



Cultural fusion theory: An alternative to acculturation

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ABSTRACT

This article lays out a theoretical framework for cultural fusion theory. This theory borrows from various theoretical frameworks to provide a more realistic description of the immigrant experience. Specifically, cultural fusion theory describes how newcomers acculturate into the dominant culture and maintain aspects of their minority culture, while at the same time the dominant or host culture also fuses aspects off the newcomer's culture into the dominant culture to create a fused intercultural identity. Boundary conditions, assumptions, axioms, and theorems are presented to define cultural fusion theory.

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The cultural adaptation process is of paramount concern for researchers, policy makers, communities, nations, and for individuals in the process of adapting. Scholars have produced a rich body of research on how this process takes place, identified positive and negative effects of the process, and offered a myriad of alternatives to current theories and models (e.g., Berry, 1990; Berry & Epstein, 1999; Chun & Choi, 2003; Croucher, 2011; Croucher & Rahmani, 2015; De La Garza & Ono, 2015; Kim, 1988, 2012; Kraidy, 2005; Kramer, 2003; Lee, 1991; Murphy & Choi, 1997; Ye, 2006).

Communication scholars examining cultural adaptation have overwhelmingly adopted Kim's (1977, 2001, 2008, 2012) theory of cultural adaptation. Kim (2001) defined cultural adaptation as "the dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environments, establish (or reestablish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those environments" (p. 31). This process is a multistep process, involving the enculturation, deculturation, and acculturation of newcomers to a culture, where the ultimate, lifelong goal is assimilation into the new culture (Kim, 2001, 2012). However, complete assimilation is theoretically impossible, as many scholars have pointed out newcomers to a culture may not be accepted by the dominant culture, may not be able to completely assimilate, and/or may not want to completely assimilate (Croucher, 2008, 2009; De La Garza & Ono, 2015; Hargreaves, 1995; Kim, 2001, 2012; Kramer, 2003; Oh, Koeske, & Sales, 2002; Smolicz & Secombe, 2003). Kim (2008) argued intercultural personhood is a more realistic representation of the adaptation process, whereby individuals merge their identities with those of the surrounding

cultural identities. However, intercultural personhood (Kim, 2008) or cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001) does not acknowledge the newcomer's impact on the surrounding culture.

Kraidy (2005), in his discussion of hybridity, explained how elements of culture, race, language, and ethnicity fuse together to form new hybrid spaces (for both the newcomers and the dominant culture). These hybrid spaces incorporate elements of various cultures including the original (typically minority) and the dominant/surrounding cultural milieu. Building upon Gadamer (1960/1975), Kramer's (2000a, 2000c) description of fusion theory asserts newcomers to a culture continually build upon their knowledge base/repertoire and fuse/integrate their previous cultural knowledge with newly acquired cultural knowledge. While newcomers are fusing elements of the dominant culture into their knowledge base/repertoire, the dominant culture is also influenced by the newcomers. This fusion/integration is different from Kim's (2001, 2008) description of deculturation, acculturation, and intercultural personhood where newcomers are strongly encouraged to abandon cultural knowledge while learning new cultural knowledge. Kramer (2000a) asserted fusion is less of a binary process, as the one proposed by Kim (2001, 2008, 2012), in that newcomers have more cognitive, affective, and operational flexibility. De La Garza and Ono (2015) further added that migrants may adapt in a variety of ways; ways that do not always mean they have to acculturate. The authors suggested that during the communicative process of migrants adapting, the larger culture (De La Garza and Ono prefer not to use the word "host") may also be changed, a process they call differential adaptation. Collectively, these theories demonstrate how a more multicultural approach to cultural adaptation is a more realistic approach to cultural adaptation.

This essay takes these approaches and expands upon them and proposes a theoretical framework for cultural fusion theory. Cultural fusion is the process through which newcomers to a culture adopt behaviors/traits of the dominant culture and maintain elements of their minority identity to function in the dominant culture. Moreover, during this process the dominant culture is also transformed as a result of the introduction of the newcomers' cultures.

Theory construction

Dubin (1978) stated that two key goals of social scientific research are understanding and prediction. Understanding is achieved by describing the cultural fusion experience of newcomers to a culture. Prediction is achieved by identifying a series of repetitive patterns that are derived from theoretical units that affect the cultural fusion process (Dubin, 1978). The goal of scientific inquiry is to understand how a process operates in reality by understanding the elements that make it up, and how the elements change/evolve over time. A theory's strength (particularly a social scientific theory) is evaluated in terms of its descriptive power (Dubin, 1978). Kim (2001) likewise stated:

prediction means that we can foretell the value of the elements that make up a phenomenon, or that we can anticipate the condition or state of a phenomenon as a whole. In both instances the focus of a predictive theory is on the outcome, and the degree to which a prediction is provided by a given theory is judged in terms of its (predictive) precision. (p. 40)

While prior explanations of cultural fusion and/or hybridity provide understanding of how newcomers to a culture adapt, such theories have not offered grounds for prediction.

Thus, these descriptions of theory have not met both theoretical (social scientific) goals (understanding and prediction). Therefore, a goal of this reformulation of cultural fusion theory is to provide understanding (description) and prediction of the cultural fusion process. To accomplish this, boundary conditions, assumptions, theoretical axioms, and theorems are presented. This procedure is consistent with theory construction in the social sciences (Blalock, 1989; Dubin, 1978).

Cultural fusion theory

Boundary conditions

Boundary conditions are conditions under which a situation/context can be studied (Dubin, 1978). Cultural fusion theory has three boundary conditions. The first boundary condition of cultural fusion theory is that:

- (1) Newcomers are primarily socialized in one culture and then move to a new culture

The primary socialization of an individual into their native culture is enculturation (Kelvin, 1970). All individuals are enculturated into a cultural milieu as children (Croucher, 2008; Kelvin, 1970). Thus, cultural fusion theory, as with other adaptation theories, assumes enculturation has taken place. Yet for individuals to be in the process of cultural fusion, they must move to a different and unfamiliar culture (or coculture). This adds an environmental element as it places the newcomer in a different/unfamiliar environment and helps to initiate a cultural change/adaptation in the newcomer. A difference that is outlined throughout this essay (and in the scholarly literature on adaptation and fusion) between cultural adaptation and cultural fusion is the extent to which the newcomer can and/or should change/adapt (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2011; Kramer, 2003).

The second boundary condition, drawing on the work of Berry (1990, 2008) and Kim (2001, 2012) is that:

- (2) Newcomers are to some extent dependent on the dominant culture/environment.

The third boundary condition asserts:

- (3) Newcomers and members of the dominant culture communicate with one another.

Newcomers are to varying degrees reliant on the host environment for many things including economic, social/cultural, and political needs. Moreover, newcomers communicate on a regular basis within the host environment via face-to-face communication with members of the host culture and through using host-culture media and social media. Overall, cultural adaptation and cultural fusion are processes in which an individual adapts to a new culture. The process of cultural adaptation, as explained by Kim (2001), takes place within the host environment. The process of cultural fusion also takes place in the host environment and within the minority community (Berry, 1992; Buenker & Ratner, 2003; Croucher, 2011; Deutsch & Won, 1963; Hargreaves, 1995; Kramer, 2003). Thus, when conducting cultural fusion research, it is essential to consider that cultural fusion takes place within an open system where newcomers are dependent on

the dominant culture and also communicate within that environment. At the same time, the dominant culture is increasingly dependent on newcomers in a globalized economic and political world.

Assumptions

Given the aforementioned boundary conditions, cultural fusion theory is based on four assumptions that drive human behavior during the process of cultural fusion. The first is taken directly from Kim (2001) in that:

- (1) “Humans have an innate self-organizing drive and a capacity to adapt to environmental challenges” (p. 35).

Numerous scholars have demonstrated that one of life’s goals is to adjust—to varying degrees—to our surroundings to overcome struggles and change ourselves (e.g., Berry, 1992; Lysgaard, 1955; Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). The level to which an individual has the self-organizing drive to adapt in reaction to environmental challenges is related to many factors, including the newcomer’s psychological/emotional abilities (Kim, 2001, 2012), willingness to adapt, economic abilities, political acceptance in the host culture, and strength of ties to the minority community (Croucher, 2008).

While individuals have an innate self-organizing drive and capacity to adapt, individuals also have the drive and desire to maintain their individuality. An individual’s identity is a significant aspect of who they are (Erikson, 1950; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Scholars have argued, and some have empirically demonstrated, that newcomers to a culture have a stronger innate desire to maintain their original cultural/ethnic identities and not lose those identities while encountering environmental challenges in the new dominant culture (Chun & Choi, 2003; Croucher, 2009; Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2011; Kramer, 2003; Sam & Berry, 2009). Even though some have considered the desire and drive to maintain distinct cultural identities as self-serving, and emotionally driven (Kim, 2008), it is impossible to deny the drive for many individuals to maintain their unique identity. Thus, based on this innate drive and desire to maintain identity, the second assumption of cultural fusion theory is:

- (2) Humans have an innate self-organizing drive and desire to maintain their cultural identities.

Humans maintain their identities while still adapting to a new environment through communication. When newcomers come to a new culture they will interact with members of the dominant culture, and with members of their own cultural groups. This communicative interaction can take many forms (e.g., interpersonal, mass-mediated, and organizational). Ultimately, newcomers must communicate with and in the dominant culture (Kim, 2001). Moreover, newcomers communicate extensively with and in their own communities. Such cultural communication (especially when it is extensive in nature) has been deemed by many a barrier to assimilation (Kim, 2001, 2012). However, other scholars have argued the use of cultural communication (sometimes called ethnic) networks aids newcomers in navigating the adaptation process by helping

the immigrant maintain their cultural identity and function in the dominant society (Clothier, 2005; Croucher, Oommen, & Steele, 2009; Melkote & Liu, 2000; Raman & Harwood, 2008). For instance, new immigrants to the United States often seek out and join institutions such as synagogues, mosques, churches, and ethnic festivals and clubs previously established by members of their communities and national origin. Such institutions form hubs within larger cultural networks. Quite the opposite of being barriers to communication between newcomers and the host society, such established institutions and organizations enable newcomers to interface with larger socioeconomic structures. Joining an ethnic church, for instance, provides channels of vital information about the host society concerning issues such as employment, healthcare, educational opportunities, and housing. While Kim (2012) has argued such contacts can be helpful in the initial stages of adaptation, in the long term such contacts impede successful intercultural personhood (Kim, 2008, 2012). Thus, under cultural adaptation theory, newcomers should actively avoid contact with ethnic media and organizations. Such resources facilitate integration by translating and bridging barriers to communication between the newcomer and the host environment (Croucher & Rahmani, 2015). Such institutions offer established channels of information so that each newcomer does not have to struggle to invent the wheel.

Community organizations interface with host cultural structures, and each “side” coevolves over time as channels are built and knowledge of needs and resources flow back and forth (Kramer, 2013, 2014). While adaptation theory argues all change or adaptation is one sided, in fact both interlocutors, for instance a local school or chamber of commerce on the host side, and a mosque on the other, open channels of communication help each become familiar with the other and coordinate community building functions that integrate different stakeholders. Vital communities are not homogenous monoliths that stagnate in zero-energy equilibrium (Kramer, 2000b). They are living processes that involve and presume differences from which communication itself and innovation flow. When all difference is eliminated there is nothing left to talk about or to integrate; vitality wanes. People seek out difference/stimulation because the alternative is boring, offers no change, and therefore no opportunity. There are risks; but to avoid all risks is ultimately nihilistic. Therefore, it is clear that while attempting to adopt certain behaviors/traits of the dominant culture and maintain cultural identities (cultural fusion), newcomers to a culture are communicating both with and in the dominant culture and community. Thus, the third assumption is:

- (3) Cultural fusion of the individual with the environment occurs in and through communication.

The coevolution and coadoption of behaviors/traits of the dominant culture and maintaining parts of cultural identity reveals the dynamic nature of cultural fusion (Kramer, 2013). Cultural fusion is an open system where a multitude of variables such as an individual’s identity, personality/psychology, biology, demographics (socioeconomic, political, religious), host-culture acceptance, media (availability, options), and many more interact to affect newcomers’ speed and levels of fusion. Moreover, due to the very nature of open systems (Contractor, 1994; Senge, 1990), variables are in constant interaction and the newcomer is constantly changing. Moreover, the system surrounding the newcomer is also changing. This is where cultural fusion theory diverges most from the work of Kim

(2008, 2012) and Berry (1992, 2008). In their conceptualizations change happens almost exclusively on the part of the minority or newcomer. However, as the newcomer and the dominant cultural group are interacting together, in an open system, it is impossible for the dominant culture to not be affected to some extent by the introduction of new cultural practices, beliefs, norms, and so forth. For example, Italian, Irish, German, Mexican, and Chinese immigrants (to name a few) have changed the cultural landscape of the U.S. In doing so, U.S. culture has been transformed, just as these immigrants, and generations after them have been transformed (Alba & Victor, 2003; Daniels, 1991). Therefore, the fourth assumption is proposed to explain the change individuals go through during the open cultural fusion process:

- (4) Cultural fusion is an open, dynamic system that changes an individual and the surrounding environment.

Theoretical axioms

Building on the theory's boundary conditions and assumptions, seven theoretical axioms related to cultural fusion theory are now presented. Axioms are generalizable statements that demonstrate reoccurring patterns of interaction between variables. Dubin (1978) stated that axioms are assumed to be true representations of the relationships between variables. Blalock (1969) argued axioms should represent a causal relationship between variables; however, axioms also describe the nature and function of relationships between variables.

The first and most basic theoretical assumption of cultural fusion theory is that:

- (1) Cultural fusion involves both acculturation and cultural maintenance.

Humans are socialized into their native cultures (Kelvin, 1970). When individuals encounter a new culture, they inevitably encounter a new cultural system of behaviors. Newcomers to a culture are ultimately torn between adopting some new behaviors or not. This learning of the behaviors/traits of the new surrounding culture is acculturation (Kim, 2012). Typically, newcomers to a culture will adopt behaviors most relevant to daily life, such as clothing, language, and other behavioral habits. While acculturation is inevitable, to a point, individuals will also maintain aspects of their culture and not completely abandon their original socialized identities. Unlike the deculturation process supported by assimilationists (Kim, 1988, 2001; Kincaid, Yum, Woelfel, & Barnett, 1983; Thayer, 1975), which proposes when one learns one thing one unlearns another thing (a rather binary process), other scholars have argued, and shown empirically, that individuals are capable of partially acculturating while still maintaining aspects of their native cultures (Chun & Choi, 2003; Croucher, 2008, 2009; Kramer, 2000b, 2003; Melkote & Liu, 2000; Sam & Berry, 2009). Thus, newcomers are able to adopt behaviors of the surrounding culture while maintaining their original (nonassimilated) minority identities. Furthermore, the dominant culture adopts (some) behaviors of the newcomers while maintaining original behaviors and identities (Kramer, 2000c). Cultural fusion therefore, represents this blending of learning new behaviors/traits (acculturation) and maintaining old behaviors/traits.

The second key component of cultural fusion theory is that the process of an individual fusing into a new culture transforms the individual. Moving to a new community, culture, and/or nation can be very difficult. Individuals can experience shock when they move and/or try to adjust to a new environment (Oberg, 1960; Ruben, 1983). Holmes and Rahe (1967) identified 43 life changes that take place in just the first year of an individual's life in a new country. A cursory view of literature and pop culture reveals various negative and positive life changes that take place during the adaptation period. As humans are open systems and susceptible to environmental factors, the process of learning new cultural behaviors/traits while still maintaining original behaviors/traits is transformative. Humans innately find ways to work through stress and adapt to it (Moos & Tsu, 1976), while learning and maintaining behaviors/traits. The fusion process with a culture is continuous and individuals are continually encountering new things in the new environment (Croucher, 2008). This process of learning and maintaining affects stress levels, while it also enhances newcomers' understanding of the new environment. Ultimately, the stress, learning and fusion process changes the person as it creates a more intercultural being (Croucher, 2008). Thus, the second axiom of cultural fusion theory is:

(2) Cultural fusion brings about intercultural transformation.

The third axiom is built from three key arguments. The first deals with the necessity to develop functional fitness. When newcomers enter a culture they encounter new ways of acting that may challenge their traditional ways of acting/behaving. In response, newcomers often adapt to the surrounding culture in various ways to better function within the new cultural milieu. Kim (2001) described this process of adapting to better function within the dominant culture as developing functional fitness to avoid maladaptation and other potential failures of maladjustment. However, Croucher (2008) found North African immigrants to France borrowed aspects of the dominant culture and kept even more aspects of their native cultures to develop their own functional fitness with French culture. In response, dominant French culture borrowed aspects of North African culture, such as food, language, and media, as such cultural elements continue to infiltrate French culture. In essence, North African immigrants, and many other immigrant groups around the world (Buettner, 2008; Joppke, 1996), find ways to converge aspects of the dominant culture along with their own cultures to build a culturally diverse functional fitness within the dominant culture. At the same time dominant cultural groups continue to borrow aspects of minority culture and make it their own (Hargreaves, 1995).

The second argument that comprises the third axiom of cultural fusion theory is how the cultural fusion process affects psychological health. Moving to a new culture is not an easy thing. Research has demonstrated moving to a new culture can have a tremendous psychological effect on individuals (Kimbrow, Gorman, & Schachter, 2012; Lee, Ahn, Miller, Park, & Kim, 2012). However, as newcomers face challenges involved with adapting to a new culture—whether that involves assimilating and/or fusing with the dominant culture—such challenges change a person. When an individual realizes they are able to handle the process of adapting to a new culture, psychologically (emotionally and cognitively), they gain greater confidence in themselves and thus are transformed (Church, 1982; Oberg, 1979).

Third, an intercultural identity develops during the fusion process. As newcomers begin to learn and identify more with the host culture, their socialized identity transforms. Many newcomers begin to identify more and more with the host culture (Kim, 1988). Crossing from one culture into another and identifying with the new culture does not mean one abandons their previous socialized identity (Croucher, 2011; Kim, 2001). Many newcomers will in fact develop dual identities as they fuse aspects of minority and host identities into a multicultural identity (Berry, 1980; Croucher, 2008; Horenczyk, 2009; Kramer, 2003; Moring & Husband, 2009). A new intercultural identity is flexible and evolving as the newcomer continually develops/grows in the new culture (Ting-Toomey, 1993). Therefore, based on the necessity for newcomers to function in a new culture, the evidence that intercultural transformation does affect psychological health, and the evidence that transformation creates a new intercultural identity, the third axiom is put forth:

- (3) “Intercultural transformation is manifested in increased functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity” (Kim, 2001, p. 90).

The ability to communicate with diverse groups within the host culture is integral to functioning within the host culture. Kim (2001) divided communication activities into two dimensions: personal and social. Personal communication includes the mental activities and processes that prepare an individual to respond to specific cultural/social situations. Scholars have generally defined personal communication as host communication competence (Banks, Gao, & Baker, 1991; Kim, 2012; Wiseman & Koester, 1993). Such competence typically includes the ability to linguistically communicate in the host culture, the ability to act appropriately in the host culture, and adequate/appropriate knowledge of the host culture (Croucher, 2008; Kim, 2001; Spitzberg, 1989; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Such competence provides individuals the ability to process and organize information, and more appropriately respond to others in the host culture.

When newcomers need to interact with members of the host culture, newcomers must enact their host communication competence (personal communication). When members of the dominant culture need to interact with newcomers, they must also enact other forms of communicative competence, depending on the situation. This process is social communication. Social communication is when “two or more individuals interact with one another, knowingly or not” (Kim, 2001, p. 72). Along with the interpersonal level of interaction, social communication also involves interactions with the host culture via host-culture mass communication outlets (newspapers, movies, internet, radio, social media, etc.). The extent to which newcomers interact with the host culture affects their adaptation. Newcomers use media to assist in the adaptation process; and host media aid in the adaptation process (Croucher & Rahmani, 2015; Hwang & He, 1999; Khan, 1992; Raman & Harwood, 2008). A level of host communication competence is important for a newcomer to function in a new culture. Furthermore, a level of basic communicative competence and flexibility is necessary for members of the dominant culture to be able to communicate with newcomers. Often, to meet the communicative needs of newcomers, host-culture media and members may accommodate/transform or aid in the development of new migrant specialized media or communication to serve the needs of migrants (Bartikowski, Taieb, & Chandon, 2016; Shumow & Vigon, 2016; Spencer, 2011). Thus, the fourth axiom is proposed:

- (4) Newcomer and host-culture intercultural transformation facilitates and is facilitated by communication competence.

Many newcomers also find interpersonal communication within their own group and mass communication produced in their native country or culture to be the most appealing and helpful in the adaptation process (Croucher, 2008; Durham, 2004; Hargreaves & Mahdjoub, 1997; Lee, 2004). Minority interpersonal and mass communication not only helps keep newcomers connected with family, friends, and events in their native cultures, but also helps them better understand the host culture (Croucher, Oommen, Borton, Anarbaeva, & Turner, 2009; Zhang & Xiaoming, 1999; Zhou & Cai, 2002). Scholars have found many immigrants use more intergroup communication and ethnic media to aid in developing a multicultural identity, and to reduce culture shock and stress while adjusting to a new culture (Croucher, Oommen, Borton, et al., 2009; Lee, 2004; Ye, 2006). Thus, unlike assimilationists who argue the use of more ethnic and or minority communication (interpersonal and/or mass mediated) over host-culture communication limits a newcomer's ability to function in a new culture, research has shown many newcomers feel the opposite. In fact, many newcomers in various cultures believe they are able to function well by actively fusing minority and host communication activities (Croucher, 2008, 2009; Croucher, Oommen, Borton, et al., 2009; Durham, 2004; Lee, 2004; Ye, 2006). Thus, the fifth axiom of cultural fusion theory is that:

- (5) Intercultural transformation facilitates and is facilitated by participation in host and minority (interpersonal and mass) communication activities.

Newcomers' intent to fuse with a new culture is greatly affected by environmental conditions. Specifically, how receptive the host culture is to the newcomer, how much pressure the host-culture places on newcomers to assimilate, and how strongly newcomers maintain minority group identities, are all key questions to consider. Each of these questions can be considered within Stephan and Stephan's (1993, 1996) integrated threat theory. Immigrants are inherently perceived as threats; thus they are often treated prejudicially because they belong to different social groups, may follow different values/beliefs and their personalities are not culturally the same as the host culture (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Stephan & Stephan, 1996). There are three kinds of threat that can lead to prejudice, low host-culture reception of newcomers, high conformity pressure, and heightened ethnic group vitality (Croucher, 2013; Stephan & Stephan, 1993, 1996): realistic threats, symbolic threats, and intergroup anxiety.

Realistic threats are mainly economic, political, and physical threats to resources. When members of the host culture believe there are limited resources in their nation/culture and newcomers arrive, competition develops, and the host culture ultimately feels threatened (Stephan & Stephan, 1996). Symbolic threats are those based on perceived differences between group beliefs, values, and norms. When groups believe they are innately different from one another (even when they are not) this perception of difference can create conflict, pressure to conform, and lack of receptivity (González, Verkuyten, Weesie, & Poppe, 2008). The final kind of threat is intergroup anxiety. People have fears when interacting with out-group members. Islam and Hewstone (1993) found prejudice increases as

intergroup anxiety increases. In turn, pressure to conform increases as intergroup anxiety increases (Croucher, 2013).

Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2011) found the desire of British and French Muslims to adapt decreased as host conformity pressure to assimilate increased, and as host receptivity decreased. They also found Muslims turned more toward other Muslims for communicative needs as host conformity pressures mounted. Turning inward to a minority group for communicative needs often happens when a group's ethnic group vitality is threatened (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977). In Europe many national governments historically placed relatively minimal pressure on immigrants to adapt to the host culture (e.g., the European Union). Recently, though, governments have placed more pressure on immigrants to adapt; in turn resentment toward national governments has increased; prejudice toward immigrants has increased; and tensions between immigrants and nonimmigrants has reached a tenuous point in the EU, with nations divided about how to handle the growing crisis (How is the migrant crisis dividing countries, 2016). France, for example, took steps to limit the open expression of religion; this is viewed by many Muslim immigrants as an attack on Islam (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2011). In response to the wave of migration from Syria, North Africa, and other conflict zones in the Middle East, Denmark passed a law permitting the government to seize the property of asylum seekers/refugees to help cover expenses of their migration (Damon & Hume, 2016). In response, the perception of migrants toward the Danish people and culture has turned increasingly negative. Immigrants in nations with fewer national limitations, and/or perceived limitations are happier, more functional, and more likely to communicate in the host and minority communities, which facilitates the development of a multicultural identity (Laurence & Vaisse, 2006). Overall, the amount of pressure placed on immigrants to transform to a host culture, the level of host-culture receptivity, and the response of minority/ethnic group strength/vitality are all integral parts of the fusion process. Thus, the sixth axiom of cultural fusion theory is:

- (6) Pressures placed on newcomers by the dominant culture influence and are influenced by the newcomers' levels of intercultural change.

The final axiom of cultural fusion theory pertains to newcomers' internal conditions. Fusion involves a change in a newcomer; and some individuals are more open to change than others, and more prepared. Newcomers who know more about the host culture they are moving to—prior to moving—have more realistic expectations about their upcoming intercultural transformation (Croucher, 2008; Searle & Ward, 1990). Prior knowledge can come from a variety of sources, including: mass media, formal training, travel, working/dealing with members of the host culture, and personal contact with the host culture. All in all, the more knowledge the newcomer has, the better equipped they are to transform. Moreover, if the move is voluntary, involuntary, planned or unplanned, can also affect how prepared the newcomer is for change.

Similarly, the minority/ethnic background of newcomers is a key internal condition that affects intercultural transformation. Newcomers who are ethnically closer to that of the host culture initially find it easier to adjust to the host culture, because some ethnicities are more similar to one another in regards to ethnic characteristics/traits (Collier, 1997; Phinney, 1992; Phinney & Rosenthal, 1992; Tajfel, 1978). The degree of ethnic similarity and/or foreignness affects newcomers' cultural fusion abilities. When newcomers are very

similar to the host culture (physically, linguistically, and religiously, for example) they will ultimately have a higher chance of being accepted by the host culture as they pose less of a threat to the host culture (Croucher, 2008; Kramer, 2003; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Stephan & Stephan, 1996). For example, a Caucasian Catholic has a higher chance of acceptance and cultural fusion into France than a Black Muslim, because of skin color and religion (Croucher, 2008; Hargreaves, 1995; Roy, 2006).

Kim (2001) identified three broad personality traits that would affect an individual's level of cultural adaptation: openness, strength, and positivity. These same personality traits will affect the cultural fusion process as fusion involves both cultural maintenance and acculturation. Openness refers to how flexible, open-minded and tolerant of ambiguity is an individual. Cultural fusion requires a level of acculturation, which necessitates a level of openness to change. Strength includes various personality traits such as resilience, persistence, and resourcefulness. Moving to a new culture will lead to culture shock (Oberg, 1979). Thus, individuals need to strength to respond, and to transform and function in the new culture. Positivity is the ability to have a positive outlook. When newcomers move to a new culture they will confront challenges ranging from the mundane to the severe. It is essential to maintain a positive outlook—as much as possible—to aid in the cultural fusion process and to minimize negative psychological effects (Kimbrow et al., 2012; Oberg, 1979). Therefore, based on research demonstrating the importance of prior knowledge, ethnic background, and personality traits on intercultural transformation, the following theoretical axiom is posed:

- (7) A newcomer's predispositions influence and are influenced by the newcomer's levels of intercultural change.

Theorems

Based on cultural fusion theory's three boundary conditions, four basic assumptions, and seven theoretical axioms, the following 19 theorems are postulated. Theorems propose how a change in one theoretical unit will occur due to the change in another theoretical unit (Dubin, 1978). Hypotheses and/or research questions can be deduced from these theorems for later empirical analysis.

- (1) The greater the host and newcomer communication competence, the greater the intercultural transformation.
- (2) A mixture of host and ethnic interpersonal and mass communication facilitates cultural fusion.
- (3) A mixture of host interpersonal and mass communication facilitates intercultural transformation (functional fitness, psychological fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity).
- (4) The greater the host receptivity, the greater the newcomer use of host interpersonal and mass communication.
- (5) The greater the host receptivity, the greater the intercultural transformation of the newcomer and the host (functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity).

- (6) The greater the host receptivity, the greater the cultural fusion.
- (7) The greater the host conformity pressure, the greater the newcomer use of minority interpersonal and mass communication.
- (8) The greater the host conformity pressure, the lesser the intercultural transformation of the newcomer and the host (functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity).
- (9) The greater the host conformity pressure, the lesser the desire for cultural fusion.
- (10) The greater the host receptivity, the lesser the minority/ethnic group strength.
- (11) The greater the host conformity pressure, the lesser the minority/ethnic group strength.
- (12) Minority/ethnic group strength will affect cultural fusion depending on levels of host receptivity and host conformity pressure.
- (13) The greater the preparedness for change, the greater the newcomer and host use of minority/ethnic and host interpersonal and mass communication.
- (14) The greater the preparedness for change, the greater the newcomer and host intercultural transformation (functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity).
- (15) The more similar the cultural proximity, the greater the newcomer and host use of host and minority/ethnic interpersonal and mass communication.
- (16) The more similar the cultural proximity, the greater the newcomer and host intercultural transformation (functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity).
- (17) The more adaptive the personality, the greater the newcomer and host use of newcomer and host interpersonal and mass communication.
- (18) The more adaptive the personality, the greater the newcomer and host intercultural transformation (functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity).
- (19) Higher levels of preparedness for change, cultural similarity, and adaptive personality facilitate greater cultural fusion.

Conclusion

These theorems can lead to various hypotheses and/or research questions examining the cultural fusion of immigrants in various cultural settings. Considering this theoretical framework, future research into cultural fusion could consider the following broad issues. First, scholars interested in the cultural adaptation and cultural fusion process should continue to explore the use of host and minority/ethnic media by newcomers. Approaching media use research from a cultural fusion perspective (and not just an assimilationist perspective) could provide greater and possibly more realistic insight into newcomer media uses and gratifications (Croucher & Rahmani, 2015). Second, future cultural fusion research should clarify the definition of “functional fitness.” From an assimilationist perspective “functional fitness” is equated with virtually complete assimilation (Kim, 2001). However, from a fusion perspective a newcomer can fuse various aspects/characteristics of minority and host cultures together to “function” in the host culture (Gadamer, 1960/1975; Kramer, 2003). Moreover, as De La Garza and Ono (2015) discussed, the very concept of functional fitness should be carefully scrutinized, as such discourse

around fitness implies some immigrants are unfit. Third, and linked to the fusing of cultures, is what aspects/characteristics do newcomers choose to adopt and/or maintain; and why do newcomers choose such particular aspects/characteristics. This line of inquiry could help improve our understanding of the psychological process of fusing with the dominant culture. Fourth, research should consider how the host or dominant culture changes in response to the introduction of the newcomer. While there is extensive research on how newcomers adapt to a host culture, little research considers how the host culture is changed by the newcomer. It is critical in a globalized world to consider the influence of the minority/newcomer on the host. Similarly, it is imperative to consider the degree of change that takes place on the part of the host and the newcomers/minorities. Fifth, drawing from integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 1993, 1996), future work should look at the effects of host receptivity and conformity pressure on the cultural fusion process. Limited research has examined the relationship between adaptation, host receptivity, and conformity pressure (Croucher, 2013). More work should explore this relationship, and in light of the current geopolitical situation, in which minority-immigrant religious groups (such as Muslims) are often the targets of hateful political and social rhetoric (Bowen, 2007). What impact and consequences do such situations have on the cultural fusion process? This is an important question for scholars, communities, and governments to consider. These questions of cultural fusion could be approached via cross-sectional research; or to more accurately understand the fusion process, longitudinal studies would provide better answers. Finally, research should explore if fusion happens differently in public versus private settings. Adapting to a new culture is unpredictable; and it is difficult to predict how, when, and where it will take place. Thus, it would be advantageous to consider such questions.

This essay provided an alternative to cultural adaptation theory, which proposes complete assimilation as the ultimate goal (Kim, 1988, 2001). As scholars have shown, complete assimilation is theoretically and practically impossible (Bowen, 2007; Chun & Choi, 2003; Croucher, 2011; Gordon, 1964; Hargreaves, 1995; Kim, 2001; Kraidy, 2005; Kramer, 2000b; Smolicz & Secombe, 2003). Cultural fusion theory provides a more realistic description of the immigrant experience. The goal of this statement of theory is to help scholars, practitioners, and policy makers better understand the immigrant experience.

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