

PREFACE

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In this book Dr. Miho Iwakuma, who has the perspective of a person who navigates the world from a wheelchair, introduces the reader to the world of people with disabilities (PWDs) generally and more specifically in Japan. The populations of the countries with the wealthiest economies are aging. This is an unprecedented event in human history, certainly in modern history. Countries such as Germany, Italy, Norway, and Japan are facing a major shift in their demographics. With aging comes disability. This book by Iwakuma examines the social and communicative ramifications of the onset of disability.

Dr. Iwakuma approaches the community of persons with disabilities as having many common experiences and challenges, and applies the idea of subculture. From this perspective we can see how newly disabled people individually and as a group struggle to be successful within the larger "host" culture. But the word "host" implies that the other is a mere visitor, not someone who permanently belongs. Iwakuma notes that disability is often a permanent condition and one that visits virtually everyone if they live long enough. The act of accommodation implies empathy and the realization that we are all together in our communities, not split as so many scholars presume between mainstream normal people and marginal abnormal people.

Identity is given through difference (Heidegger, 1957 Ger./1969 Eng.; Saussure, 1916 Fr./1977 Eng.). Identity is a co-constituted phenomenon (Kramer, 1993). Identity is thus, at least in part, a social construct (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Garfinkel, 1964/1972; Goffman, 1959; Schutz, 1953; Schutz & Luckmann, 1959 Ger./1973 Eng.). This shifting aspect of identity increases as diversity increases. The self is a product of systemic social

interaction. It is pan-evolutionary and co-constitutive in nature (Kramer, 2013, 2010, 2008; Kramer, Callahan, & Zuckerman, 2012).

When Otherness as a function of differentiation occurs, communication patterns shift, making issues like trust, confidence, and self-efficacy salient. The shifting quality of identity occurs as both a mundane aspect of human reality and sometimes as an extra-ordinary occurrence such as the onset of disability. It is rooted in the temporal nature of our being (Kramer, 2013). Changes in identity are constant but are most pronounced in threshold experiences. What happens is that difference and therefore identity suddenly comes into focus and this alters the mood, the pattern of communication, and the sense of self as inclusive or exclusive, as belonging or as intruding, as being appropriate or inappropriate. With cognitive uncertainty comes anxiety about the unfamiliar.

Many researchers make untested presumptions about abnormal identity and host receptivity and the interaction between the two. One presumption is that simple interaction between the newcomer/deviant and locals will eventually lead to "assimilation," meaning that the minority person's way of thinking, feeling, and behaving will follow a process of adaptation/conformity whereby they will abandon their own culture, values, and ways of thinking and adopt the mannerisms, customs, values, and social attributes of the locals. As the story goes, this process of adaptation/assimilation will continue until the newcomer becomes indistinguishable from a majority group member (Gordon, 1964; Park, 1950). According to William Park (1950), as interactions between ethnic groups sharing a common socio-cultural boundary increase, their distinctions will disappear until the groups become indistinguishable.

This presumption is unfounded. It is self-evidently incorrect. One need only glance around the world and observe the preservation of cultural identity over centuries among ethnic groups that live side-by-side throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. George Simmel, a Jew writing of ethnic communication and survival in an increasingly anti-Semitic European context, contradicts the claim that assimilation is one-sided, linear, inevitable, or natural (Simmel, 1908 Ger./1950 Eng.). Assimilation, especially forced assimilation, has been shown to be none of these things.

Leon Festinger (1956) and Festinger and James Carlsmith (1959/2008) already demonstrated (and this has been replicated many times since in psychology and sociology) that "forced compliance" does not make people happy, more peaceful, or enjoy greater "psychic equilibrium." And prior to this work Herbert Kelman (1953) had already discovered that there is no linear correlation between rewards and change in opinion. Even forcing a person to rehearse the desired narrative or behavior does not achieve much "self-convincing." Rather, forced compliance can often lead to overt resistance to change. And compliance gaining is greatly complicated by cultural differences (Bruner, 1990/2010; Griswold, 1994; Miller-Loessi &

Parker, 2003), gender differences (Collins, 1991; Fausto-Sterling, 1993; Haraway, 1991; Ridgeway, 1993; Sprague & Zimmerman, 1993; Tuana, 1993; West & Fenstermaker, 1993), disability (Cahill & Eggleston, 1994), perceptions of race and ethnicity (Devine, 1996; Devine & Elliot, 1995; Hunt, Jackson, Powell, & Steelman, 2000; Miall, Ramsbothorn, & Woodhouse, 2005; Paul, 1998; Rawls, 2000; Sherif, 1956/2008; Stryker & Burke, 2000), comparative concepts of identity (Gergen, 1991/2010; Hogg, 2003; Snyder, 1980/2008; Stryker, Owens, & White, 2000), comparative concepts of family (Ferree, 1990; Naples, 2001; see the resource *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*), body aesthetics (Cowley, 1996/2008; Crandall et al., 2001/2008), concepts of masculinity (Anderson, 1990/2010; Duneier, 1992), and so forth.

Already in 1963, Nathan Glazer and Donald Moynihan observed that whereas some immigrant groups assimilate, others retain aspects of their native culture. For instance, one may change one's religious affiliation and convert but even such a conversion for the deeply faithful is not a simple process of "church membership." Religion is an essential aspect of core identity. This has been demonstrated time and again (Becker, 1973; Campbell, 1988; Croucher, 2008; Croucher & Cronin-Mills, 2011; Rokeach, 1968).

Dr. Iwakuma challenges both the traditional folkways in Japan pertaining to people with disabilities (PWDs) and some of the social engineering prominent in the discipline of intercultural communication. Specifically she empirically tests the theory of intercultural adaptation theory and finds it to be fundamentally flawed. This largely untested, yet popular theory, promotes conformism as the path to "upward-forward" improvement of functional fitness, mental health, balance, and what some writers define as communication competence (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p. 382). For instance, in their seminal book introducing the influential theory of intercultural adaptation theory, William Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim (2003) describe what they call "psychic evolution" (p. 389): "The cross-cultural adaptation process involves a continuous interplay of deculturation and acculturation that brings about change in strangers in the direction of assimilation, the highest degree of adaptation theoretically conceivable. It is that process by which strangers are re-socialized into a new culture, so as to attain an increasing compatibility and functional fitness" (p. 360). They continue: "The direction of acculturative change in strangers is toward assimilation, that is, a state of a high degree of acculturation into the host milieu and a high degree of deculturation of the original culture. It is a state that reflects a maximum convergence of a strangers' internal condition with those of the natives and of a minimum maintenance of the original cultural habits" (p. 360). Gudykunst and Kim (2003) define deculturation as "unlearning" (p. 380) and argue in a zero-sum fashion that unless one unlearns old ways, one cannot learn new ones, and they define accul-

turation as “programming” (p. 376). Another term taken from engineering and applied to humans is “entrainment.”

This reasoning and even language already exist in the Social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer in colonial Victorian England. The theories are nearly identical. The basic axiom is, conform to the dominant mainstream culture or fail. And adequate conformity, according to Gudykunst and Kim (2003), is not merely imitation of mainstream behavior patterns as in the old saying, when in Rome do as the Romans do. Rather they insist that true progress, true psychic evolution, and becoming “socially competent” and “functionally fit” as well as mentally healthy requires that the minority person “unlearn” (p. 380) themselves; that the minority person willingly strive for “psychic disintegration” (p. 380), and to be “programmed to think, feel, and behave” like the dominant “mainstream culture.” Adaptive assimilation for Gudykunst and Kim (2003) is a “cognitive, affective, and behavioral process” (p. 372). According to the theory of intercultural adaptation, the “host culture” forces conformity because it is the numerical majority: the “one-sided change is the difference between the size of the population sharing a given stranger’s original culture and that of the population sharing the host culture. To the extent the dominant power of the host culture controls the daily survival and functioning of strangers, it presents a coercive pressure on them to adapt” (p. 360). Adaptation means one-sided conformity to majority norms. Gudykunst and Kim argue that to become a competent, sane, mature, well-balanced individual, one must “learn and acquire all the factors and processes which make one human being fit to live in the company of others [according to majority standards]. Socialization involves conditioning and programming in the basic processes of communication” (pp. 358-359). As mentioned, such “upward-forward progress,” Gudykunst and Kim (2003) argue, can occur only to the extent that the minority is willing to “deculturize” and “unlearn” their own ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving (p. 359).

What is necessary for the deviant, the minority newcomer, the newly disabled in this case to become functionally fit and competent, is to deculturize and unlearn their disability so that they can become “fit to live with” (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p. 358). But what if one cannot cease to be who one is? What if one cannot change, cannot walk or cannot speak, or chooses not to “unlearn” themselves; abandon their religion for instance?

The conformity pressure put on deviant behavior by the “mainstream” host culture is just that, pressure to *conform* to old ways. It is not adaptation, which involves the emergence of a new form of living (Kramer, 2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b, 2009). This pressure is real. However, it affects different newcomers differently and in nearly all cases, at least some of their native culture or nonrelativistic characteristics are retained.

At stake here is the question: What if the source of deviation is not mutable? What if it is race or some other embodied marker such as living

in a wheelchair, being gay, mentally handicapped, or being abnormally short? To then argue that failure to assimilate is a reflection of inherent “personality attributes” that lead to “unrealistic” and immature expectations among the minority individual, as Gudykunst and Kim do, begs the question. If the source of deviance is not mutable, then what is the “mainstream” society to do with minorities that cannot assimilate? According to assimilationists, minorities who do not conform, for whatever reason, are, by definition, pessimistic, closed-minded, inflexible, weak, and doomed to permanent “mental instability” (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p. 381), poor “self-understanding” (p. 382), and poor “psychological health” (pp. 376, 382). As noted above, by implication nonconformists are also unnatural. Taking the side of the coercive majority as natural and good, Gudykunst and Kim (2003) define communication competence in terms of the “host society’s” standards. The potential consequences of this ideology are profound with horrific implications, which history has already and repeatedly tested. For the PWD clumsy, deviant “incompetent” behavior is not a character flaw or an inherent failing but a matter of circumstance.

Such negative value judgments about people who are different from oneself have been empirically proven false. First, minorities are part of every system, and simply by the nature of the bell curve, the most successful and happy people are a numerical minority. Second, happiness, social competence, success (including economic and academic), and functional fitness are empirically self-evident among many who cannot or choose not to be average. Third, social change, what might be judged as progress, always comes from deviance. Conformity does not lead to progress.

Dr. Iwakuma calls the actual process that she empirically investigated the “adjustment path,” by which the environment *and* the individual as a part of a single social communication system concurrently adjust. She describes and outlines coping strategies she observed. She discusses the adjustments friends, acquaintances, institutions, families, and ultimately society must make to accommodate people with disabilities.

Through ethnographic observation and interviews conducted at rehabilitation clinics, hospitals, and private homes in Japan, Iwakuma demonstrates that PWDs do not have to behave, think, or feel like others to be functionally fit, socially competent, happy, well adjusted, and successful. Iwakuma explores the adjustment path a newly disabled person tends to follow. She critiques the notion of cultural assimilation (“adaptation” a la Gudykunst & Kim) as put forth in the theory of intercultural adaptation theory, as being both an inaccurate set of assumptions and a set of inadequate and intolerant suggestions for social engineering. The theory is not applicable to people who cannot conform or “fit in” to “mainstream” lifestyle and mainstream communication competencies. Instead she applies the notion of co-evolution, first applied to cultural morphology from systems theory by Eric Kramer (1997a, 1997b, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b), to explain

how several different people comprising a system adjust to accommodate each other. This constitutes “cultural churning” and “cultural fusion” (Kramer, 2000b, 2003a, 2003b, 2008, 2010; Kramer, Callahan, & Zuckerman, 2012).

As we follow the evolution of the idea of outsider identity and assimilation theory from Park to Gordon (1964) and beyond, the trajectory of the concepts adapt, adopt, adjust, assimilate, and integrate sometimes become entangled and confused. Gordon (1964) realized that the change that constitutes assimilation is on both sides of the equation, that the host culture is changed by the presence of minorities just as minorities are changed by the host culture, a process Kramer (2000a, 2000b, 2003a, 2009) calls co-evolution, which also involves the co-constitution of identities (Kramer, 1993, 2009).

In short, co-evolution recognizes that the “direction of change” is on both sides of the process; the host culture must work to accommodate PWDs and the PWDs must work to adjust to their new circumstance. This is a much more accurate description of what actually occurs and it is also a much more ethical set of recommendations than the description/evaluation given by the dominant host culture of what constitutes the “good” assimilator (the “model minority”) who should never resist no matter what the coercive forces of the host population demand.

It must be recognized that Iwakuma is working within a field where confusion exists in the use of concepts among some writers, a confusion that needs to be addressed, especially with regard to the theory of intercultural adaptation theory (which is sometimes called “cross-cultural adaptation theory”) by the authors—yet another fundamental confusion). Whereas assimilation leads to the disappearance of the immigrant culture and the ethnic identity of a person in a process of socio-cultural homogenization, integration involves the continued vitality of immigrant identity as such. They are mutually exclusive processes. Assimilation means the end of integration for integration requires difference. Gordon (1964) updated Park’s work noting that assimilation is a multidimensional process and that the change wrought by immigration affects everyone involved including the host society.

In 1997 the Canadian social psychologist John Berry (1997) set out to clarify the concept of acculturation, a process that takes two fundamentally different paths: assimilation and integration. As noted, these are *mutually exclusive processes for assimilation spells the end of integration*, the end of the original identity of the newcomer—her way of behaving, thinking, and feeling. For assimilationists intercultural communication is the problem. The way to solve it is to eliminate all differences and thus the prerequisites that enable intercultural communication to exist (Kramer, 2000a, 2000b; 2008, 2009, 2010; Kramer, Callahan, & Zuckerman, 2012).

Iwakuma challenges writers who define deviant identity, the subculture of PWDs in this case, in highly moralizing ethnocentric terms (Kramer, 1997a, 1997b, 2000a, 2000b, 2003, 2008; Kramer, Callahan, & Zuckerman, 2012). Iwakuma’s work, including this book, is an effort by her to challenge prevailing prejudices among both laypersons and writers who promote assimilation as the only path to happiness and success. With the empirical data published in this volume, she seeks to not only accurately describe how PWDs adjust to new disabilities but also how those around them also adjust. Accommodation is a concept lacking in much intercultural communication research.

Also, Iwakuma seeks to challenge the current state of host society receptivity in Japan. Host society receptivity is a measure of how welcoming a host society or group is to an outsider/deviant (Berry, 1997). This factor is essential to the success of the newcomer who is by definition a minority. Failure to accommodate difference is not the default “natural” way of social interaction.

Another unfounded presumption made by the original students of minority status 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. As Anthony Pym (2003), following the work of Homi Bhabha (2004), puts it, culture is a product of codifying interculturalities. Like dialects and daughter languages, “All cultures stem from interculturalities, which lose secondness as they expand” (Pym 2003, p. 4; also see Pym 2004).

Like the co-constitution of identity and the co-evolutionary process whereby a society both changes and is changed by minorities who appear and join the living process of society as a system, a semantic field (Kramer, 1997, 2000b), integration is also a communicative process. Integration is co-integration. In short “both sides” influence each other through difference. They accommodate and converge on a common equilibrium. They co-operate. For an automobile to function each part must be different. A pile of identical windshield wipers does not make a car. The effort to achieve equilibrium will fail if the focus is on eliminating difference by eliminating the identity of one side of a dyad. When that happens communication ceases.

Integration does not mean becoming the same as locals for integration is not homogenization. Integration involves cultural fusion (Kramer, 2000b, 2002, 2003b; Kramer, Callahan, & Zuckerman, 2012) whereby subjects, conscious people, encounter a host cultural form, adopt it, and, in the process, add their accent to it. Host and newcomer co-evolve and co-accommodate until equilibrium, not as a personal psychic phenomenon, but as a shared balance, is achieved. Equilibrium is a moment within a system—a communicative process.

People with disabilities are always already a part of the social system. They are a growing part of the social system. Integration presumes differences, perspectives that persist even as they influence each other and change. However, no matter the valence of how the experience is perceived, in all cases it involves the realization of what Ernst Jentsch (1906 Ger./1995 Eng.) and Sigmund Freud (1919 Ger./2003 Eng.) called the uncanny. The uncanny is the paradoxical experience of something or someone who is both familiar and foreign at the same time.

Iwakuma discusses the unfamiliar and uncanny nature of having a family member suddenly become disabled. She describes the decision-making processes families go through considering whether or not to move closer to medical facilities and how to reorganize space within the home and family schedules. Similar adjustments must be made in educational, financial, and social life. Herein she allows the reader to participate in many conversations she has had with people at various stages of adjustment to severe disability and also with those who live and work and play with them. We see how old friendships and overall social networks give way to new ones and how families cope with new stresses. She also explores the “positive consequences of disability.”

This book is one of the first to explore how people with disabilities communicate with others, and how a visible disability impacts conversation, expectations, values, and emotions. Dr. Iwakuma illuminates for the reader how different kinds of disabilities affect interpersonal contact including anxiety, hesitation, and self-censorship. She explores how communication patterns typically change profoundly after a disabling disease or accident occurs. This has implications for us as we all endure various kinds of abilities and disabilities and we all age. Iwakuma also explores how persons with disabilities shift their field of capacities and emphasize different abilities, a process which often leads to nondisabled persons being surprised and even inspired by the hypertrophic development of certain capacities by an otherwise “disabled” individual.

Finally, Iwakuma explores how persons with disabilities are portrayed in the mass media; typically according to the rhetoric of being a “burden,” and embodying the ethos of “trying harder.” How relationships with friends and family change and become less superficial. What the onset of disability requires is that the group change to accommodate the individual.

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CONTENTS

Preface, <i>Eric M. Kramer</i>	vii
Acknowledgments	xxvii
1 Introduction	1
Current Research Status on Disability in Communication Studies and Neighboring Fields	1
Objectives of the Study	3
2 Related Literature for the Study	5
PWDs as Hidden Minorities in the World	5
Counting Disability	6
Disability Issues and Theories	9
Disability Models	9
Communication with PWDs	14
Goffman's Work	15
Positive Experience of Disability	16
Stage Theories	17
Recovery Process	18
Coping Strategies	19
Personality Theories	19
Karen Yoshida's Pendular Reconstruction of Self and Identity	20
"Adaptation" and "Adjustment"	20
"Embodiment" and "Modern Object": Phenomenology of the Body	21
Research Questions	23