

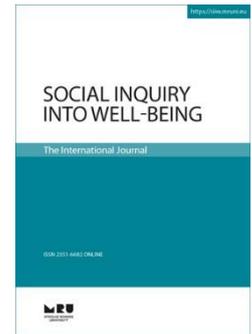


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### Immigrant Identity: Part II

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#### Abstract

In this article first conventional definitions and the major traditional theories of self and identity are summarized. Because immigrant identity is central to other processes they too are summarized. They include the concepts of integration, assimilation, acculturation, adaptation, adjustment, and adoption. It is important and useful to review the distinctions made between integration and assimilation as well as the distinctions between self and identity that exist in the conventional sociology and psychology literature. Too often these concepts are confused or used as synonyms.

Then a final section presents a discussion of contemporary theories of immigrant identity specifically and the widely observed process of enclaving, which manifests in-group and out-group identification. The theories of cultural fusion, semantic field theory, and dimensional accrual and dissociation are summarized and applied to the phenomenon of immigrant identity.

#### The Self

A person who was not very proficient in English once complained that all they wanted was “Piece of brain. Piece of brain.” What they meant to say was “peace of mind.” The self is not identical with the physical brain. Rather, the self is seen as a phenomenon in flux, a never “finished” product. The self is comprised of a constitutive core called consciousness, which synthesizes information. What we call experience or awareness results from that synthesis. The self and consciousness are not the same thing. **Consciousness** is basically awareness. I can be conscious of my self just as I am aware of others. To the constitutive core, or consciousness, all information is equal.

There are basically four kinds of information we are aware of. They are **memorial information** (memory), **affective information** (emotion), **cognitive information** (reason), and **sensational information** (of the senses). All of these kinds of information are actively combined by our consciousness. This process is called **synthesis** and it leads to a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. In other words, consciousness generates an awareness characterized by **synergy**. The synthetically active core continually

recombines old and new information generating minute to minute, what we call reality. This continual stream of information is organized by the synthetic process and constituted into meaningful experience. At the same time, the new information continually reorients the self, which is also a constitutive product of active consciousness. Consciousness as a process is not the same thing as the self.

The **constitutive self** is a never finished product, a multi-dimensional field where various differences continually converge and integrate. Thus, am I short? Short is dependent on tall. Am I rich? Rich is dependent on poor. Am I smart? I cannot be smart without the existence of stupidity. The self is a constantly shifting convergence of traces of differences. If I am standing among a group of professional basketball players, I am short. If I am standing among a group primary school children I am tall.

The self or identity is a constantly shifting product of difference. It may be the case that I am regarded as a very literate even eloquent person in my home country within my primary linguistic community, but then when I enter another linguistic community I suddenly become illiterate and inarticulate. Because personal status and source credibility have very much to do with communicative competence and

eloquence, I may be a high status person at home but a low status person abroad, and this may be very difficult for me to accept (Giles and Johnson, 1981). I may even attribute my sudden change in status on the stupidity and arrogance of the host culture (Jones and Nisbett, 1972). “Don’t they know who I am! How dare they treat me this way!” Well, the fact is that what you are to the host is an illiterate. And as if that is not bad enough, because you cannot communicate well, it is very difficult for the host to get to know the “real you” and vice versa.

**The Onion Model of the Self.** The way the self is organized by the constitutive core consciousness is in layers of identification. When you completely identify with someone or something else that means that you are identical emotionally speaking. For instance, when I see my pet dog, that I love very much, kicked by a mean person, I do not have to stop and think about what is happening. I am instantly hurt and very angry, perhaps also frightened that my dog is injured. In another case, when I watch a beloved family member suffering through a terrible medical crisis, I am very sad and hurt too. Compassion means to suffer with. **Empathy** (Titchener, 1909; Wispe, 1991) means to identify with another or to be identical with another. While empathy means to project oneself into the other’s situation, **sympathy** means to feel for the other but not necessarily to identify with the other.

Psychologists (Gruen and Mendelsohn, 1986; Langer, 1972) have discovered that when individuals feel empathy for another, their responses tend to use the same muscles and reactions as the person or thing they are observing. In the case of sympathy, similar muscles are used but not the same ones. My companions and I are all members of the same club; we are all debaters or swimmers. We share a common name or linguistic label, “tigers,” or in the case of national identity, “Columbian.” I am Columbian, she is Columbian; we are all Columbians. These are clues to my identity.

The structure of self can be metaphorically seen as being like an onion with layers upon layers of identities and psychological involvement or caring. There are inner and outer layers. They each have a psychological distance from my core being. Thus, I cheer for my intramural basketball team against all other teams in my school. But when my team is defeated and our school’s champions play against another school, then I cheer for my school’s champions even though they defeated the team I was on. My allegiance, those who now count as “my” team, shifts to the team that represents my school and myself. My caring shifts. Then if my school is defeated by another team, which then becomes our city champions, again I shift to the/my city champions whom I identify with and cheer for. When *my* city champions are playing against the city champions of another city then I cheer for my city’s champions who previously were my enemies. Then, even if my city champions are defeated by the other city to become the state champions, when our state champion plays another state’s team, I cheer for my state’s team. So it goes in concentric spheres of influence, allegiance, and emotional identity/attachment.

What would unify the planet and make us set aside our differences and animosities would be a common enemy attacking from another planet. Under such circumstances,

my personal, local, regional, and national identities would fade in importance. Instead my planetary identity would emerge as a consequence of the appearance of a group from another planet. Suddenly, it would not be salient to say I am Russian or Nigerian but...we are all humans unified at the level of species consciousness against an extraterrestrial enemy.

If you are from New Jersey and you visit San Francisco, being from New Jersey suddenly becomes a salient aspect of your identity. When you were at home in New Jersey, you did not realize that you were a Jerseyite. Similarly, when you are in the United State, the fact that you are American rarely crosses your mind. But when you encounter a foreigner or if you go outside the US, then being American becomes an important part of your self-awareness. Identity is a consequence of difference, and it affects all aspects of your life.

**Language and the Self.** Culture, as a way of life, becomes an important concept because it powerfully influences how an individual will act and react to 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 they are Greek or Malaysian this expresses the identification that exists between the person and their culture and also very often their language.

Language is important to personal identity. Language, culture, and self are very difficult to separate. Language has always been a very sensitive subject because it involves peoples’ sense of community and identification. In France, the *Academe Francaise* 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. This is called **linguistic relativism** and two of the most important scholars that have promoted this idea are Edward Sapir (1929) and Benjamin Whorf (1940). The fact that a language is much more than just a list of names for objects and actions but a way of organizing cognition and emotion was first suggested in modern times by Wilhelm von Humboldt in (1836 Ger./1999 Eng.). This important insight later inspired Noam Chomsky (1957; 1965) to break with B. F. Skinner’s behaviorism, which reduced explanation of human events to simple correlations between observable behaviors, and launch what has come to be called cognitivism. Not unlike Immanuel Kant (1781 Ger./1999 Eng.), Chomsky argues that the mind is active and the mind is a consciousness structured or programmed by language, which enables not only conception but even certain forms of perception. Hall (1966) puts it well:

*...the principles laid down by Whorf and his fellow linguists in relation to language apply to the rest of human behavior as well – in fact, to all culture. It has long been believed that experience*

*is what all men [sic] share, that it is always possible somehow to bypass language and culture and to refer back to experience in order to reach another human being. This implicit (and often explicit) belief concerning man's [sic] relation to experience was based on the assumptions that, when two human beings are subject to the same "experience," virtually the same data are being fed to the two central nervous systems and that the two brains record similarly... research casts serious doubt on the validity of this assumption, particularly when the cultures are different... different cultures not only speak different languages but, what is possibly more important, inhabit different sensory worlds. Selective screening of sensory data admits some things while filtering out others, so that experience as it is perceived through one set of culturally patterned sensory screens is quite different from experience perceived through another. (p. 2).*

According to Sapir and Whorf and others, perception itself is effected by the language one speaks (**Sapir/Whorf Hypothesis**). Very often languages contain words for phenomena like moods, objects, social roles, and so forth that do not exist in any other language. For instance, Sapir (1929) discovered that the Inuit, a tribe of people who live above the Arctic Circle readily identify over 20 different kinds of snow. Sapir, had difficulty identifying many more than 3 or 4 kinds of snow like wet snow and dry snow. He reasoned that this may in part be due to the upbringing of Inuit children. Over the years they are taught how to identify different kinds of snow and the name of each distinct kind. As Aristotle argued, categorical naming is the essence of knowledge and knowing the different kinds of snow was crucial to the survival of a people who live in a world of snow.

Language is a powerful medium that gives a person a linguistic identity that also binds them with their linguistic community. Language gives a person access to others and a shared tradition. Language makes one a member of a group. Since languages vary, so too do the types of thoughts and mindsets that different people have. That is why translation from one language to another always involves interpretation. That is also why perfect translation is never possible. For instance, many social scientists like to talk about personal efficacy or a person's belief their her "capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to exercise control over events in their lives" (Wood and Bandura, 1989, p. 364). But this concept does not translate into many other languages such as Japanese.

### The Social Construction of the Self

The last element needed to understand the role of the self in cultural action is a discussion of the formation of the self. The structuration of my consciousness is largely a process that I am not, and indeed cannot be initially aware of. The formation of my self, my language, my world, as such, is largely out of my control. We are part of the field of experience. As Michel Foucault (1966 Fr./1970 Eng.)

following the insights of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, it is not so much that I speak a language as it speaks me, meaning that my language structured the world into which I was born and it shaped my 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, 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. We are born into an already complex and operant semantic field. And when an immigrant crosses a boundary, she must contend with a new semantic field which includes not merely spoken language like vocabulary and grammar but also paralinguistics such as when is it appropriate to laugh, when is it appropriate to be silent, is it appropriate to talk about yourself, when are jokes appropriate, what volume should I speak at, how does turn taking work, 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. In the United States what counts as personal efficacy has more to do with being an eloquent speaker, witty, quick, will informed and so forth. Also there are nonverbal codes that are difficult to master when crossing borders.

Because we are taught through daily experience how the world is, and because this form of "teaching" is an integral way of being in the socio-cultural life-world of our local experience, this constitutes the root of cultural differences. A person either is or is not attractive to us, *before* we can even think about it. Martin Heidegger (1962) called this "**prejudgment.**" Gadamer (2006) called it "**prejudice.**" For instance, Gadamer observed that before a critic can begin his or her analysis of a work of art, he or she has already judged that the object is a work of art. We may even question our own judgments and ask ourselves why we think a certain girl is attractive and another is ugly to us. But still, she remains pretty to us despite our reflective efforts to change our own perceptions *after* we have already seen her as pretty. And as Gadamer (1960 Ger./2006 Eng.) has argued, even the Enlightenment's pride in attacking prejudice is itself a prejudice.

Objectivists *value*, value-freedom. They stand within and embody a tradition, which argues that traditionalism is an irrational prejudice. But this virtue is not universal. Standards of judgment and meanings vary across cultures. The judgment that ethnocentrism is bad is not itself a universal value. Most cultures in fact believe that their way of life is the best. Through contact, we may slowly come to appreciate the values, standards, beliefs and prejudices of others. We cannot escape prejudice for prejudice enables us to perceive the world (Gadamer, 2006). We always see the world from our personal point-of-view, which is limited, prejudiced. Evaluation cannot be separated from experience. A bit of data either is or is not of interest. A girl

just is or is not pretty prior to any meta-evaluation of the judgment itself. Perception is always already judgmental.

**Immigrant Identity.** Identity depends on the worldview it presumes. This is a complex phenomenon that includes perceptions and presumptions about gender, race, group membership, caste, age, sectarian membership, tribal and familial membership, political affiliation, educational status, and so forth. Typically identity is part of what Husserl (1913 Ger./1982 Eng.) called the “natural attitude” which means that it is a belief that is so taken for granted that it does not occur to one to question it, that it is “natural” and inherent. One’s identity often seems “normal,” “natural,” utterly “real”; presupposed. Very often it never occurs to someone to question their own identity. However, one moment when identity becomes salient or even problematized and visible is when a person crosses a boundary and becomes Other. This indicates that identity is neither fixed nor wholly inherent but very much a social construct sustained by interaction and communication.

Identity is a meaning. And many meanings, unlike physical objects, can occupy the same time and “place.” Qualitatively, identities are not the same as physical objects. We can have cognitive dissonance. But more important to human beings perhaps, as their behaviors are usually based on what things mean to them, is that we often experience emotional or affective dissonance, which means that we are not sure how we feel about a relationship, event, object, or action (Isa and Kramer, 2003; Kramer, 1997; 2003a; 2003b). For example should I “put down” my old pet? How do I feel about that action, about my old friend, about everything? What is the “right” thing to do?

Identity is a form of difference which means that all identities are co-constitutive phenomena (Nietzsche, 1882 Ger./1974 Eng.; Saussure, 1916 Fr./1977 Eng.; Heidegger, 1957 Ger./1969 Eng.; Kramer, 1993). An identity is the liminal moment between the text of self and the context of one’s semantic ecology (including but not restricted to the environment). For instance, I am never so aware of my American citizenship identity as when I am living abroad. At home it fades into the background of my existence and I may not even own a passport. To an immigrant, identity is very much more a salient aspect of being. To recall Husserl’s (1913 Ger./1982), Max Scheler’s (1921 Ger./1960 Eng.), Alfred Schutz’ (1942; 1970), and Irving Goffman’s (1959) terminology, identity in everyday life or the *Lebenswelt* (life world) can flux between the background and foreground of a person’s being.

Human beings live in a world of meaning. Meanings are not empirical objects. Just as it would not occur to a person to ask what color logic is or how much mathematics weighs or how many meters science is, so too it makes no sense to ask what color a meaning is or how much it weighs. The human life-world is what Kramer (2009; 1997) calls a semantic field, a milieu of countless meanings (including identifying a phenomenon as empirical) that fluxes with time and mobility (social, economic, geographic, political, psychological, and so forth). Meanings influence each other with synergies just as colors and sounds complement and clash. Semantic dissonance is basically a clash of meanings.

Identity is not a thing but a process that is most evident in threshold experiences. It makes no sense to ask what color

my identity is or how long it is or how much it weighs. It is not an empirical object but instead it is, like all of conscious experience, a set of relationships that are in flux, sometimes very much and sometimes less so. As such identity is never a finished product. And in most cases it has no sense of progress or maturation because there is no final goal to “personal growth” or change that would allow one to speak in such measured terms. In order to measure “progress,” in something like personal growth or assimilation, one would have to first posit a final goal. In life, identity-change can be directional as when one is striving to *become* a doctor or a police officer. But overall identity is not directional. Identities are rarely fixed. A person can be disbarred, fired, divorced, become rich, become ill, even change their sex. Even age as a state of mind and social status is not a simple fact or number. And the most “inherent” characteristics of a person such as their “race,” can be redefined by social conditions.

Otherness and marginalization do not always mean being weak but they do evoke from the immigrant greater effort and an increase in ecological complexity which is reflected in an increase in cognitive, and often affective, complexity. For a sojourner the semantic field “thickens,” to borrow a term from Geertz (1973). Everything, even the most mundane processes and objects suddenly seem salient, become more prominent in one’s consciousness. For instance, when this author first moved to Bulgaria just after the end of the Cold War, I was confronted with a world of practices, beliefs, and objects that were new to me. Due to a lack of advertising, downtown Sofia, the capital city, seemed drab compared to all other cities I was familiar with. Even light switches I noticed had a different design than I was used to. For the sojourner, food, clothing, rules for crossing streets, for how to use a public telephone, 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.

When one crosses a boundary and becomes marginalized this means that one is not automatically included via social ritual and scripted behavior (Schutz, 1970). Upon breaching 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 monitor and other-monitoring increases (Gangestad and Snyder, 2000; Snyder, 1974). All of this means that interaction becomes more complex which means that options must be weighed in the moment and cognitive labor increases and with it feelings of frustration. The simplest task, such as mailing a letter or plugging in one’s laptop, can become difficult. For instance, when I was living in Bulgaria, I had to go to the principle of the American School in Sofia and enlist his aid in getting an electric converter that would work and those came from neighboring Greece. So I had to wait for a converter, which weighed about five pounds, to be delivered. In the meantime he lent a precious one to me. So just plugging in my laptop became much more complicated and laborious because it

was not compatible with the larger system. The same could be said of me and many of my beliefs, attitudes, expectations, and value judgments.

After reviewing scores of definitions, Kramer (1997) defines culture as a set of shared beliefs, attitudes, expectations, motivations, values, and behavior patterns. As such, immigrant identity is very much a process of intercultural communication and negotiation.

Since life complexity increases greatly for immigrants it is important to understand the stresses immigrants are under. Kramer (2000b) postulates that all organisms behaviorally converge on a fairly narrow set or repertoire of activities, beliefs and expectations, patterns, even though they may be very capable of a much broader variety of thoughts and behaviors. Humans often settle into what is sometimes called a rut. Kramer (2005) argues that there is a very good and simple reason for this routinization of thinking and behavior. Behavior becomes scripted and routinized in order to save energy for the organism (Kramer, 2005). Too much novelty in a person's life can lead to too much mental and physical stress. Simply put, a person tires rather quickly of too much excitement and so we see the famous "U" curve in studies of culture shock (Oberg, 1960; Kramer, 2000b).

At first for the immigrant all the new surroundings are exciting and fun but typically within a month or so people begin to become home sick and this then can deepen into true clinical depression. If they can stick it out, or are forced to stay, within about a year's time things begin to become normalized and psychological stress alleviates. In sporting terms, even though all the rules and positions may be essentially the same, when a player moves into a higher league, a more challenging environment as when a player moves from the high school ranks to the college ranks and from college into professional competition they are at first overwhelmed, but as their exposure to the "new game" continues, it begins to "slow down" for them as they adjust. A very similar process of adjustment occurs for the immigrant sojourner. This is not, as Gudykunst and Kim (2003) argue, a form of "evolution" because evolution has no purpose or direction but is instead a random process from asteroid impacts to climate change (Gould, 1996; Dawkins, 1996). Gudykunst and Kim (2003) also confuse adaptation with learning which is incorrect. Evolution and adaptation have no transcending purpose, no design, no final goal, and no progress. This is not the case with immigrants who wish to achieve greater economic, linguistic, and cultural integration.

The process of settling in is one of adjustment (not "psychic evolution") to the predominant culture an immigrant finds herself in. The acculturation and adjustment process is also not a zero-sum process as Gudykunst and Kim (2003) argue whereby a sojourner or newcomer "adapts" to her new circumstances only to the extent that she "unlearns" her old identity and ways, what Gudykunst and Kim call willful "deculturation" (see pp. 358-364). Rather, according to Kramer (2000b) the newcomer learns new ways that are appropriate in her new circumstance, which involves added to her repertoire of cultural literacy and communication competencies. If and when she "goes home" she has not forgotten how to behave "back there," simply as a function of learning how to get

along in her adopted homeland. Gudykunst and Kim posit a process that is variable analytic in style so that the more one adapts to a new homeland the more one must unlearn one's old identity. This variable analytical style of thinking is inappropriate to the reality of immigrant adjustment. Empirical evidence proves that this simply is not how a newcomer adjusts to her new circumstances (Croucher, 2009; Iwakuma, forthcoming 2010). She learns new ways without having to "unlearn" her old identity and ways; without having to "deculturize" herself as Gudykunst and Kim claim.

Culture shock is characterized by a sense that living is difficult. When interaction is effortful because it is not ordinary or routine, it becomes laborious and so it is completely expected that an immigrant facing this sort of struggle to communicate and navigate an unfamiliar semantic field, may well seek to self-segregate or keep to herself, at least part of the time in order to rest and integrate all the new experiences she is encountering. This behavior is what Kramer (forthcoming) calls enclaving.

### The Enclave

Volunteerism is less the case with refugee identity. But in the case of both the refugee and the immigrant, we notice that the sojourner often seeks refuge among their "own kind" in conversations of "their" language and may seek to physically and psychologically withdraw from time-to-time to essentially rest and make sense in their own fashion of all the new experiences they are being exposed to. This involves personal time and space, in a word territoriality. All animals need a sense of territory where they feel safe and in control (Hall, 1966; Morris, 1969). Humans are the same. When a person cannot retreat into a time and space they control then we see a breakdown in their psychology and their patterns of behavior (Calhoun, 1983; Morris, 1969).

The enclave is an essential and common aspect of immigrant identity. Enclave implies membership; belonging. An enclave is a place of cooperation where behavior can run more on subconscious scripted patterns. The world is more implicit than explicit, less problematical. Enclaving is not an economic process but rather a psycho-cultural process that can have economic consequences as when Chinese open a Chinese language bank in China town. Whether one is speaking of the relatively poor Latino barrios of Los Angeles or the enclave of Chinese immigrants in wealthy Flushing, New York, the felt need to retreat into the familiar is the same. The enclave is not merely space. It is a place inscribed with signification. It is in the simplest terms a territorial phenomenon and like all territoriality, such places often seem to outsiders insular and aggressively defended. The irony here is that the immigrant may well feel that the local folk aggressively defend the larger society from difference. It has to do with a sense of belonging. This in essence means identity and co-ownership. This is my neighborhood and I belong to it. This is my "mother tongue" and I belong to it.

Enclaving may take the form of refuge and retreat into a familiar cuisine, a familiar style of music, movies and television from the home culture, spending time visiting Internet websites created and maintained by people from the

home culture, and so forth. For isolated individuals such as many foreign students, their dorm room may be their enclave and their favorite Internet web sites their destinations of escape from a strange world. Because life for the immigrant is complicated and stressful, enclaving is an attempt to retreat from time to time into a comfort zone of the familiar where one can relax from being constantly vigilant and also feel reconnected with their home world. The relative certainty of the familiar helps to alleviate anxiety (Berger and Calabresse, 1975). As Nietzsche (1882 Ger./1974 Eng.) noted, to be familiar with something means to “know” it. Otherness implies uncertainty, mystery, and this can lead to a feeling of anxiety about “the stranger” on both sides of the relationship. The best way to reduce that anxiety is to become familiar with each other.

When Otherness as a function of differentiation occurs, communication patterns shift making issues like trust, confidence, and self-efficacy salient. When one crosses a boundary one becomes either a minority or a majority as such. One becomes a “member,” either of an “in-group” or “out-group” as such, and this sense of differentiation depends on the context. In fact a person is a member of both an in-group and an out-group at the same time depending on perspective. As soon as one identifies with an in-group, out-groups are implied.

Identity is given through difference (Saussure, 1916 Fr./1977 Eng.; Heidegger, 1957 Ger./1969 Eng.). Identity is a co-constituted phenomenon (Kramer, 1993). Identity is thus, at least in part, a social construct (Schutz, 1953; Schutz and Luckmann, 1959 Ger./1973 Eng.; Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Goffman, 1959; Garfinkel, 1964/1972). This shifting aspect of identity increases with mobility. It is co-evolutionary, co-constitutive in nature.

The shifting quality of identity occurs as both a mundane aspect of human reality and sometimes as an extra-ordinary occurrence. It is rooted in the temporal nature of our being. Time, as Husserl (1917 Ger./1964 Eng.) pointed out in his study *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, which Heidegger was editing and borrowing from as he wrote his own *magnum opus, Being and Time*, which in turn has had a profound influence on the work of Jacques Derrida (1967 Fr./1980 Eng.; 1972 Fr./1981 Eng.) with his emphasis on difference, time is of the essence of human awareness including self-awareness and identity.

Changes in identity are constant but are most pronounced in threshold experiences. It occurs, for instance, when someone “middle aged” comes upon a group of teenagers and becomes “middle-aged” and “inappropriate” as such, or when one enters a strange temple, or when one finds herself in the “wrong” neighborhood,” or when a foreigner joins one’s work team, or when an authority such as a high level boss sits down to have lunch with a crew of laborers. 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.

For instance, when a high level authority suddenly appears in a factory cafeteria where he rarely ventures and sits down with a work crew to “mingle” and “connect,” often

the discourse that constitutes the crew as a group suddenly stops due to intimidation and suspicion. The manager may not get the sort of candid feedback he hoped for due to his very presence. So the anonymous “suggestion box” often works better at facilitating communication.

### Dependency

Diplomacy, the mediation of problem situations, takes many channels. For this reason, immigrants who have difficulties in navigating their newly adopted world often identify and cling to anyone who comes from their home but who has more experience and competence. Usually it is a more established “homey” who immigrated earlier and knows more about the host environment. This clinging can become problematic. Often the newcomer’s reliance on an oldcomer works well at first but if the dependency relationship continues for very long the oldcomer will seek to escape the relationship. This avoidance behavior can take many forms ranging from just not returning phone calls to a blunt face-to-face confrontation where the oldcomer tells the newcomer that they can no longer take care of them. Initially the oldcomer may be happy to show the newcomer once or twice how to sign up for utilities and pay bills, how to enroll in school, give them rides for groceries, get them started in the immigration and naturalization process, help them get an apartment and so forth but usually within a few months such dependency starts to strain the relationship. Such a dyad used for enclaving has limited utility. This is where less casual professionals in organizations and institutions such as court interpreters, ombudsmen, human relations negotiators, and social services workers can become great helpers to the immigrant. As professionals they can remain fairly anonymous while at the same time offering needed assistance to the immigrant with daily chores and unusual problems such as health care and legal predicaments. They can act as midwives to the birth of the immigrant’s new identity.

### Co-Constitutional and Co-Evolutionary Identity Formation

Difference, Otherness, is the essence of identity. Identity is invisible without the existence of Otherness. Emotions, attitudes, and evaluations such as pride and prejudice are fundamentally linked to the sense of Otherness in all its manifestations including inclusion and exclusion. Identity is essentially a perspective and the bias of perspective is never more apparent than when confronted with difference. But as Nietzsche (1882 Ger./1974 Eng.) and Gadamer (1960 Ger./2006 Eng.) point out, perspectivism is not a bad thing as one might presume if one ironically takes the Enlightenment perspective that presents a powerful bias against prejudice and “subjectivism.” As Nietzsche and Gadamer demonstrate, perspective, bias, in a word subjectivity, is a necessary condition for any perception and knowledge to exist. Knowledge is another word for being familiar with a thing. Only subjects can be “familiar” and know. Objects do not know. The more familiar you become with a task, situation, event, or thing, the better you are said to know it. And the more you know of a host culture the less

anxious about it you are likely to be. Hence, culture shock slowly eases over time.

This is the case with an immigrant as he or she integrates into a host society. But integration here does not mean becoming the same as locals for integration is not homogenization. Integration involves cultural fusion (Kramer, 2000b; 2002; 2003b) whereby subjects, conscious people encounter a host cultural form adopt it and, in the process, add their accent to it. Examples from multicultural societies are innumerable. A few are curry hamburgers, playing jazz with traditional Japanese instruments, adding Polynesian warrior dances to an American college football pregame routine, and so forth. Influence is not a bad thing. Immigrants influence the societies into which they move and are also influenced by those societies. They are consciousness structures or emotional and cognitive systems that meet and mix (Gebser, 1949 Ger./1985 Eng.). While 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 co-evolutionary processes whereby the host culture *and* the sojourner communicate – exchange, interpret and borrow some of each other’s ways (Kramer, 2000b; 2002; 2003b).

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 Nietzsche and later Heidegger, that the human condition is fundamentally a process of interpretation, 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. And 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 but 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.

Given the fundamental tenet of perspectivism in hermeneutics, which is presumed by the theory of cultural fusion, the theory of intercultural adaptation put forth by Gudykunst and Kim (2003) is utterly unworkable; false. From the point-of-view of cultural fusion theory and the empirical studies that back it up (Croucher, 2009; Iwakuma, forthcoming 2014; Jafri, 2008) the basic advice put forth by Gudykunst and Kim (2003) that if an immigrant wishes to be “mature,” “well adjusted,” “functionally fit,” “communicatively competent,” “sane,” “integrated,” they must willfully “unlearn” and “deculturize” themselves, to “disintegrate” psychologically and erase their original identity so that they may be reintegrated as a better more “appropriate” person, is fundamentally and necessarily false. Given the empirical data of large scale studies noted above,

the immigrant or refugee sojourner does not have to disintegrate their own original self-identity to be “successful” in their adopted land. In fact, and very much the opposite, the immigrant must rely on the abilities and personal assets that they bring to the new situation in order to make any sense of it and to be able to learn and integrate new ways.

### Co-Integration

At the social level, integration is really co-integration. Communication is not a one-way process. While what Gudykunst and Kim (2003) call “conformity pressure” is exerted one-way on to minority immigrants by the numerical majority of the host population is real, it is not, and cannot completely overwhelm the immigrant’s mind. If it did they would be like an erased computer memory, having no operating system left with which to translate and interpret (make sense of) their new world even if and even though that interpretation must be accented. Like the co-constitution of identity and the co-evolutionary process whereby a society both changes and is changed by immigrants who move in joining 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.

Conformity pressure exists on “both sides” or in both directions. And the intensity of the pressure cannot, as Gudykunst and Kim (2003) argue, be reduced to simple quantification. A single missionary entering a village can have tremendous influence.

The immigrant is always already a part of the psychosocial system into which they move. But according to the theoretical construct of Gudykunst and Kim’s intercultural adaptation theory, the immigrant adds nothing to the system but must “progress” in and “upward-forward” direction toward the “mainstream” host culture or fail. It is a neo-Spencerian social Darwinian theory that justifies forced conformity applied by an official national culture to all newcomers (Kramer, 2000b; 2000c).

The immigrant Other is always already a part of the social system into which they move. Integration presumes differences, perspectives that persist even as they influence each other and change. The perspectives that are manifest hermeneutic horizons do the integrating. Accent in ways of talking, walking, dancing, arguing, doing friendship and so forth are inevitable. Diversity is the antidote to routinized and simplified cognition -- boredom. Boredom is a natural state for human beings and they tend to seek to avoid it. Too much boredom due to a lack of diversity in experience, can easily lead to depression. Multicultural boarder zones such as ports are very dynamic places to live and tend to attract large populations of people in part because they are stimulating environments that offer not just economic opportunity but stimulus opportunity. In short, Otherness is stimulating. This is not to say that the presence of Otherness does not sometimes lead to conflict. But the theory of cultural fusion, unlike Gudykunst and Kim’s theory of intercultural adaptation does not make value judgments about which kinds of behavior and interaction are good and bad. While they present a plan of social and psychological

engineering calling it a social scientific theory, the theory of cultural fusion does not posit a utopian goal such as the elimination of all conflict or misunderstanding<sup>11</sup>.

All perception, all knowledge is meaningful and useful not in spite of, but because of its limited scope. For instance, a telescope has a prejudice a perspective built into its very structure so that it is useless for studying microbes. But this does not invalidate the perspective that a telescope can render. Its use-value, its validity is conditional. It has a limited hermeneutic horizon. A microscope is “better” for studying microbes than a telescope. However, “better” depends on context, on interest and on the relationship between the knower and the known. The built in limitations of a telescope make it “better” for studying stars than a microscope – if that is one’s interest.

The point is that perspective essentially involves bias, limitation, prejudice but such prejudice not only blinds one to some realities while it also enables one to see others. And identity is comprised of the interaction of various perspectives within the process of social intercourse. Perspective is inescapable. It is also essential to our ability to know anything at all even as it blinds us to some things. When one thing comes into focus, others go out of focus. This is the nature of knowing and knowing is based on differentiation, the ability to identify things as distinct from one another, to be able to define them by recognizing boundaries. To know means to fragment. Precision in knowing is based on fragmentation (Kramer, 1997; 2005). The greater the fragmentation of a field the more precise our knowing. So we say that a clock that measures seconds rather than just minutes is more precise than a clock that cannot measure “down to” the discrete, identifiable, knowable second.

To be an immigrant, to be identified as such and to see oneself that way is not an empirical phenomenon. Rather, it is a relationship that has no color or weight. It is a meaning that varies as the foreground and background of experience shifts. 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 the less individuals are identifiable as unique. The moment a person steps into a group that 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 (Kramer, 1993; 1997) is complex and ever-present. Being dependent on difference for its very existence, identity changes as differences change.

For instance the immigrant experience and sense of identity is different for a French physician from Paris moving to Los Angeles as compared to a Naga tribesman from Northern Myanmar. Also the experience of being an immigrant is different for a Parisian physician moving to Los Angeles as compared to rural Ethiopia. In fact our Parisian doctor will have a different sense of self if she moves from urban Paris to a rural French village.

For our purposes, it is postulated that the various combinations of such different structures leads to different configurations of identity including the identity of sojourners between and among the different cultures and cultural families or civilizations. Identity is a fluid phenomenon. It is a momentary nexus of meanings and expectations that influence human behavior and ways of communicating and interacting. While it often seems to be the most permanent, the most “basic” and “inherent” quality of things, identity is actually an emergent phenomenon. And yet, this fact itself is transcendent. Despite the endless adumbrations of immigrant identity, the phenomenological analysis indicates that all immigrants share an essential experience, which is Otherness. The quality of this experience can be pleasant or unpleasant, satisfying or unsatisfying, friendly or unfriendly.

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. The immigrant to the host and the host to the immigrant can very well seem uncanny. The strangeness of difference can be fascinating and/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.

## Conclusion

Everyone has a unique perception of the world. This perception is based on culture, experience, personality, and identity. The self is the culminating result of the intersection of these phenomena. It is important to note that the self is never finished. We change, are changed, and through our influence promote change in others. This difference in us, our surroundings and others, is what makes life so interesting. We want to travel. We want to learn new things, have different experiences. These diverse encounters invigorate us. They make us more than what we were, and we like that.

(p. 384) and should be eliminated, and also presumes to know not only human nature but what is best about the future of all humans, which is basically to “rise above the hidden forces of culture” (p. 385) to generate what this author has called a global monoculture elsewhere (Kramer, 2003a). Of course the elimination of culture would also eliminate human life as we know it and Gudykunst and Kim propose exactly that.

<sup>1</sup> See Gudykunst and Kim’s (2003) lengthy plan to include public schools in an effort to create “intercultural persons” with the right kind of personality traits such as flexibility and “open-mindedness” (pp. 369-370) to make a better world where cultural differences are ultimately eliminated. To this author this is a hopelessly idealistic and in some ways disconcerting plan of action which presumes that culture categorically is a “defilement”

And this is probably why you are reading this text—to gain some understanding of how to most effectively manage intercultural encounters. This text will give you some of that but this is not its aim or ultimate purpose. The best way to develop a multicultural mindset is to understand how you and others make sense of the lifeworld. This is the ultimate

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<sup>2</sup> The translator for Foucault's masterpiece *Les mots et les choses (The Order of Things)* is not listed. In total agreement with his anger, I quote here George Steiner, *The New York Times* book reviewer from February 28, 1971, of the translator, "whom, with maddening

disregard for human effort and responsibility, the publisher leaves anonymous." Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/books/00/12/17/specials/foucault-order.html>

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