

tion theory, without making any choice or stating any preference for a specific theoretical approach.

In comparison to for instance Rosengren's *Communication: An Introduction* (2000, Sage) McQuail's book offers very little room for discussion among communication scholars about the merit of one theoretical approach above the others. In that sense the book is not, as the new title suggests 'McQuail's Mass Communication Theory'. But it certainly is McQuail's Mass Communication Theory in the sense that it is an impressive and successful legacy of a lifelong career in teaching, writing and introducing students to the vast and ever developing field of mass communication theory.

References

Rosengren, K.E. (2000). *Communication. An Introduction*. London: Sage

Department of Communication
University of Nijmegen

Ed Hollander

Kim, Y. Y. (2001). *Becoming intercultural. An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN 0-8039-4488-8 (321 pp.)

In *Becoming Intercultural*, Young Yun Kim presents an integrative theory of the process of cross-cultural adaptation, bringing together various disciplinary perspectives and approaches to the phenomenon. This integrative theory has to form a more comprehensive and general system of description and explanation by identifying and formulating the uniformity and regularity in what are infinitely varied individual experiences of cross-cultural adaptation.

The interdisciplinary integration has been worked out through the use of constructs that are broad and general enough to represent various well known but narrower concepts (cf. chapter 2, Existing Approaches to Cross-Cultural Adaptation). Thus, the term *strangers* (not *immigrants*, *expatriates*, *sojourners*, *refugees*) represents all individuals who find themselves in a cultural or subcultural milieu for varied time periods under varied circumstances. Likewise, the concept of *cross-cultural adaptation* incorporates a number of other more restrictive concepts, such as *acculturation*, *psychological adjustment*, *assimilation*, and *integration*.

Given these concepts, the domain of the theory is broad, limited by three boundary conditions (chapter 3, Organizing Principles):

- The strangers have had a primary socialization in one culture or sub-culture and have moved into a different and unfamiliar culture/sub-culture.
- The strangers are at least minimally dependent on the host environment for meeting their personal and social needs.
- The strangers are at least minimally engaged in firsthand communication experiences with the host environment.

The theory is grounded in three assumptions about the nature of human adaptation (chapter 3). The first assumption characterizes cross-cultural adaptation not as a distinct phenomenon but as a fundamental life activity of all humans to adapt to environmental challenges. Driving this activity is the give-and-take of communication, i. e., assumption two, which, over time, brings about a qualitative transformation of the individual, i. e., assumption three.

Based on these three assumptions Kim sees cross-cultural adaptation as a process of psychic evolution toward increased functional fitness for the host environment and psychological health, as well as increased intercultural identity (chapter 4, *The Process of Cross-Cultural Adaptation*). Central to this process is the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic, which is characterized by opposing forces like engagement – disengagement, and acculturation – deculturation.

Within this approach Kim seeks to reconcile opposing and dividing views of cross-cultural adaptation. The stress-adaptation-growth dynamic acknowledges cross-cultural adaptation as problematic in nature as well as the more positive view of such adaptation that emphasizes the aspects of learning and growth. The theory also incorporates both assimilationist and pluralist views in emphasizing that both new cultural learning (acculturation) and unlearning (deculturation) is implied in cross-cultural adaptation. Further, the two divergent values of acculturation and deculturation have been reconciled by treating them both as important environmental conditions reflected in the receptivity and conformity pressure the host environment exerts on strangers and the overall strength of their ethnic group on the other hand.

Against this background Kim structures her theory around six dimensions of constructs (chapter 5, *The Structure of Cross-Cultural Adaptation*). The structural model depicts the interdependent relationships among the constructs and serves as an explanation for the differential rates at which the adaptation process unfolds over time.

Dimension 1, *personal communication*, is based on the construct of ‘host communication competence’ that serves as the driving force pushing the individual stranger along the adaptation process. Dimension 2 is *host social communication* consisting of the constructs of ‘host interper-

sonal communication' and 'host mass communication' which are seen as inseparably linked with 'host communication competence'. At the same time, dimension 3, *ethnic social communication* with its constructs of 'ethnic interpersonal' and 'ethnic mass communication' adds complexity by impeding long term adaptation to the host environment. The degree of 'host receptivity', 'host conformity pressure', and the stranger's 'ethnic group strength', the three constructs of dimension 4, *environment*, are interfacing with the communication dimensions. Dimension 5, the *stranger's own predisposition*, is also affecting his adaptation process. The three factors underlying this dimension are 'preparedness' for life in the host environment, the degree of the stranger's 'ethnic proximity' to the dominant ethnicity of the host environment, and the degree of openness, strength, and positivity in his 'personality'. Together, these five dimensions influence dimension 6, *intercultural transformation*, i.e. internal changes embodied in increased 'functional fitness', 'psychological health', and 'intercultural identity'.

Chapters 6 through 10 discuss a number of empirical indicators for each construct. Indicators for 'host communication competence', for example, include knowledge of the host communication system (language, verbal and nonverbal patterns, communication rules), cognitive complexity (differentiation, integration, flexibility), affective co-orientation (affirmative attitude, aesthetic participation), and operational proficiency (verbal, nonverbal, interactional). Likewise, 'host receptivity' can be indicated by positive attitudes towards strangers, or the use of inclusive communication messages, while 'intercultural identity' can be assessed using the individualization and universalization of identity as opposed to seeing oneself and others on the basis of social stereotypes.

In chapter 11, Research Considerations, Kim discusses four research issues for the design and implementation of research in correspondence with her theoretical conception of cross-cultural adaptation, i.e., previously neglected constructs, such as intercultural identity, host receptivity, or ethnic group strength. These constructs, which have been under-investigated so far, may broaden the conceptual base of research to all the dimensions of cross-cultural adaptation, the need for longitudinal research, and, finally, methodological integration reflecting both emic and etic methodological perspectives.

Practical Insights, chapter 12, conclude the book.

Becoming Intercultural is a good book, and most of all it is a very inspiring book. Kim depicts a clear and almost complete picture of a very complex process, the cross-cultural adaptation of an individual who leaves his milieu and who has to cope with the challenges of the new host environment leading to some degree of intercultural transformation. The author presents an abundance of information from social, psychological,

and communication research as well as from nonscientific resources like diaries and literary books in an integrative manner. In this way she has managed to write a book that is highly stimulating for researchers as well as for other students of cross-cultural adaptation.

Due to the nature and the objectives of the book, its concepts and constructs remain quite general but it is precisely this factor that can challenge researchers from various disciplines to further research and to evaluate and interpret their results within the framework of Kim's structural model of cross-cultural adaptation.

Although not a textbook, *Becoming Intercultural* is not only useful for researchers. Kim discusses cross-cultural adaptation without falling back into simplistic and fruitless dichotomies like individual vs. community processes, assimilation vs. maintenance of ethnicity, or sojourners vs. (long term) immigrants, to name but a few. Kim's general approach of cross-cultural adaptation as an evolutionary process in the individual, influenced by various personal and community factors is a very useful one for all people engaged in the ongoing debate on cross-cultural processes.

Finally, it is interesting to note Kim's idealistic views on cross-cultural adaptation as an emergence of intercultural personhood, although not politically motivated. In Kim's view the process of becoming intercultural is not one of having to replace one culture with another. It is, instead, a 'working through' of all cultural experiences so as to create new constructs. In this respect it is worth to cite Kim's own almost Homeric simile:

"Like hikers climbing a high mountain who finally see that all paths below ultimately lead to the same summit, with each path presenting unique scenery, becoming intercultural is a gradual process of freeing one's mind from an exclusive parochial viewpoint so as to attain a greater perspective on the inclusive whole." (p. 193).

Let's hope much more future research on cross-cultural adaptation is going to reveal an increasing amount of paths leading to the summit of intercultural personhood.

Department of Business Communication
University of Nijmegen

Herman Giesbers