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2015

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#### Recommended Citation

Dunaetz, D. R. (2015). Three models of acculturation: Applications for developing a church planting strategy among diaspora populations. In E. Wan & M. Pocock (Eds.), *Diaspora missiology* (pp. 129-145). Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library.

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# Three Models of Acculturation: Applications for Developing a Church Planting Strategy among Diaspora Populations

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**Abstract:** Cross-cultural church planters often work with individuals from several cultures or with immigrants from one specific culture. These church planters can develop a more effective church planting strategy by understanding three models of acculturation, the process of how individuals respond and change when coming into contact with a new culture. The melting-pot one dimensional model describes how immigrants acculturate as time progresses, from one generation to another. The two dimensional acculturation strategies model describes what can be expected to happen to members of a diaspora population due to their views of both their host and home cultures. The social identity model of acculturation predicts immigrants' desire to be member of a group based on what group membership contributes to their identity. All three models can be used to help choose an appropriate church planting strategy according to the context.

Cross-cultural church planters in urban settings may find choosing a target audience to be far more complex than they had foreseen. They may imagine themselves planting a church that will reach the unreached indigenous population. But the majority of large cities in the world are multicultural, filled with peoples having different languages, behaviors, and values. It is quite possible that when these church planting missionaries come into contact with members of these diverse cultures, they find them to be just as needy as the majority culture and without a viable

church in their city or region. It is also possible that these immigrants will be more open to developing friendships and to studying the Bible with the missionaries than are members of the host culture.

If immigrants are part of the initial group that the missionary hopes will eventually become a self-supporting church, there are several paths that such a group may take on its way to maturity. One option would be for the missionaries to focus on using the national culture, taking care to avoid introducing any cultural elements into the programs

which would be more characteristic of the immigrant cultures than the national cultural. Alternately, the missionaries could decide to focus on the culture which is the most open to the gospel, creating a diaspora church that will be attractive primarily to members of the new target culture. Yet another option would be trying to plant a multicultural church, rather than a monocultural one, where church members find their unity not in their culture of origin, but in the Gospel, in their common experiences of life in the city, and perhaps in a similar socio-economic level. Such a church may remain multi-cultural indefinitely, but the missionaries might find that growth is fastest among members of one of the cultures, resulting in a multi-cultural church dominated by one culture, or even in a monocultural church if members of other cultures no longer feel comfortable in the community.

The missionaries' strategy will be greatly influenced by their goal. Is their goal to plant a church among a specific people, essentially ignoring members of other cultures? Or is their goal to reach the most people for Christ possible in the given context? The purpose of this study is to help pioneer church planters understand how diaspora populations acculturate to their host culture. This will then allow church planters to more effectively design and implement a church planting strategy appropriate to their situation.

### **Acculturation**

When members of one culture move into another culture, many changes occur. On the individual level, members of both cultures are influenced by members of the other culture. On the group level, both cultures adapt to the

presence of the other culture. This process of change is known as *acculturation* (Berry, 2005; Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 2002; Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). This is an important concept for the cross cultural church planter working with diaspora communities. To minister effectively, the church planter must not only understand the culture of the diaspora community, the culture of the host country, and the values of the individuals with whom he or she works, but also how both of the cultures have mutually influenced and continue to mutually influence each other, and even more importantly, how the individual members of the nascent church are changing because of their interaction with the host culture.

Acculturation must be distinguished from both *enculturation*, the process by which people learn their first culture, and *assimilation*, the process of adopting a new culture as one's own while losing the beliefs and behaviors associated with one's original culture (Berry, et al., 2002). Whereas enculturation occurs primarily in a familial context, acculturation occurs when a person has regular contact with members of another culture. One possible outcome of acculturation is assimilation, but, as we will see, there are other possible outcomes as well.

The effects of acculturation can be observed at both the group and individual levels. Because cross-cultural church planters are typically more concerned about influencing individuals than cultures, the focus in this study is on acculturation that occurs at the individual level, also known as *psychological acculturation* (Graves, 1967). Psychological acculturation occurs both in

members of the immigrant or minority culture and in members of the host or majority culture. However, the effects are usually far stronger in the members of the immigrant or minority culture. Although some cross-cultural church planting missionaries may work with minority peoples who are not immigrants (e.g., Amerindians or other indigenous peoples), cross-cultural church planters working with diaspora populations will more commonly be working with people who have immigrated to their country of residence sometime after World War II. The psychological acculturation of immigrants will thus be the focus of this study.

Many factors influence what the acculturation of immigrants will look like. The common beliefs and social norms of the home culture are initial factors that influence acculturation. The beliefs and norms of the host culture will interact with those of the home culture to be another major source of influence. Of special importance are the host culture's beliefs about how immigrants should acculturate. On the individual level, the reasons for immigration will exert an influence on how each person acculturates. Those who willingly immigrated for economic reasons will choose an approach to acculturation that is different from those who are refugees, even if both come from the same home culture into the same host culture. Those who immigrate as adults will acculturate differently than those who immigrate as children or those who are born in the host country to parents (or grand-parents) of first generation immigrants. We will examine three models of acculturation (a one dimensional model, a two dimensional model, and the social identity model) to better understand the factors that influence the behavior, the

emotional well-being, and the relationships of members of a diaspora community.

Although these models will be applied to the immigrants with whom cross-cultural church planters work, it can be noted that these models also describe what the church-planters themselves may experience on a personal level. Acculturation occurs for missionaries as well as for immigrants. Although the painful experiences of adapting to a new culture may be seen as a necessary evil to become an effective cross-cultural worker, they are the same difficulties as immigrants experience; these common experiences can serve as bonds to build deeper relationships with members of the immigrant community, enabling the missionary to be a more effective minister of the Gospel.

### **The Melting Pot One-Dimensional Model**

In the melting pot model, immigrants enter a new culture with relatively little knowledge of it. Gradually, over a period of years or generations, they master the new culture and eventually assimilate into it, no longer identifiable as foreigners. An early version of this model was used by University of Chicago sociologists in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which included three stages that immigrants experience (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Persons, 1987): contact with the new culture, accommodation to the new culture, and assimilation into the new culture. Contact with the new culture occurs when the immigrant arrives in the new country and begins to interact with members of the host culture. This results in the possibility of conflict because of the different expectations of appropriate

behavior. To reduce the likelihood of conflict, members of the immigrant community make accommodations to the host culture, slowly accepting the social norms of the host culture. This eventually leads to assimilation where the behavior and attitudes of the immigrant community become indistinguishable from those of the host culture.

### **Applications for Church Planting**

This simple, straight forward model of assimilation described the 19<sup>th</sup> century assimilation of European immigrants into American culture very well, and continues to be useful to describe the experiences of many immigrants living in Western countries today (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). The assimilation of immigrants often takes three or four generations (McIntosh & McMahan, 2012; Phinney, 1990). The implications of this model for church planting are clear. The first generation of immigrants will be much more at ease in their home culture; the establishment of an ethnic church will be especially attractive to the first generation. The second generation tends to be bicultural and capable of fully functioning in both cultures; they will see less need of a church that maintains the culture of their parents, and may even prefer a church that is more in touch with the dominant culture. By the third generation, there are few traces of the original culture and churches using this original culture will not be attractive. This means that each generation of a diaspora culture can be best reached by a different type of church. It also means that churches which are planted among first generation immigrants using their home culture need to be prepared to change as the church matures and leadership passes onto the second and third generation. A church

planter should prepare a young diaspora church for this change long before the change is necessary, incorporating the expectation of cultural metamorphosis into the church's fundamental values and vision. This can reduce the likelihood of the older generation eventually refusing to let go of the cultural elements that are important to them but which are no longer meaningful to the younger generation.

Building upon this simple model, Redfield and colleagues (1936) added the idea that it's not only the immigrant community that changes when coming into contact with the host community, but the host community also changes as it adopts elements of the immigrants' culture (e.g. food, music, or literature). So, just as young diaspora churches need to be prepared to face cultural change as the church matures, young churches of the dominant culture need to be prepared to change as well, especially if they successfully reach out to and evangelize an immigrant community. These changes will come from both outside the church (from the dominant culture as it adapts to the immigrant culture) and from within the church as immigrants bring elements of their own culture into it. Thus all young churches in multi-cultural contexts need to be prepared for change, regardless of the initial culture which defines the church's identity when it is first planted.

### **Factors Influencing Assimilation**

"It takes three generations for immigrants to assimilate" is a simplistic, but convenient, rule of thumb. However, there is much variation in the time necessary to assimilate (if, in fact, the immigrants assimilate which, as we will see later, is not always the case) due to differences in individuals and cultures. Schermerhorn (1978) has argued that the

movement toward assimilation depends on the centripetal and centrifugal tendencies of both the immigrant culture and the host culture. The immigrants' centripetal tendencies push them to assimilation. These centripetal tendencies may be part of the immigrants' culture, such as valuing the music and literature of the host culture more than those of their home culture or a strong belief that immigrants should adapt to the host culture. In contrast, the immigrants' centrifugal tendencies motivate them to preserve their lifestyle and culture, such as a belief that their language or religion is superior to the host culture's. Similarly, the host culture has unique centripetal tendencies (that encourage assimilation of the immigrants) and centrifugal tendencies (that resist assimilation of immigrants) for immigrants of each culture depending on the host culture's attitude toward the immigrant culture.

This means that church planters need to be aware of the centripetal and centrifugal tendencies of both the immigrant and host culture. If in both cultures, the centripetal forces are dominant, the need for an ethnically homogenous church with a strong commitment to the immigrant culture will be lower than if the centrifugal forces are dominant. For example, a church planter in Europe might want to start a church that reaches the Arab Muslim diaspora community. However the core group of the nascent church might be more concerned about integrating into European culture than preserving their own culture; in addition the Europeans of the dominant culture may also want them to integrate. In a case like this, a young church might be more attractive to the Arab Muslim community if it adopts the host culture in Europe as its reference point rather than trying to preserve Arab

culture.

In this one dimensional model of acculturation, the acculturation of an individual may be measured by asking them about their preferences for cultural elements from their host culture relative to those from the culture of origin (Ryder, et al., 2000; Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987). These cultural elements may include ethnicity of friends, the language(s) they use, the foods they eat, their ethnic identity, their knowledge of history, and their culturally based beliefs and values. Ryder and colleagues (2000) from the University of British Columbia studied the characteristics of immigrants who have the highest level of acculturation (which implies assimilation into Western cultures in this one dimensional model). Unsurprisingly, the amount of time and the percentage of one's life spent in Western culture both predicted higher levels of acculturation. Those who have been in the West longer and those who came to the West at a younger age tend to adopt more Western cultural elements than those who came more recently or at an older age. Ryder also found that the time spent in the Western educational system also predicts acculturation beyond the amount of time spent in the West and the age at which one immigrated. In addition, immigrants who were more extraverted, who were more open minded and open to new experiences, or who suffered from fewer psychological problems (e.g., anxiety or depression) experienced higher levels of acculturation.

Church planters should note that the common characteristics of potential leaders in a young diaspora church (education, extraversion, open-mindedness, and emotional stability) might push these leaders to acculturate more quickly than the majority of

members of the diaspora community. This can be a source of tension that the church planter must handle carefully. The church planter might want to focus on developing leadership from among the young, dynamic, Westernized youth. However, the majority of the diaspora community may be more comfortable with the more traditional leadership of the older generation. A balance must be found with representatives of both ends of the spectrum playing a role in church leadership.

Although this simple one-dimensional model of acculturation is quite useful, a more sophisticated, two dimensional model will be able to better account for the variety of acculturation experiences that members of diaspora communities encounter.

### **The Two Dimensional Model of Acculturation Strategies**

John Berry of Queen's University, Ontario, observed that assimilation is not the goal of all immigrants who are experiencing acculturation (Berry, 2001, 2005; Berry, et al., 2002). Some prefer to be bicultural, having the ability to fully function in both their home and host cultures. Others prefer to live separately from their host culture, remaining in their own cultural enclave. Berry observed that the strategies chosen by an immigrant depend on two independent preferences. The first preference is the immigrant's desire to maintain his or her home culture. Some are strongly attached to their home culture and have no intention of abandoning it; others are far less committed to their home culture and willingly abandon the behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes associated with it. A second, independent preference concerns the immigrant's desire to have relationships

with members of the host culture. Some immigrants want to have frequent contact or close relationships with members of the host culture, so they make efforts to understand and, when necessary, adopt the behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs that make better communication and closer relationships possible; others have little interest in developing such relationships and feel little need to learn about the host culture.

The various combinations of these two preferences (Figure 1) result in the use of four different acculturation strategies (Berry, 1997; Camilleri & Malewska-Peyre, 1997). Immigrants who arrive in a host culture and who want to maintain their culture while having few interactions or relations with members of the host culture use a strategy which can be called *separation*. Seeking to minimize the influence of the host culture on their lives, immigrants who choose this strategy tend to live close together in relatively homogenous communities and participate in activities that are typical of the home culture rather than the host culture. Immigrants with the opposite of these preferences tend to use a second acculturation strategy, *assimilation*. This strategy is used when immigrants move to a new culture and seek to develop relationships with people of the host culture, but do not have a strong desire to maintain their own culture (traditions, values, language, etc.); their goal is typically assimilation into the host culture. A third strategy, *integration*, is used by immigrants who seek both to have relationships with members of the host culture (requiring them to adopt at least the basic elements of the host culture) and to maintain their own cultural identity, especially when in the presence of members of their own culture. The integration strategy is valued

in multicultural societies and has generally been found to produce the best psychological outcomes for immigrants (e.g., lower levels of depression and anxiety). A fourth strategy, *marginalization*, is characterized by a low desire for relationships with members of the host culture and a rejection of one's home culture. This strategy may be chosen by social deviants or delinquents ostracized from their own community and unable (or unwilling) to adopt the basic elements of the host culture; this strategy is most strongly associated with psychological outcomes, such as depression or anxiety (Ryder, et al., 2000; Shiraev & Levy, 2009).

**Church Planting Strategies**

These four acculturation strategies (separation, assimilation, integration, and marginalization), based on two dimensions (Figure 1), can also describe church planting strategies that can be

applied to diaspora communities. The church planter, along with the initial core group, will be responsible for the strategy that the church adopts and its implementation. The strategy chosen will define major aspects of the church's ministry for many years, if not the entire life of the church. Neither young, inexperienced church planters nor veterans of multiple church plants may be aware that a choice of strategies exists. Church planters may simply adopt the strategy that they have seen modeled in other churches without considering the possibility of using a different strategy. However, the choice of strategy can significantly influence the impact that a church can have on its surrounding community.

**Separation.** A church planting strategy that focuses on maintaining the culture of the diaspora community with minimal attempts to reach the dominant

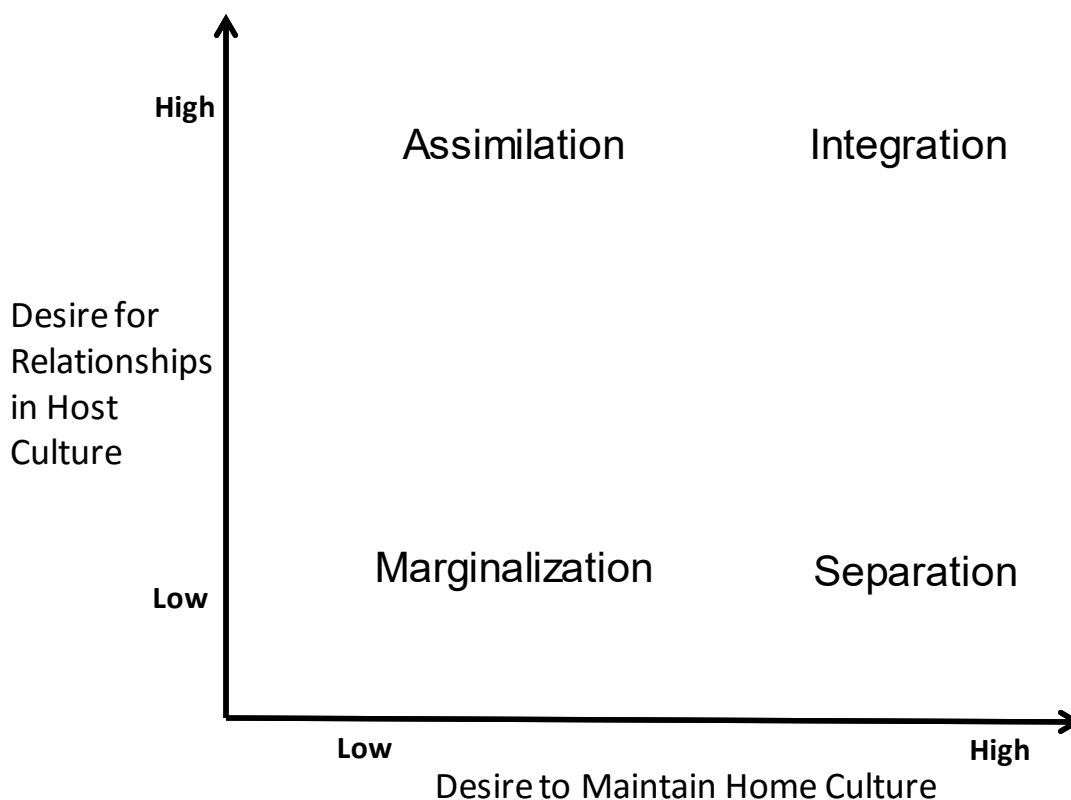


Figure 1. Four Acculturation Strategies (Berry, 1997, 2001)



culture can be considered a strategy of separation. This strategy would be typical of a church plant that focuses exclusively on a single block of immigrants and uses the language of this group for all its ministries. This strategy makes it easier to attract new immigrants to church activities because the church community provides a safe haven where recently arrived immigrants can meet people of their own culture who have at least some experience navigating the host culture. Diaspora members can freely express themselves in their own language and in ways appropriate to their home culture. This permits the Christian community to meet the felt needs of those who have recently arrived and demonstrate Christ's love in concrete ways. The gospel can be communicated in the heart language of the immigrants, accompanied by food and community activities that are meaningful to them, making the Gospel even more attractive.

Yet there are certain drawbacks to a strategy of separation. For example, it is difficult, if not impossible, to reach anyone outside of the specific immigrant community due to language and cultural barriers. This strategy may also hinder assimilation or integration of the members into the host culture; this can be costly on both a psychological and economic level. If immigrants do not develop the ability to communicate with members of the host culture, they may face economic hardships, exclusion, and the inability to understand the worldview that their children will develop. Furthermore, this strategy may not appeal to the more forward and innovative members of a diaspora community, those who may likely become the next generation of leaders. Such individuals may see a strategy of separation as a sort of ghettoization of the

diaspora community, creating an isolated body which cannot meet their needs or benefit from their skills and gifts.

**Assimilation.** A church planting strategy that assumes that the diaspora church members will gradually assimilate into the national culture will try to have programs and styles that correspond to how Christians from the national culture express themselves. For example, a church planter in Portugal who has found an openness to the Gospel among Angolan immigrants may try to develop a church with a Portuguese style of worship rather than an Angolan style of worship, especially if the Angolans have a desire to assimilate into Portuguese culture.

There are a number of advantages to using a church planting strategy focused on assimilation. First, it allows for multiethnic churches composed of members with diverse cultural backgrounds. Rather than having to learn and understand the culture of each immigrant group in a church in order to communicate, everyone agrees to use the national culture as the means of self-expression. For example, if a church plant is primarily composed of native Portuguese, Cape Verdeans, and Angolans, everyone can agree to do things the Portuguese way. Such a church can be attractive to immigrants because it can provide them with a safe environment to practice expressing themselves in a language and culture that they want to master. Another advantage of this strategy is that it enables the church to better reach members of the host culture. Rather than remaining an ethnic enclave, a church plant using the national culture can reach nationals, especially if exposure to and association with other cultures is valued within the national culture, or at least within a significant subgroup of the national culture. However, this

*multicultural ideology* (Berry, 2001) is more common in the English speaking world than elsewhere (Bourhis, et al., 1997) and might not be as appreciated as missionaries from North America might expect.

So although there are certain advantages, there are also certain drawbacks to using an assimilation strategy in church planting. Young churches which express themselves in the national culture are not accessible to all immigrants. The language, the worship style, and the food may all be incomprehensible to some members of a diaspora community, even if other members are present and partaking. Such experiences may be too stressful for them and may not communicate the gospel. In order to reach such immigrants, churches which use another strategy must be planted.

**Integration.** A church planting strategy which aims for integration seeks to form a community where both cultures are present. Perhaps both the diaspora community's language and the host culture's language are used in worship. Elements from both cultures determine how the programs are integrated. This is a very attractive approach to individuals who are bicultural, especially members of the diaspora who were born in the host country and who feel completely at ease with both cultures. Like the assimilation strategy, the integration strategy can be attractive to immigrants because it provides a safe haven for learning and interacting with elements of the host culture. Like the separation strategy, this strategy also makes it relatively easy to reach out to new immigrants.

However, an integration strategy can be upsetting to members of diaspora cultures who want to preserve all aspects of their own culture. Seeing the second

generation become completely bicultural can indicate that the third generation will have little understanding of the original diaspora culture and may be more likely to leave the church. Another limitation is that an integration strategy requires all but those who are already bicultural to learn a second culture (whether they be members of the diaspora culture or the host culture) in order to fully participate and understand all that is happening in the church. This means that the church plant will have great difficulty reaching members of the dominant culture or immigrants from other cultures.

**Marginalization.** A church planting strategy that aims for marginalization does not seem like it would have much potential for success. However, Bourhis and colleagues (1997) have sought to better understand how Berry's quadrant defined by a low desire to maintain one's home culture and a low desire for relationships with members of the host culture plays out. They reconceptualized Berry's two dimensions as a desire to maintain cultural identity of one's original culture and a desire to adopt the cultural identity of the host country (Bourhis, et al., 1997; Bourhis, Montaruli, El-Geledi, Harvey, & Barrette, 2010). Immigrants who have little desire to have either cultural identity (Berry's marginalization) tend to go in one of two directions. The immigrants who feel rejected by both cultures, or who choose to reject both cultures, may experience *anomie*, a cultural alienation that may be characterized by delinquency, marginalization, isolation, and extreme maladaptation to the host culture. However, other immigrants, those who choose to identify themselves as individuals more than as members of one culture or another and who wish to relate to others as individuals rather than

members of ethnic groups or cultures, choose an *individualist* approach to acculturation. These immigrants are likely to form relationships or join groups based on their own needs and values rather than the norms of either culture. Such immigrants are more likely to come from countries which tend to be highly individualistic such as Anglo and European countries (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010), but in all cultures there are some members who are more individualistic than others and are more likely to adopt an individualist approach.

In high density multi-ethnic urban areas in individualistic countries, the individualist approach might seem the most natural, especially to people who have grown up in such a context. Many urban church planters have used this strategy (McIntosh & McMahan, 2012). Members of these churches might find their identity more in their own, freely chosen relationships than in the culture that they were raised in or currently live in. They might also find a natural camaraderie with those who have grown up in the same multi-ethnic urban situation and have experienced many of the same things they have.

A church planting strategy based on an individualist approach has the advantage of encouraging the development of a Christ-centered community with minimal interference from cultural commitments that might run contrary to the gospel. Such a strategy would emphasize that “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:30 NIV) and that we are “aliens and strangers on earth” (Heb.11:13 NIV). This strategy is also able to welcome everyone, even individuals who may be disdained by their own or host cultures. Becoming a member of a Christian community is likely to counteract the negative psychological

effects associated with marginalization (Leary, 1990; Williams, 2007). Yet the individualist approach also has significant disadvantages. A young church planted with this strategy will develop its own unique culture. New (or not yet) Christians who begin attending will need to learn a new culture in order to fully enter into its community. A church that has rejected outside cultures may also suffer from an inability to attract non-Christians, especially those who have good social connections and may be the most apt to lead others to Christ. Such a church can come across as cult-like and dangerous.

There is no one church planting strategy that fits all diaspora church planting contexts. The church planter needs to prayerfully consider the needs of the community, the cultural contexts, and the expectations of the core group before proceeding through any door that the Lord may open.

### **The Social Identity Model of Acculturation**

A third model of acculturation is based on research in the field of social psychology focusing on how individuals develop a sense of identity. Social identity theory (Hogg, 2006; Hogg & Terry, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) begins with the idea that people need a strong sense of group identity for their well-being (Lewin, 1948). Moreover, people are motivated to have a positive view of themselves (Steele, 1988). So individuals are motivated to not only belong to groups but to think and act in such a way that they feel good about themselves because of their group memberships. The social identity model of acculturation (Berry, et al., 2002; Padilla & Perez, 2003; Phinney, 1990) predicts that immigrant

behavior will be motivated by this desire to enhance self-esteem via their social identity, that is, their group memberships.

Social identity is a crucial issue for immigrants. Before leaving their home country, they may have had a high social standing, or at least a well-defined place in their country of origin's social structure. However, as immigrants, they may be viewed as outsiders with a low standing and no clear role to play in their host culture. If they are members of a negatively viewed ethnic group, their visible and difficult to change attributes (e.g., skin color, physiognomy, or accent) may lead to stigma and to a negative social identity (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Phinney, 1990) regardless of their actual contributions to the host culture. Immigrants, therefore, may be highly motivated to build a positive social identity through various strategies. One strategy is to try to become members of the dominant group through assimilation. Sometimes this is not possible because of visible characteristics or an inability to fully adopt the host culture. The assimilation approach is costly because it means shedding one's home culture and identity. A second strategy is to develop pride in one's own group, by placing a greater value on activities that the group excels in (e.g., education, cuisine, sports, music) and downplaying what the dominant culture excels in (e.g., education, technology, entertainment). A third strategy involves limiting the comparisons that one makes to only members of one's own culture. For example, rather than comparing themselves to Germans, relatively high standing Turkish immigrants might choose to compare themselves to other Turks in Germany who are lower in some measure of status in order to boost their own social identity. A fourth strategy, and

the one that is most important from a church planting perspective, is to join a new group which gives status, and hence change one's social identity, in order to enhance one's self esteem.

### **Churches, Status, and Self-Esteem**

Immigrants will be attracted to a young church if joining such a church is perceived to raise their status and increase their self-esteem. Several factors will influence their decision. First, they will evaluate the social status of the people in the church. Are they people whom the potential member can respect? Are they people whom the potential member would like to have as friends? Would friendships with the church members increase the potential member's status in the eyes of his or her present friends and family? If his or her social status would go up by joining the church, the potential member will be more motivated to join the group. If not, a barrier will arise, providing motivation for the person to avoid the group.

Secondly, potential church members will evaluate how they are judged by people in the church. If potential church members feel accepted, valued, and desired by the present church members, their self-esteem will go up and they will be motivated to join. If they receive the message that they have little to offer to the group, their self-esteem will go down and they will be motivated to avoid the group.

This means that church planters have to deal with a very strong tension. A young church filled with bright, sociable, fun-loving, attractive people will appeal to more people than will a church with foolish, awkward, unattractive people. Yet Christ loves everyone equally and calls us to do the same. We are to avoid any form of favoritism towards high status people

(James 2:1-13). If a church planter follows this principle, young churches will be most attractive to people of low status because they will be valued there, whereas elsewhere they are not valued. But if the church is primarily composed of low status people, it becomes less attractive to outsiders. This apparently was the situation in at least some of the churches that the Apostle Paul planted (I Cor. 1:26-31). Paul argues that God calls the lowly and weak to be his people to shame the strong and arrogant, demonstrating that any true righteousness and holiness that a person has comes through Christ.

This leaves the church planter with the question, "Is it possible to remain faithful to the Gospel, yet start a church that will be attractive to anyone other than those of low social status?" A possible response comes with the church planter's approach to leadership selection. Research has demonstrated that the leaders of an organization are responsible for an inordinate amount of the increase or decrease in status that a person receives when joining a group (Hogg, 2001). The leader or leaders become the *prototype* of what the members of the group aspire to be. If the leader is seen as highly respectable, upright, socially skilled, and living in a manner consistent with the professed values of a potential member, one's social identity will get a boost in self-esteem by joining such a group. However, if the leader is seen as incompetent, untrustworthy, awkward, or hypocritical, joining such a group would hurt one's social identity and the potential member would be motivated to avoid the church because of its leadership. Although this is not the vocabulary that the Apostle Paul used in describing why he set high standards for leadership in churches (I

Tim. 3:1-13, Titus 1:6-9), his desire to see people who excel at living out the Gospel appointed to leadership is perfectly consistent with what social identity theory would predict is the best way to help a young church grow.

For church planters working among diaspora communities, this means that leadership must not be appointed too quickly. Near the end of his ministry, the apostle Paul said, "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others" (I Tim. 5:22). Rather the church planter must carefully nurture the young church and appoint formal leadership only when truly exemplary leaders are available. Such leaders will make the church more attractive to outsiders, while leaders who are less honorable will make the church less attractive. Because the social identity of immigrants is in greater flux than the social identity of non-immigrants, this phenomenon is amplified among diaspora communities, and leadership selection becomes even more important.

It might be argued that often Paul did not wait long to appoint leaders in many of the churches he planted (at least at the beginning of his ministry). However, it should be noted that many of the converts in Paul's early churches were from synagogues and were already committed to the study of the Word of God (e.g., Acts 13:14-15, 14:1, 17:1-2, 17:10-11). At least one synagogue leader, Crispus of Corinth, became a Christian and was most likely a leader in the young church. When highly respected leaders with a knowledge of the Word of God come to know Christ early in a church planting ministry, leadership selection and appointment can advance much more quickly than when this is not the case.

These three models of

acculturation each provide unique insights that are useful for church planting among diaspora communities. The melting pot one-dimensional model emphasizes that changes in ministry emphasis need to occur in diaspora churches over time, especially over generations, as the cultural distance between the diaspora group and members of the host culture decreases. The two dimensional model of acculturation strategies, focusing on the desire to maintain one's home culture and the desire for relationships in the host culture, provides insights into different church planting strategies that may be used according to the needs and values of the diaspora community that is being reached. The social identity model of acculturation accentuates the importance of careful leadership selection in order to enable a young church to be attractive to outsiders and to continue growing.

No single acculturation model is sufficient for understanding the best way to go about planting a church among a diaspora population. Even together, they are insufficient for determining a church planting strategy. However, they provide tools that church planters can use as they seek to obey the leading of the Holy Spirit in obedience to the Great Commission.

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