

Communication accommodation theory in american history x

[Sociology](#), [Communication](#)



CAT- American History X In this paper, I will use CAT (Communication Accommodation Theory) to explain how convergence, divergence, and intergroup contact are illustrated within the film American History X. Convergence in CAT refers to the accommodativeness, the process concerned with how we both reduce and magnify communication differences between people in interaction. Talking about convergence, people tend to enhance interpersonal similarities and reduce uncertainties. The effect of converging towards or approximately to another can increase liking and enable him or her to be seen more competent and credible.

It includes switching to the other's language or dialect, or assuming the same level of the other's interruptions, speech rate, posture and so forth. When engaging conversation, if the individuals or in-group identity is viewed more than the out-group identity, there will be convergence and higher communication relational satisfaction. In the film American History X, there are several examples help to illustrate the concept of convergence: Firstly, the attitude and the way of thinking towards Derek are influence by his father who is being murdered and killed by two black people during his duty as a firefighter.

In one of the flashbacks in the film, Derek's family gathered around at the dinner table, Derek mentions his black teachers, Bob Sweeney, who assigned the class to read a book which is written by an African American author. Derek's father disapproval the book because he is personally having dissatisfaction about his job with two black people got approved to his team. He explains the facts of how the black people in their society and

neighbourhood would threaten their life and verbally assume Derek is supporting his point of view. All these influences Derek after his father died.

He starts to believe that the problems of the society is all race related. Started from that point, Derek strongly stereotypes his ethnic identity because of his father's prejudices towards the minorities in his society and the reason for his father's death. His convergence mixed with stereotyping leads to over accommodation which is viewed as disrespectful to his whole family both verbally and nonverbally. Second example of convergence is another flashback in the movie. Derek along with his brother Daniel and girlfriend Stacey gathered a large group of whiteracismgangs in the parking lot.

Derek was having a speech to the whole group about the newimmigrationand unfairness about the distribution on the resources towards whites and other ethnics. After the speech, they destroyed a market which the owner is an Asian. They almost broke everything in the store and beaten up the people inside. The whole actions show that the group of white gangs is trying to show their strong social power to those who has lower power in the society. Besides, the group of white gangs tends to converge to signal their common ethnic and social identities.

In another flashback scene, when Derek was in the prison, he tried to find the group who has the similarity with him base on the tattoo on his body. He lay down and worked out in the area where the others ethic prisoners were staying and he threaten them away. Finally he found the group and he is one of the in-group members. Here Derek tends to converge as he wants to gain

approval by a group of people with similarity in the prison. He also wants to develop a closer relationship with the other members in his in-group that he didn't meet before.

After three years, Derek gets released from the prison. Daniel's appearance changes to a younger version of Derek, with shaved head and tattoo. Derek seems to be frustrated about the tattoo on Daniel's arm as he thought it would be a bad idea for Daniel to follow his steps and get involved all those racism stuffs. But Daniel says " I thought you would like it! " Daniel tends to converge to gain approval and trust from his brother, he tends to develop a closer relationship with him as long as he thought they are sharing the common social identities.

Divergence in CAT refers to non-accommodativeness, to magnify the communicative differences. Divergence occurs when individuals desire to represent their in-group identity above others desire. It serves as a distinction to preserve dialect or vocabulary. Members of different ethnic groups often accentuate their identities by diverging from one another both verbally and nonverbally. Divergence can be particularly intense if people feel their identity is threatened and that the other group has historically and illegitimately discriminated against them.

If a person accommodates an out-group member in this situations, that person is named as cultural traitor. If the out-group identity is more noticeable than the in-group or individual identity, there will be divergence less satisfaction. Here are some examples help to illustrate the concept of divergence: When Derek was in the prison, he found his in-group member.

Everything is going well till one day Derek find out one of the prisoner in-group member trade with a Mexican American ethnic group member. He is disappointed and had never acknowledged the possibility of his in-group member could do wrong.

He shows his disapproval towards that member's action nonverbally and walked away. In the next few days, Derek reveals to sit with his in-group for meals and he didn't show any respect to his in-group. He started to play basketball with the other out-groups instead of gather with his in-group. By then, he offended the group's leader of his own in-group and they turned on him and gang raped him in the shower. At first, Derek diverges from his in-group due to the actions of the member trading with the other out-group member. He thinks that is no different with cultural traitor.

Then his in-group members disapproval towards his demeanor, the gang raped accident happened to increasing the divergence. When he was attacked by those he once considered members of his in-group, Derek makes up his mind to leave the group after that as he thinks his social identity is being raped out because he had believed that could only be perpetrated by out-groups. After Derek is released from the prison, he went back to the party held by Cameron, who used to convince Derek to lead several violent acts. He starts off a fight with him due with the issue about his brother Daniel.

Derek blames Cameron is the one who giving them so much trouble and asked Cameron to leave them alone. Derek tends to diverge from his in-group to signal his disapproval towards Cameron's actions and demeanors.

He thinks Cameron is trying to put Daniel into hardship like him. Derek broke up with his girlfriend Stacey in that same party. Derek was trying to tell Stacey to leave the group with him together, but Stacey disagree as she thought Derek is in a popular position at that time and she personally doesn't think there is any problem with the group. They turn out to be enemy.

They tend to diverge to signal relational dissatisfaction, Stacey think Derek changes a lot after he gets out from the prison and she thinks he loses his reputation because of what he did to her. In one of the flashbacks in the film, Derek's family was gathering around with a Jewish man at the dinner table. They talked about the revolution which an Asian market was being destroyed, happened before when Derek, Daniel and Stacey were involved. The Jewish man has different point of view toward the whole racism activity with three of them. Derek started the get mad in the middle of the meal.

He thinks that the Jewish man is trying to get sexual benefit from his mother and he is a hater for Derek. Derek rudely asked him to get out of the house and never step into his house again. Derek tends to diverge as he wants to signal the relational dissatisfaction towards his mother and the Jewish also he wants to disapprove toward his actions in his house, being a hater for Derek. Intergroup contact theory indicates the perceptions of an out-group will change consistent with the perceptions one holds regarding a relationship one has with a member of that out-group.

Intergroup communication also maximized the presence of their group and will sometimes leads to a dissatisfied relationship. Here are some examples

from American History X helps to explain the intergroup contact theory: During the work in the prison, Derek was assigned to work with an African American man who named Lamont. At first Derek refused to talk to him because of his strong stereotyping but Lamont was always trying to challenge Derek's deep-set stereotypes. Most of the time for Lamont, it is more likely a one-side conversation.

Lamont worked around with Derek's racist attitude by talking about some common interests for example women and the reason they are in prison. Along with the conflicts happened between Derek with his in-group, Derek realizes that those of the other ethnicities were much more like himself than he had imagined before. They become friends afterwards and on the day that Derek got released, they met each other and Derek says to Lamont " I think part of the reason that I could get out is because of you. " Derek feels thankful to him. His strong stereotyping is lost.

Another example is after Derek was being raped by his in-group member; Derek was helpless and feels utterly alone. He lost his cultural identity to cling to and is not belongs to any of the groups. While he was staying in the medical room, his former African American English teacher, Bob Sweeny, came to visit him. Derek seeks helps from him. Bob was willing to help him and he helped him to see how his actions have affected his younger brother Daniel. These two examples show that Derek has changed his attitude towards an out-group after he tried to communicate with them. Stereotyping also reduces for Derek.

He tends to have a positively relationship with the out-groups which is the aims of intergroup contact theory. American History X does not only explain the convergence, divergence and intergroup contact theory in CAT (Communication Accommodation Theory), but it also explains more theories in interpersonal and intercultural communication. Convergence, divergence and intergroup are all related to the communication between an in-group and out-group. The film helps to illustrate some facts that also happening in the real life that we have to face and most of the time, the way that we could deal with them is by communication.