

# **Mass Media Usage Pattern and Acculturation Processed of Koreans Living in Kentucky**

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## **Abstract**

This exploratory study set out to investigate the relation between mass media usage patterns of Koreans living in Kentucky and their degree of acculturation. In addition, this present research sought to uncover the relationship between several demographic variables and U.S. (or Korean) media consumption patterns of Koreans living in Kentucky, where most study respondents consume Korean media through the Internet, because of limited access to such Korean media as newspapers produced in the U.S.

The findings of this research indicate that there are some positive relationships between the degree of acculturation and English proficiency, and between the consumption of U.S. media and acculturation. Furthermore, the results revealed that there was not only a significant negative relationship between acculturation and usage of the Korean language on the Internet, but also there was a significant relationship among marital status, age, and degree of acculturation. Single and younger Koreans consume more U.S. and Korean media and are more acculturated than married and older respondents. However, this study did not find any statistically significant relation between the intentions of Koreans in Kentucky to stay in or leave the U.S. and their U.S. media consumption. Likewise, no significant relation was found between negative perceptions of the U.S. media by the Koreans and their U.S. media consumption.

## **Consuming U.S. Mass Media**

Among the many factors affecting immigrants' acculturation processes, a number of studies have shown that mass media play a crucial role in helping immigrants understand the host culture, and thus people from different cultures tend to use and expose themselves to mass media to some extent (Hurh, 1998; Kim, 1995; Survervi-Velez, 1986/1994; Valenzuela, 1985). In a study about the use of media among immigrants, Foner (1997) found that American mass media influenced immigrants by disseminating cultural norms and values inherent in the dominant American culture. Bryant and Zillman (1984), Gudykunst (1988), Kim (1995), and Walker (1998) point out that immigrants and sojourners tend to use American media not only for reducing cultural uncertainty and emotional anxiety, but also for increasing their knowledge of the new host country.

Based on previous cross-cultural communication literature, there are two major reasons why immigrants use American mass media: to facilitate acculturation, and to seek information about the dominant cultural elements, patterns, and values, such as language usage (Hsu, 1993; Mansfield-Richardson, 1999; Walker, 1998).

First, as noted before, it appears that acculturation is a broad concept. Acculturation mainly implies that an individual has become familiar with values, cultural norms, and modes expected in a host culture and possesses the skills to negotiate in new cultural setting (Berry, 1990; Choi et al., 1988; Hurh, 1998). From this perspective, many intercultural communication scholars believe that American mass media can play a key role in providing immigrants and sojourners with knowledge about American culture, which facilitate the acculturation process. Some researchers also claim that immigrants and sojourners depend on American mass media to learn culturally relevant information that would help them adapt such as language, cultural norms and modes, and social interaction skills (Kim, 1984; Walker, 1999).

Second, immigrants tend to consume American mass media for functional reasons that allow them to get much of the information that they want (Hurh, 1998; Vincent & Basil, 1997). In the examination of Haitian immigrants' media consumption in Miami, Walker (1999) found positive correlations between the immigrants' mass media usage patterns and their motivations. For instance, immigrants' tend to use U.S.

media for both information seeking and entertainment (Walker, 1999).

In terms of explaining the positive correlation between acculturation and mass media exposure of immigrants, several previous studies have pointed out that immigrants and sojourners have a tendency to accept American culture by exposing themselves to American mass media to learn American culture (DeFleur & Cho, 1957; Greenberg, 1986; Huang, 1993; Hurh, 1998; Lee & Tse, 1994; Rios, 2000).

Similarly, Chaffee et al. (1990) and Hurh et al (1979; 1984; 1998) show that the development and consumption of American mass media is cyclical; U.S. media provide information that immigrants use to seek knowledge of American culture, and immigrants in turn seek out the media because they know the information is readily provided. In a study of Korean immigrants living in California, Chaffee et al. (1990) found a positive correlation between the immigrants' media usage and patterns and their knowledge of U.S. politics, indicating that the more Korean immigrants were exposed to U.S. media, the better their understanding of American politics.

Knowledge of the English language has been argued as a main factor that influences immigrants' and sojourners' use of U.S. media. Hurh (1998) and Min (1990) have pointed out that a lack of English language skills impedes Koreans from acculturation into American society. Several researchers have also found that usage of the host country's mass media and language skill is positively correlated (O'Guinn & Faber, 1985).

Unlike other Asian immigrant groups (e.g., from India and the Philippines) that have had Anglo-American colonial experiences, Korea did not have direct experiences with English speaking countries until the early 1950s (Hurh, 1998). Thus, many Korean immigrants and sojourners often come to the U.S. with limited or no English language skills. It is, therefore, not surprising that some scholars have found that recently immigrated Korean people try to learn English using the mass media. In other words, one of the greatest factors concerning U.S. media use by immigrants and sojourners is associated with a desire to learn English and improve their language skills through watching U.S. television news programs (DeFluer et al., 1957; Richmond; 1969; Won-Doornink, 1988).

In summary, American mass media help immigrants and sojourners not only to gratify their personal needs (e.g., such as learning English and being aware of the American political climate), but also enable immigrants to be more goal-directed in the consumption of American media (Chaffee et al., 1990; Hurh, 1998; Mansfield-Richardson, 1999; Walker, 1999). Therefore, it can be argued that the desire to learn English language and acquire information relevant to successful adaptation to the new host country influence immigrants and sojourners in their consumption of American media. Hence, the main objective of the present study is to further investigate immigrants' and sojourners' media usage patterns, language skills, and degree of acculturation.

## **Consuming Native language Media in the U.S.**

According to Shibutani et al. (1965) and Subervi-Velez (1986), immigrants' and sojourners' native language media not only affect their adjustment to the culture of the host country, but also help them maintain their ties with their own traditional values and modes. For this interaction between immigrants (including sojourners) and the use of their native language media, several studies report that the more immigrants and sojourners are exposed to their native language media, the less they are acculturated into the host country (Hsu et al., 1993; Kim, 1979; Lee et al., 1994; Won-Doornink, 1988). Some scholars note that using more native language media in the U.S. prevents immigrants from integrating into the host country and from getting adequate information about a new host country. However, several research findings claim that immigrants (or sojourners) prefer to consume their native language media because those media provide clearer information and keep the original cultural identity alive (Hurh, 1998; Lee & Tse, 1994; Walker, 1999).

Scholars who study the usage of native language media by immigrants in the U.S. suggest the following reasons for this usage: (1) the lack of language skill, (2) availability of their native language media in the U.S., and (3) a dearth of ethnic affinity accompanied by widespread stereotypes of non-Anglo Americans in the U.S. media (Mansfield, 1998; Park, 1996).

First, as previously noted, many immigrants consume both their native language media and U.S. mass media. When immigrants are exposed to a new culture, their language skills are not proficient enough to interact with the host people (Kim, 1995; Walker, 1999). In general, many cross-cultural communication scholars suggest that immigrants and sojourners suffer from lack of host language proficiency that results in the consumption of native language media. In other words, it is easier to learn new cultural modes and norms through one's mother tongue rather than through the host country's media until one has enough host language skills (Mansfield-Richardson, 1999; Subervi-Velez; 1984).

Walker (1999) also found, in the first-year Haitian immigration study, that most of the Haitian immigrants came to the U.S. with poor English skills, which gave rise to increasing use of their native language media in the US, thus resulting in limited acculturation and upward mobility within the host country. In addition, Ryu (1976) states that a high degree of English proficiency is associated with high exposure to U.S. media, and poor English ability is related to low exposure to U.S. media. In turn, it seems possible to say that immigrants and sojourners who are proficient in English tend to use their native language media less frequently. Thus, this study explores the veracity of this finding when applied to the Koreans in Lexington and Louisville.

Second, the usage of immigrants' native language media in the U.S. has something to do with the availability of these media in the U.S. Mansfield-Richardson (1999) points out that, in particular, Asian immigrant media have a rich history and tradition in the U.S., which perpetuates Asian immigrant ethnic media consumption. With around a 150-year history in the U.S., Asian ethnic media function as information-transmitters when it comes to immigrants who have poor language skills and need information. Nowadays, there are many Asian ethnic media (e.g., newspaper, video, and so on) available to Asians living in the U.S., geared to attract other ethnic groups through provision of both English and native language versions (Hsu, 1993; Hurh, 1998; Mansfield-Richardson, 1999; Walker, 1999).

Furthermore, there are several Korean daily newspapers, magazines, videos, and TV broadcasting stations in the big cities of the U.S. (e.g., New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Atlanta). All these media function as information providers and transmitters for Korean people living in the U.S. (Hurh, 1979/1998; Hsu; 1993). Similarly, Lee and Cho (1990), in their Korean immigrants' study, found that Korean housewives tended to rent more Korean soap operas imported from Korea than American soap operas from video shops in the California area. This phenomenon is associated with the availability of native language media. Past studies report that native language media play a key role in transmitting cultural heritage and values to viewers while providing information that they need in their native language, which the host country's media cannot do (Chen & Starosta, 1998; Hurh, 1998; Lee & Tse, 1994; Mansfield-Richardson, 1999). As a result, through the use of native language media in the U.S., immigrants keep their traditional values alive and pass on these values to the next generation. By doing so, they create a cultural unity and identity within their ethnic communities.

These findings are likely to explain the correlation between a certain type of media availability (e.g., ethnic media) and immigrants' and sojourners' media choices. In addition to availability, it is worthwhile to determine whether there are any cultural proximity factors such as language influencing immigrants' (including sojourners') media choices and preferences. Straubhaar (2000) defines cultural proximity as follows:

"Cultural proximity builds on cultural capital, but is a separate dimension of identity. Cultural capital ... focuses on the sources of knowledge which permit people to make choices among media and other sources of information and culture. Cultural proximity is more of disposition or a tendency towards the use of cultural capital in a certain way. Forms of cultural capital, in terms of what one knows about other countries and cultures, can lead people toward or away from cultural proximity, the tendency to prefer media products from one's own culture or the most similar possible culture." (Straubhaar, 2000. pp 8-9).

Based on the above definition, people tend to prefer products reflecting their own cultural background. Thus, it is worthwhile to find the correlation between the availability of Korean ethnic media and its usage by immigrants and sojourners.

Third, there is a dearth of ethnic diversity and prevalent minority stereotyping in U.S. media, which leads

many immigrants and sojourners to consume native language media in the U.S. (Greenberg et al, 1986; Jeffres & Hur, 1980; Mansfield-Richardson, 1999; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). In addition, several studies report that ethnic media try to use more of their own national news and tend to describe minorities in a more positive way, compared to U.S. media (Mansfield-Richardson, 1999).

Greenberg et al. (1986) and Nielsen (1998) point out that African Americans tend to consume more television programs with African American actors because they feel more attached through cultural affinity and ethnic identification while watching them. Furthermore, among ethnic minorities in the U.S., it is true that Asians and Native Americans are almost excluded from U.S. media (Greenberg et al., 1986; Mok, 1998). Mok (1998) states that Asians not only barely exist before 1960s on U.S. television, but also were described as 'a threat group' threatening the U.S. economy if they did exist. Also, recent research concerning the under-representation of Asian Americans in the U.S. media shows that Asian made up only 1% of television character population in the 1990s and roughly 2-3 % during the 2000 to 2001 (Mansfield-Richardson, 1999; Mastro et al, 2000; Mok, 1998).

Beyond the scarcity of Asian Americans in U.S. media, several scholars point to widespread racial stereotypes of this group in American media, which is also related to media usage patterns (Dhingra, 2003; Hurh, 1998; Kim, 2003; Shim, 1998). For example, the movie 'It could happen to you' depicts the Korean-grocery owner couple as workaholics and merciless penny pinchers. In conjunction with other negative racial stereotypes and prejudice toward Korean immigrants in the film, this depiction reflects a certain amount of racial prejudice in the U.S. media (Park, 1996). Also in the TV program 'Lost', which started airing on ABC in 2005, the Korean man's character is depicted as authoritative and the Korean woman as submissive and dependent on the Korean man. The Korean male's character even expresses racism toward an African American character, saying Koreans do not like African American people (Korean Journal, 2005). Although the Korean male's statement does not represent the view of the majority of Koreans living around the world, this portrayal evokes misunderstandings and misconceptions.

Many studies of racial stereotyping have been done in the U.S., however there is limited research literature available regarding stereotypes toward Asian Americans. Some scholars have found that the negative stereotypes and distortions of Asian minorities increased in the 1990s. For instance, there is a marked increase in the portrayal of Asian Americans as criminals in U.S. newspaper coverage (Martindale, 1995). Negative stereotypes and under-representation of minority groups in U.S. media might lead non-Americans to make greater use of their native language media in the U.S.

In a similar vein, Keshishian (2000) mentions that negative ethnic stereotypes in the host country's media impede immigrants' acculturation processes. Thus, stereotypes and less cultural affinity in the mainstream media might somewhat affect people who have culturally different backgrounds, and those factors are likely to lead many immigrants to avoid the host media; instead they may use their native language media. Therefore, it is necessary to find out whether any correlations exist between consumption of native language media and U.S. media depictions of minorities (e.g., negative racial stereotyping).

## **Internet and the Diaspora**

In 2001, the U.S. was reported to have the largest number of Internet users in the world, about 165.7 million. Also in 2001, the Internet connection rate in the U.S. increased by 50.5%, compared to 18.6% in 1998 (the U.S. Census Bureau, 2000; the World Factbook, 2002). According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project (2002), Internet users in the U.S. come from various age groups, educational and ethnic backgrounds including immigrants and sojourners from various cultures. Among these Internet users, Asian Americans are considered the most active group to go online for information gathering. For instance, Melkote and Liu (2000) found that many Chinese sojourners' (e.g., international students, scholars, temporary workers in the U.S., and so on) often take advantage of the Internet as a new mass medium, and use it on a daily basis for doing research and for getting personal information, among other things. With the rapid growth of modern technology, immigrants and sojourners are easily able to connect and get their own national and host country's news and information than ever before. By installing native language tools on their computers, immigrants and sojourners are easily able to read their national or

host country's newspapers, listen to music, and watch television programs from their home or host countries. Furthermore, immigrants and sojourners can easily interact with their friends and families through sending email and posting messages on their or others' homepages.

When it comes to using the Internet in the host country, it is also important to mention the degree of technological development in the immigrant's or sojourner's native country. Many Asian countries are trying to develop telecommunications infrastructures, and most of them are focusing on areas such as the Internet. Exceptions to this are countries such as North Korea and Mongolia. It is undeniable that technological development is thriving in many Asian countries (Gunaratne, 2000).

Of all Asian countries, South Korea ranks at the top of nations with the largest number of Internet users. A total of approximately 25.6 million people out of the country's total population of 45 million are regular users of the Internet (The World Factbook, 2002; Kim, 2003). Moreover, the growth in the number of Internet users has stimulated all Korean newspaper and broadcasting companies (e.g., KBS, MBC, SBS, and EBS) to offer 'intercast' services and on-line editions of newspapers, which basically allow media audiences to access news and entertainment material on-line (Heo et al., 2000). Now, Koreans living in the U.S. can have access Korean-based media services as long as they have the appropriate technology and know-how. In sum, modern technology has made it possible to overcome time differences and geographical limitations with ease, especially as technology becomes more available, cost-effective, and user-friendly (Chen & Starosta, 1998; Hiebert & Gibbons, 2000; Mansfield-Richardson, 1999).

The present study will therefore investigate the Internet usage patterns of Koreans in Kentucky in order to understand whether or not the new communication technology affects their acculturation and media choice as well as their choice patterns. Unlike traditional media, which does not require active audience participation, the Internet encourages the audience to actively and purposely search for information (Hiebert & Gibbons, 2000). The uses and gratifications theory assumes that the audience is goal-directed and often actively engaged in information when they consume mass media products (Katz et al., 1973; McQuail, 1994/2000; Rubin, 1984; Walker, 1998). Thus, the correlation between media choices of Korean people living in Kentucky may be explained within the framework of uses and gratifications theory. This is in line with other studies, which have attempted to explain immigrants' and sojourners' media usage patterns within the framework of the uses and gratifications theory (Johnson, 1996; Valenzuela, 1985; Walker, 1998). However, the present study is a bit different from most of the previous studies since it will not only investigate traditional media usage patterns, but also it will seek to identify emerging patterns resulting from the new technological developments such as the Internet.

## **Korean Immigration to the U.S.**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau report (2000), as of April 1, 2000 over a million Koreans live in the United States. This growth in population did not happen overnight. At the beginning of 20th century, around 7,000 Koreans reached Hawaii as plantation laborers, and since then, the number of Korean people living in the U.S. has increased astonishingly (Choi, 2002; Hurh, 1998; Patterson, 1988). Several factors prompted Koreans to come to the U.S. and according to scholars who have studied 20th century Korean immigration, there are three waves of immigration, in general. Below is the summarized Korean immigration history into the U.S.

The first wave of Korean immigration to the U.S. runs from the beginning of the 20th century to 1945. The history of the first Korean immigrants mainly starts and ends with Japanese imperialism over the Korean peninsula and its economic calamities. During this period, most of the Korean immigrants who landed in the U.S. consisted of common laborers, mine workers, students seeking economic prosperity, or political refugees. Some of the literature shows that, overall, the first immigrants were largely uneducated and worked as cheap laborers in the U.S. territory of Hawaii's sugar plantations (Hurh, 1998; Hyun, 1976; Yu, 2001; Yun, 1977). According to Gardner (1970), these first Korean immigrants were converted to the Christian religion, which also played an important role in their cultural and social lives and thus helped immensely in their acculturation to the new cultural environment.

The second wave of Korean immigration (1950-1964) to the U.S is directly associated with the division of the Korean peninsula (North and South) and the U.S. government's intervention in the Korean War (Hurh,

1998). During this period, most Korean immigrants to the U.S. were war orphans, political refugees, Korean wives of American servicemen, and students. For example, after the Korean War broke out, Hurh et al., (1984) and Yu (2001) point out that there were more than 100,000 Korean children adopted by American families and more than 6,000 Korean students came to the U.S to pursue their education.

This phenomenon was partly made possible by the Korean and U.S. military alliance, and by the abolishment of the national origin quota system in U.S. immigration laws (Yu, 2001). During this period, the Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (1997/98) shows that over 30,000 Koreans were admitted to the U.S., compared with only 107 Koreans admitted to the U.S. between 1941 and 1950. Unlike the first Korean immigrant group, it is important to note that a few professional people with high literacy came to the U.S. during this period, and U.S. government documents reveal that more Koreans acquired U.S. citizenship than any other nationality group, such as India, China, and Japan (Kim, 1977).

The third wave of Korean immigration (1965 to present) is somewhat related to the U.S. Immigration Act of 1965, which supported family reunion for permanent residents or U.S. citizens with their spouses, parents, and siblings. It is so-called kinship-based migration. The law led many Koreans to reunite with their families in the U.S., and it gave rise to the large number of Korean immigrants in this period.

According to U.S. government official documents, the number of Korean immigrants reached over 34,000 in the 1960s, and the number the following decade (1970s) jumped to over 265,000. The 1980s were ranked as the highest number of Korean immigrants (Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1997/1998).

However, Korean immigration has declined since the 1990s, because of the economic success and increased political stability in Korea, such as the fall of the military dictatorship. For this phenomenon, the New York Times states

“As Koreans poured into this country over the last two decades, their entrepreneurial energy transformed whole neighborhoods in New York and other cities. Now, with the burgeoning economy in Korea providing more opportunities there, Koreans have fewer reasons to move to the United States. And thousands of Koreans who raised families and built businesses here are returning to their homeland, some of them driven away by economy difficulties and others parlaying success in this country into better jobs in Korea” (New York Times, August 22, 1995).

As Hurh (1998) mentions, it is necessary to understand Korean immigration to the United States in terms of historical changes in Korean economic and political systems. Japanese imperialism, national division, and South Korea’s experience with military dictatorship from 1970s to the middle of 1980s were all major influences on Korean immigration patterns to the U.S.

Following the Korean War in 1953, Korean self-reflection on identity became feasible. The Korean War had resulted in economic difficulties, political instability, and military dictatorship (Chung, 2002). Furthermore, the lack of a national infrastructure (e.g., industrial facilities, financial difficulties and the loss of technical expertise) led South Koreans to focus not only on national development inside Korea, but also gave them a chance to look at the different circumstances outside Korea. In a similar vein, some research literature pertaining to the factors that triggered Korean immigration to the U.S. during this period have stated that most of the recent Korean immigrants came to the U.S. with a desire for a better life and to have more opportunities, such as education and economic success (Hurh, 1998; Hurh et al, 1997; Mansfield-Richardson, 1998; Park, 1996). During this period, many of them came from the middle-class and the professional class in Korea. Thus, it is not surprising that the Korean employment rate in the U.S. was higher than for the previous immigrants.

## **Demographic characteristics**

So far, this study has divided Korean immigration to the United States during the 20th century into three distinctive phases. As noted earlier, the third-wave of Korean immigrants was quite different from the first two groups; not only were they better educated, but they also came to the U.S. from a high socio-

economic status in Korea (Huh, 1998; Huh & Kim, 1984; Min, 1990; Noland, 2002; Park, 1996). Despite the fact that Korean immigrants attain high professional and educational status in their country, it has typically been true that they are in lower status occupations after immigrating to the U.S. (Huh & Kim, 1984; Messaris et al., 1991).

Moreover, some literature has reported that Korean immigrants have had a tendency to cluster in major big cities, such as LA, New York, Atlanta, and so on. For instance, roughly 32.6% of Korean immigrants lived in California and 12% in New York, according to U.S. Census Bureau data (2000). In addition, most of the Korean immigrants are highly concentrated in self-employed businesses that help them get economic mobility and maintain a sense of autonomy, compared to other businesses (Min, 1990; Nolan, 2002). Yet, the given fact that self-employed businesses (e.g., green grocers, dry cleaning shops, and so on) depend on family members and employees of the same ethnic group may give rise to greater difficulties in the acculturation process (Huh, 1998; Huh and Kim, 1984; Min, 1990).

Since the second wave of Korean immigration, the number of non-immigrant Koreans in the U.S., such as students, temporary workers, and exchange visitors has increased (The U.S. census bureau, 2002). Of these groups, Korean students are the largest population (The U.S. census bureau, 2002). Although there are some studies pertaining to Asian immigrant groups, there is little research on such non-immigrant groups (Hsu et al., 1993; Melkote et al., 2000). However, recently several cross-cultural communication scholars have drawn attention to international students for their behavior patterns and cultural transition experiences (Hsu et., 1993). Non-immigrants are different from immigrants in that they have a different legal status, purpose of stay in the U.S., and socio-economic status. Students often have the option of leaving the U.S. after achieving an academic degree and completing their work contracts. Such intentions may affect their overall mass media usage patterns and choices. For instance, if they intend to return to Korea following the completion of their education or work, they may spend more time consuming Korean media. Thus, it is worthwhile to compare their mass media usage and patterns with those of immigrants.

In summary, many factors will play roles in the relationship between acculturation and media usage for Koreans living in the U.S. Among those, this study will consider the following:

- English language skills
- Roles of the Internet as a media channel
- Availability of Korean-language media from both the U.S. and Korean sources
- Perception of negative stereotypes in the U.S. media
- Intention to live or leave the U.S.
- Immigrant vs. non-immigrant status

## **Method**

### **Uses and Gratifications Theory**

According to Rubin (1994), uses and gratifications theory is applied (a) to explain how audiences use mass media to gratify their individual needs, (b) to know audiences' motives toward media consumption, and (c) to make any inferences regarding individuals' needs, motivations, and behaviors resulting from media use.

Many studies employing the approach of uses and gratifications have clarified five major audience needs. First, cognitive needs demand getting information and obtaining knowledge. Second, affective needs motivate emotional and aesthetic gratifications. Third is a personal integrative need to get involved in keeping personal confidence and stability. Fourth is a social integrative need to strengthen personal networks. Fifth is a need for escapism, which drives one to take a break from ordinary life and work of life (Katz, Gurevitch & Hass, 1973; Tan, 1985). Therefore, the uses and gratifications' theoretical framework

is pertinent here since this study investigates the relations between individual needs and media usage patterns. As noted earlier, immigrants and sojourners go through cultural and social changes in a new culture, and their personal needs may be influenced by these changes potentially with the consumption of mass media.

Uses and gratifications theory provides a helpful context in which to study why and how Koreans living in the U.S. consume American and Korean ethnic mass media. Several intercultural communication scholars (Johnson, 1996; Valenzuela, 1985; Walker, 1998) have employed uses and gratifications theory to study Hispanic immigrants' use of American mass media and ethnic media by utilizing the uses and gratifications theory, however there have been very few uses and gratifications studies about the patterns and choices of Asian immigrants' (in particular, Korean immigrants and sojourners) media use in the U.S.

## **Acculturation Models**

There are several acculturation models, such as unidimensional (Gordon, 1964/1978), bidimensional (Berry, 1990), and interactive acculturation models (Bourhis et al., 1997). Of those, there are two major models to explain the degree of immigrants and sojourners' acculturation. One is the so called unidimensional model, which posits that people from other cultures tend to accept the new host country's culture as people lose their original culture. According to the unidimensional model, immigrants (or sojourners) may be placed into the acculturation continuum from unacculturated to acculturated during cultural changes in the new culture (See Figure 1). As can be seen in Figure 1, the midpoint on this continuum is called biculturalism, which assumes that immigrants (or sojourners) maintain their cultural heritage while adopting new cultural aspects. Thus, biculturalism is believed to be that immigrants (or sojourners) are in the middle of a transitory period (Gordon, 1964; LaFromboise et al., 1993; Lee et al., 2003).

The other is a bidimensional model, assuming that people from different cultures have a tendency to either accept or retain the new culture (Lee et al., 2003; Bourhis et al., 1997). The bidimensional model employs independent dimensions (e.g., integration, segregation, assimilation, and marginalization) rather than the bipolar continuum of the unidimensional model (LaFromboise et al., 1993; Lee et al., 2003). At heart, this model assumes that immigrants (or sojourners) may be placed in each independent dimension, based upon the degree of their cultural heritage retention in a new culture.

Lee et al., (2003) summarizes the above-mentioned two models below, which are based on Keefe & Padilla (1987) book:

Figure 2-1: Two models of acculturation (Keefe & Padilla, 1987)



## **Gordon's Unidimensional Model of Acculturation**

The unidimensional model has been widely used to study immigrants (or sojourners) acculturation processes in a new culture. In this literature, Gordon's unidimensional model is employed and utilized to develop its theoretical framework. Unlike other models, this model is considered useful in that it not only investigates the relationship between a degree of acculturation and immigrants (or sojourners), but also it particularly emphasizes communication, such as immigrants' (or sojourners') mass media consumption.

The model identifies seven dimensions of acculturation; (a) cultural, (b) structural, (c) marital, (d) identification, (e) attitude receptional, (f) behavioral receptional, and (g) civic dimension. For determining levels of acculturation (or non-acculturation), Gordon identifies the content of each dimension. First, the cultural dimension includes three variables as follows; English proficiency, U.S. mass media consumption, and American food consumption. Second, the structural dimension consists of two main items as follows: immigrants' U.S. social participation and U.S. social network. Third, the marital dimension includes current and ancestral exogamy. Fourth, the identification dimension concerns personal identification as to whether or not he or she is an American. Fifth and sixth, the attitude receptional and behavior receptional dimensions are regarding perceived discrimination in the U.S. Finally, the civic dimension deals with immigrants' (or sojourners') motivation to learn American culture. In short, here is a graphical representation to elucidate the relationship between degree of acculturation and the suggested dimensions as follows:

Figure 2-2: Gordon's acculturation model

Based upon Gordon's unidimensional model and the purpose of the study, this study has two categories of measures. The measurement normally used with Gordon's unidimensional acculturation model is further discussed in the methodology section.

The summarized content that was originally used by Lee et al. (2003, p 285) is provided below:

Figure 2-3: Measures of Acculturation

**Research Question and Hypotheses**

□ FPRIVATE  
Diagram"

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Figure 2-4: Model for the research question

Figure 2-4: Model for the research question

RQ: To what extent do age, socio-economic status, length of stay, and intentions to leave or stay influence specific media preferences?

Based upon the literature review and the research question, this study proposes six research hypotheses. Several studies have shown that the poorer the language skills immigrants and sojourners have, the more they consume their native language media. At the same time, other studies indicate that the higher degree of English skills, the more acculturated (DeFluer et al., 1957; Hurh, 1998; Mansfield-Richardson, 1999; Min, 1990; Richmond, 1969; Hsu, 1993; Walker, 1998; Won-Doornink, 1998).

Figure 2-5: Model for hypotheses

Therefore, the first hypothesis is below:

H1a: English skills of Koreans living in the U.S. are positively correlated with use of U.S. media.

H1b: Use of U.S. media is positively correlated with degree of acculturation.

In line with the suggested theoretical framework, it is assumed that one of uses and gratifications' functions is to gratify foreigners' needs by providing necessary information related to the unfamiliar culture (McQuail, 1994/2000; Ruggiero, 2000). Based on this theoretical perspective, immigrants and sojourners try to use the host media for making their acculturation easier and for getting information. To support this argument, previous studies suggest that the exposure to the host media or native language media is an important indicator in explaining the degree of immigrants' and sojourners' acculturation

(Berry, 1990; Choi et al., 1988; Hurh, 1998; Kim, 1995; Survervi-Velez, 1986/1994; Valenzuela, 1985; Walker, 1998). Hence, the second hypothesis is:

H2: Use of Korean media in the U.S. is negatively correlated with acculturation.

As noted earlier, the rapid growth of technological development has been a crucial factor influencing mass media choices and patterns. Unlike traditional media, the Internet has overcome geographical obstacles and time difference since it was invented. Also, the Internet has made it possible to make the most of many kinds of media and informational resources as much as people want, such as watching movies, listening to music, searching for academic resources, and making friends (Chen & Starosta, 1998; Cole & Robinson, 2002; Hiebert & Gibbons, 2000; Kim, 2003; Melkote & Liu, 2000). According to the uses and gratifications theory, the audience is goal-directed and purposive in pursuit of gratifying one's own needs through consuming mass media (McQuail, 1994/2000). For that reason, immigrants and sojourners might use the modern technology (e.g., the Internet) to gratify their personal needs.

While using the Internet, language usage (either English or Korean) is likely to play an important role in affecting immigrants' and sojourners' acculturation. Thus, in order to address the relationship between language usage pattern and acculturation, the third and fourth hypotheses are as follows:

H3: Acculturation is positively correlated with the use of the host country's language (English) on the Internet.

H4: Use of Korean language Internet sources will be negatively correlated with acculturation in the U.S.

When it comes to time limited sojourners, such as international students and working VISA holders, the intentions to stay in or leave a different culture might affect their new behavior adoption (e.g., sticking to their own cultural tradition). Hence, the purpose to stay or leave might play a key role in choosing new cultural modes, including mass media consumption in a new culture (Hsu et al., 1993; Melkote & Liu, 2000). Based on this fact, the fifth hypothesis is stated below:

H5: Non-immigrant Koreans living in the U.S. who intend to remain consume more the U.S. media than those intending to leave the U.S.

Finally, in line with the uses and gratifications perspectives that clarifies the audience's needs for consuming mass media, several intercultural scholars have pointed out that negative stereotypes and prejudices towards ethnic minorities in the host country's media might lead immigrants and sojourners to use more their native language media (Dhingra, 2003; Greenberg et al., 1986; Jeffres & Hur, 1980; Keshishian, 2000; Mansfield-Richardson, 1999; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Mok, 1998; Park, 1996; Shim, 1998). For that reason, this study explores the correlation between the perceptions of the host country's media and mass media choices, among Korean immigrants and sojourners. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis is stated below:

H6: Perception of negative stereotypes in the U.S. media will be negatively correlated with consumption of U.S. media.

Research was conducted in Lexington and Louisville, Kentucky. Although Lexington and Louisville do not have any locally based Korean language media, there are several Korean grocery markets where Korean ethnic newspapers and magazines are distributed. Individuals seeking additional Korean native language media may obtain them from distributors in larger cities.

There are around 700 Korean people living in Lexington and Louisville, including children and youth (the U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Data were collected by means of a survey among this population. People below the age of 18 years old were excluded from this survey and the respondents' names were not collected. All of the respondents were informed that their participation and responses remained completely anonymous. Also, the respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could choose not to participate, and the survey questionnaire was prepared in English. Also, the self-report questionnaire was distributed and collected among members of four Korean churches and one

Korean Student Association at the University of Kentucky, all of which are run by Koreans. In addition to gathering data on media use and degree of acculturation, the survey questionnaire collected demographic information, including socio-economic status, gender, age, and the length of stay in the U.S.

In this study, the questionnaire that was used includes scales and question items that measure: (1) usage of host country's mass media or Korean language media, including the Internet, (2) English language skills, and (3) degree of acculturation. Respondents also indicated demographic characteristics, such as length of stay in the U.S., sex, age, educational level, and intention to stay or leave the U.S.

In order to measure the degree of immigrants' and sojourners' acculturation, Lee et al. (2003) summarize Gordon's dimensions of acculturation which overall involves the cultural, structural, and other dimensions (Gordon, 1964/1978). Gordon's dimensions of acculturation were adopted to develop a scale for measuring acculturation and mass media usage patterns, while modifying Korean American acculturation questionnaires constructed by Hurh and others in 1979.

Even though there are no standard ways to measure acculturation for Korean immigrants and sojourners, several studies have employed Gordon's acculturation scale (Hurh et al., 1979; Lee et al., 2003). Based on Gordon's dimensions (1964/1978), mass media consumption (either the U.S. or Korean mass media) and food consumption were used to measure cultural acculturation. The media types included television, radio, books, magazines, movies, and newspapers. Thus, the respondents were asked how much time on a daily basis they spend on those above-mentioned media. The response categories for mass media consumption were on a 5-point Likert scale with response categories as follows: (a) none, (b) less than 30 minutes, (c) 30 minutes to 1 hour, (d) 1 to 2 hour, and (e) more than 2 hours. Also, respondents were asked about the frequency of their consumption of Korean and Western food. The response categories were again on a 5-point Likert scale with the following categories: (a) never, (2) rarely, (3) occasionally, (4) frequently, and (5) always.

The Internet as an alternative medium was measured in this study, in line with Gordon's cultural dimension of acculturation. In addition, Flanagin and Metzger (2001) identify the four functions of the Internet: email, conversation (e.g., chatting and Internet telephone), information giving (e.g., using personal or others' website posting), and information retrieval (e.g., downloading articles and movies). Respondents were asked how much time they spend on each of these four activities every day. The response categories were on a 5-point Likert scale: (a) less than 30 minutes, (b) 30 minutes to 1 hour, (c) 1 to 2 hour, (d) 2 to 3 hours, and (e) more than 3 hours.

English skills were also considered a measure of immigrants' and sojourners' acculturation. This study not only examined whether respondents use English (or Korean) at home, but also investigated respondents' language skills (e.g., speaking, reading, and writing). Regarding their language (Korean or English) usage patterns at home, the respondents were asked to answer how frequently they used English and Korean at home. The response categories were on a 5-point Likert scale: (a) never, (2) rarely, (3) occasionally, (4) frequently, and (5) always. In addition, for the purpose of measuring respondent's English skills, the response categories on speaking, writing, and reading skills were on a 5-point Likert scale: (a) not at all, (b) poor, (c) fair, (d) good, and (e) fluent.

With regard to measuring immigrants' and sojourners' negative perceptions in the U.S. media and their media choices, the 5-point Likert type scale were employed by circling an appropriate number ranged from (a) strongly disagree, (b) somewhat disagree, (c) neither disagree nor agree, (d) somewhat agree, and (e) strongly agree.

The respondents were asked to answer whether/how often they take part in any host country social activities or Korean religious groups on a regular basis. The response categories were (a) rarely/not at all, (b) a few times a year, (c) a few times a month, (d) about once a week, and (e) more than once a week.

In a similar vein, respondents were asked to answer 'how they feel about the dominant host society', based on Gordon's attitude receptional and behavior receptional dimensions. For instance, some of the survey questionnaire items asked the respondents' perception on interracial marriage, relationships with American people, and so on. The response categories were on a 5-point scale: (a) strongly disagree, (b)

disagree, (c) somewhat, (d) agree, and (e) strongly agree.

As noted earlier, other factors, such as gender, age, length of stay, educational level, and legal status were included as demographic variables. To note, the survey questionnaire items were based on Hurh and his colleagues' (1979) and Lee (2003)'s survey questions.

## Results

In this section, the results of analysis conducted to answer the research question and test the hypotheses posed in the current study are presented. In the first section, the results that help in answering the sole research question is made available and in the second part, the details of the hypotheses testing outcomes are provided.

To begin with, of the total of 206 survey respondents, there were 87 men and 118 women. One subject did not identify his or her gender on the survey. The survey results show that the age group from 31 to 40 years old was the largest (Male  $n = 42$ , Female  $n = 38$ ). Also, the majority of the respondents consisted of student visa holders ( $n = 65$ , 31.6% of the total sample), permanent resident/green cardholders ( $n = 36$ , 17.5% of the total sample), and U.S. citizens ( $n = 56$ , 27.2% of the total sample). Also, this study found that marital status played an important role in acculturation. Singles turned out to be more acculturated than married people (Manny Whitney:  $z$  statistics = -3.354,  $p = .001$ ).

Results for the research question:

RQ: To what extent do age, socio-economic status, length of stay, and intentions to leave or stay influence specific media preferences?

Testing the research question, this study found that several demographic characters affected the mass media consumptions of Koreans living in Kentucky. For example, age factor was negatively correlated with Korean and U.S. media consumption. Also, length of stay was positively correlated with the U.S. media consumption (see Figure 4-1). However, the result revealed that there was not only no correlation between socio-economic status and any media consumption, but also there was no correlation founded between age and any media consumption. In addition, there was no correlation between intention to stay or leave and U.S. media consumption.

Figure 4-1: Model for research question test results

Note: NS, which means 'not significant'

The sample was also highly educated. Except for 39 out of the 205 people responding to this question, they were at least in the middle of the process of obtaining a college education or already had a college degree. It appeared that singles tended to consume significantly more U.S. media (Mann Whitney: z statistic = -4.503,  $p < .001$ ). Also, the graduate student group tended to consume less Korean media (Kruskal Wallis Chi-Square = 23.294,  $df = 5$ ,  $p = .000$ ). In short, it appeared that there was a significant difference in the U.S. media consumption across the different categories of marital status, with singles apparently consuming more U.S. media than others. In addition, level of education was found to be a major factor in the amount of Korean media consumed by the respondents. For instance, the results show that respondents with graduate degrees seemed to consume less Korean media.

A correlation analysis also showed that the length of stay was positively correlated with U.S. media consumption among the respondents ( $n = 204$ ,  $\rho = .171$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, there was no significant relationship between the length of stay and Korean media consumption. This finding is in line with Kim's (1977, 1995) studies of immigrant communication patterns specified that immigrants consume more host media and consume their own language media less as time spent living in a different culture increases.

When it comes to consuming mass media (either U.S. media or Korean media), the study found that there was a strong correlation between age and mass media consumption. A correlation analysis revealed that people who were younger consumed more mass media (U.S. media:  $n = 204$ ,  $\rho = -.173$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Korean media:  $n = 206$ ,  $\rho = -.301$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In addition, this study found that educational level was associated with Korean media consumption. In other words, people who were less educated consumed more Korean media ( $n = 206$ ,  $\rho = -.306$ ,  $p < .05$ ). However, this study found that there was no significant relationship between socio-economic status and mass media consumption.

In terms of choosing favorite mass media, television (65.5%) was the most popular medium for consuming U.S. media and the Internet (67%) was the most favorite mass medium for Korean media, respectively. In this study, gender did not influence the use of either Korean or U.S. media.

Correlation analyses were conducted to test all hypotheses and uncover the relationships among variables specified in hypotheses 1 to 4 and 6, the Mann Whitney test was used for testing the fifth hypothesis.

Figure 4-2: Model of hypotheses test results

H1a: English skills of Koreans living in the U.S. are positively correlated with use of U.S. media.

H1b: Use of U.S. media is positively correlated with degree of acculturation.

The first hypothesis sought to uncover the relationship among U.S. media use, English skills, and degree of acculturation. Generally, this hypothesis was supported. The nonparametric correlation not only showed that there was a moderate relationship between English skills and U.S. media consumption ( $n = 203$ ,  $\rho = .345$ ,  $p < .01$ ), but also between U.S. media consumption and degree of acculturation ( $n = 197$ ,  $\rho = .198$ ,  $p = .003$ ).

In addition, there was a significant negative relationship between English skills and Korean media consumption ( $n = 205$ ,  $\rho = -.139$ ,  $p = .048$ ). In other words, people who did not have good English skills tended to consume more Korean media.

H2: Use of Korean media in the U.S. is negatively correlated with acculturation.

This hypothesis was also moderately supported. This study found that a significant negative relationship was found between Korean media use and degree of acculturation ( $n = 197$ ,  $\rho = -.692$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The more time a respondent spent using Korean media, the lower the respondent's degree of acculturation.



H3: Acculturation is positively correlated with the use of the host country's language (English) on the Internet.

The third hypothesis set out to find the relationship between acculturation and Internet language preferences on the Internet. A test of nonparametric correlation revealed that there was no significant relationship between Korean language use on the Internet and acculturation ( $n = 197$ ,  $\rho = .076$ ,  $p = .144$ ). Hence, the third hypothesis was not supported.

H4: Use of Korean language Internet sources will be negatively correlated with acculturation in the U.S.

The fourth hypothesis sought to uncover the relationship between degree of acculturation and Korean language use on the Internet. There was a partial relationship between those variables ( $n = 197$ ,  $\rho = -.492$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

H5: Non-immigrant Koreans living in the U.S. who intend to remain consume more U.S. media than those intending to leave the U.S.

As mentioned earlier, the length of stay was significant in relation to the consumption of U.S. media, but not Korean media. However, in order to test the fifth hypothesis, this study ran Mann Whitney test to compare the consumption of U.S. media of the respondents who intended to stay with those who did not intend to stay. Based on this test, there were no major differences in consumption of U.S. media among the respondents. In other words, the intention to stay or leave the U.S. did not affect the use of U.S. media (Mann Whitney Z statistics =  $-1.443$ ,  $p = .149$ ). Thus, this hypothesis was not supported.

H6: Perception of negative stereotypes in the U.S. media will be negatively correlated with consumption of U.S. media.

This hypothesis was to find a relationship between negative stereotypes in the U.S. media and the respondents' consumption of that media. However, the result showed that there was no significant relationship between the variables ( $n = 204$ ,  $\rho = -.057$ ,  $p = .075$ ). Thus, the hypothesis was not supported.

## **Discussion**

Most of the findings of the study are in accord with findings from previous studies of the same issues. However, the present study found some unexpected results that have not been explored by previous studies. For instance, this study discovered that marital status was a major factor in the amount of U.S. media consumed by Korean people living in Kentucky and after additional analysis, it was also discovered that it played a pivotal role in their degree of acculturation. Furthermore, this study found that Koreans who are single tended to consume significantly more U.S. media and had higher levels of acculturation. Age was also discovered to influence mass media consumption. Younger Koreans in the sample tended to consume more U.S. and Korean media than the older respondents. This could be explained by the younger Koreans' expertise with the newer communication technologies, such as the Internet.

Although the findings related to marital status were not anticipated in the research question or alluded to in the literature reviewed, they highlight the importance of including and examining these demographic factor in media usage and acculturation studies. In addition, these findings also demonstrate the need to further investigate the relations among marital status, age, media/Internet usage, and acculturation.

Apart from the unexpected results discussed above, all the other findings in relation to the research question were in accordance with previous studies. For instance, in agreement with previous research (Kim, 1977/1997), the present study found that length of stay was positively correlated with U.S. media consumption. This finding could be easily explained by the fact that as the immigrant stays longer in the U.S., the English language skill improves and so they consume more U.S. media.

The first hypothesis sought to examine the relationship between degree of acculturation and U.S. media consumption, and between U.S. media consumption and English skills. The results reveal that the degree

of acculturation, consumption of American media, and English are all positively correlated. In other words, the respondents consume more U.S. media, the more they get acculturated. The better English skills the respondents have, the more they consume U.S. media. As mentioned in the result section, this study found that Korean media and English skills were negatively correlated. This finding was expected as previous research (DeFluer et al., 1957; Kim, 1995; Richmond, 1969; Won-Doornink, 1988) had come to the same conclusions. Based on this finding, it is reasonable to state that immigrants and sojourners with better English skills consume more U.S. media.

The second hypothesis was to find out the relationship between degree of acculturation and Korean media consumption. The result shows that there was a negative relationship between Korean media and degree of acculturation. The result implies that the more the respondents' consume Korean media, the less they get acculturated into the U.S. Support for this second hypothesis is closely linked with the discussion of hypothesis one in acknowledging that the consumption of U.S. media is positively associated with a higher degree of acculturation. This finding was also expected as previous research (Mansfield-Richardson, 1999; Ryu, 1976; Walker, 1999) had come to the same conclusion.

A test of the relationship between English language Internet usage and acculturation found no significant correlation. It seems that English language usage on the Internet did not influence the acculturation process. However, there was a significantly negative relationship between Korean language Internet usage and degree of acculturation. One of the reasons why English Internet language usage did not affect the acculturation process possibly comes from the fact that as revealed in hypothesis one above, the respondents who already have English language skills also consume more U.S. media. Although these two hypotheses have not received wide testing in the literature reviewed for the present study, they were posed in the present study to explore the role of the Internet in the acculturation process.

The fifth hypothesis was to uncover the relationship between intentions to leave or stay in the U.S., among non-immigrants and U.S. media consumption. The test result showed that there was no significant relationship between the two variables. In other words, the intentions to stay or leave did not influence the respondents' media usage patterns. The reason that this hypothesis was not supported partially comes from the fact that the most important factors that influence U.S. media consumption in the U.S. are English skills, age, and marital status, regardless of the intentions to leave or stay in the U.S.

The sixth hypothesis was posed to test the relationship between negative stereotypes in the U.S. media and the consumption of that media. The result indicated that there was no correlation between the two variables. In other words, perceptions of negative stereotypes did not affect the U.S. media consumption of the respondents. One of the reasons that this hypothesis was not supported may be the fact that too few Korean characters are depicted in the U.S. media to begin with.

To summarize the six hypotheses' test result, the higher the degrees of acculturation, the better the respondents' English skills, the more the respondents consume American media, and the less the respondents use Korean media. All these findings were in accord with previous studies (e.g., Hurh, 1979; Huang, 1993 Walker, 1999).

In addition, this study has other limitations. For instance, the Korean population in the targeted cities had limited access to Korean media, compared to other large U.S. cities (e.g., Los Angeles, Atlanta, New York, and Chicago). It should also be noted that, on the average, the educational level of the sample seems higher than what would be expected in larger cities.

As illustrated in here, most Korean immigrants living in Kentucky make the most out of Korean media through the Internet. Also, one of the hypotheses test results showed that Korean Internet language usage was negatively correlated with acculturation. With increasing accessibility to the Internet, this finding implies that the Internet has become a very important mass and interpersonal communication medium. Hence, future studies need to focus more on technological developments and their influence on acculturation. The present study found that younger Koreans in Kentucky use more U.S. and Korean media, use the Internet more, and are more acculturated than Koreans in older age brackets. However, it was not established that these young Koreans are developing a multilocal sense of belonging or becoming "flexible citizens" (Ong, 1999). This is one phenomenon that calls for more studies of the role of

new communication technologies in the acculturation processes of immigrants and sojourners, especially the youth.

Overall, the findings of this study provide important insights into how the uses and gratifications perspective, the acculturation processes, demographic variables, new communication technologies, and mass media consumption converge in inter/cross cultural communication studies, relating to how immigrants and sojourners adapt to new cultures.

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