

COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION AND THE PROCESS OF  
ACCULTURATION AMONG INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM CHINA, INDIA, AND  
THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

by

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## **Abstract**

Using focus group this study found that forms of computer-mediated communication combined play a positive role in the acculturation process of the international students from China, India, and the Republic of Korea. Participants from different cultures reached general agreements that computer, the Internet, and other computer-facilitated devices and services have become functional displacements to older media in their daily life in the United States. While mass communication promotes behavior, psychological, and sociocultural adaptations of the international students, interpersonal communication is still of central importance in acculturation process and outcomes. Findings suggested that computer-mediated communication could become a major key to the formation and perfection of a pluralist American society, because (1) the computerized mediums serve as both the host and native media, and (2) forms of computer-mediated communication facilitate the cooperation between subgroups and individuals in different social arenas in American life.

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## **Dedication**

To my grandpa and grandma.



## CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

Growing diversity has always been a distinguishing demographic characteristic of the United States. The nation's minority population gained 2.4 million in a year and reached 100.7 million in 2007 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). About one in three U.S. residents is now a minority, and nearly one in every 10 U.S. counties has a minority population larger than its White population. While Hispanic and Black remained the top two largest minority groups, Asian came as the third, with 14.9 million, or 5% of the total population, on July 1, 2006. More than 33 million residents were foreign-born by 2003, of whom 49% entered the country since 1990, and 27% were of Asian origin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003, summary tables). It was projected that by 2050, people from all ethnic minority groups will constitute 49.9%, or 200 million, of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004, summary tables). The United States is not alone in these changes. New waves of population mobility have accelerated greatly the expansion of minority groups in many countries across the world, and resulted in these societies becoming increasingly multicultural.

As immigrants and international sojourners gain increasing visibility on the political, economic, and cultural arenas of the host countries, many have begun exploring their ways of life, as well as their cultures, values, and philosophies. One specific topic that has drawn much attention from academia is acculturation, which refers to a process that groups and individuals having different cultures experience when they participate in continuous contact with one another (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, p. 149). In the United States, scholars in various academic disciplines have explored the complex process of acculturation since the early days when groups of European immigrants arrived (Park, 1922, p. 5). Psychologists have conducted studies from a cross-cultural psychology perspective, and found that individuals generally make adaptations in accordance with cultural influences and expectations (Berry, 1997, p. 6). That is to say, the strategies and outcomes of acculturation are always affected by social elements.

The mass media has long been deemed as a source of social influences on acculturation. Lasswell (1948, p. 51), for example, outlined transmission of social inheritance from one generation to another as a major function of mass media. He argued that the media function by connecting various disparate subgroups in society. Ryu (1976, p. 1) proposed mass media is

important especially in the initial stage of acculturation. His reasoning was that people would first go to the media for help because they used them in their native country and are thus quite familiar with their capabilities.

Much of the research in this regard has been done under the rubric of media uses and effects. The media effects approach and the uses and gratifications paradigm, though being two traditions, actually share many similarities. One such similarity is that both traditions are aimed at explaining the outcomes and consequences of mass communication such as cultivation, behavior change, and societal influences, despite that uses and gratifications emphasizes more audience initiative (Berry, 2002, p. 533). Therefore, some researchers have proposed a combined usage of the two (e.g., Rosengren & Windahl, 1972, p. 166; A. M. Rubin & Windahl, 1986, p. 184).

The present study applies primarily uses and gratifications to discuss the role of mass media in acculturation. This is because it is always the acculturating individuals that seek out using the media to gratify their acculturation needs as well as those needs of more general categories. Uses and gratifications sees media audience as variably active communicators (Greenberg, 1974, p. 89), but their selection and use of specific medium types and content are under considerable influence by social and psychological elements (Katz, Haas, & Gurevitch, 1973, p. 165). This is still true with acculturation, during which process people's freedom of choice are often restrained and sometimes reduced by such factors as personal conditions, economic status, cultural backgrounds, and their geographic location, social position, lifestyle, and etc.

Researchers follow uses and gratifications have so far produced rich literature that documented the connections between media consumption and acculturation process. Kim (1978, p. 197), for example, found that South Korean immigrants in Chicago used less Korean-language media while their uses of American media increased. Shoemaker, Reese, and Danielson (1985, p. 734) proposed the decrease in use of Spanish-language print media as an indicator of progress in assimilation. Stilling's (1997, p. 77) study demonstrated a strong correlation between exposure to English-language television and the cultivation of acculturation among Hispanics. And Reece and Palmgreen (1996, p. 807) observed that Indian international students in the United States watch American television to learn the norms and values of the new culture. Usually these studies made media typologies in terms of not only their distribution channels, but their cultural

origin – the ethnic media and the host country media. Once established, these ethnic media have always served as a powerful tool to reinforce native cultural traditions and values, whereas media of the host country mainly serve the needs for cultural learning and adjustment.

The appearance of computer, the Internet and other forms of computer-mediated communication has brought radical changes to the media environments worldwide. Researchers have developed upon studies of the older media various new items of gratifications with respect to Internet usage. Furthermore, the fast pace of technological upgrades urges that rigorous exploration into innovations, uses, and social effects to be carried out (Flanagin & Metzger, 2001, p. 154). One group of researchers have begun looking at the acculturating individuals' behavior and views on why and how they adopt the latest computer-related technologies. Yang, Wu, Zhu, and Southwell (2004, p. 81), for example, observed an evident relationship between needs for acculturation and enhancement in the motives for and the actual consumption of U.S.-based Internet content. Ye (2005, p. 160) found that the Internet use among East Asian international students are mainly motivated by information seeking, social utility, and relaxation and entertainment. Her findings showed that the four main types of acculturative stress – fear, perceived hatred, perceived discrimination, and cultural shock – are strong predictors of social utility and relaxation and entertainment motivations. Ye suggested that the Internet serves as a primary source of information, but also a favorable means for these students to cope with pressures and displeasures during acculturation. These studies appeared to indicate that the Internet facilitate the successful acculturation by providing large amounts and variety of information with easy access and low cost. Besides, the Internet may function as a soothing comfort so that people can be healthily acculturated. But there are some disputes. While in the past the availability of ethnic media was limited in most communities, today's Internet, with its huge capacity and global popularization, has dramatically enhance ethnic media's influence in cultural maintenance. Kong (2006, p. 1) argued that a similarity between use pattern of the Internet media – both host and ethnic – and the traditional media use would suggest that the Internet become a hindrance to the adaptation toward a new culture. Jeffres (2000, p. 504) posited that the new communication technologies offer individuals the opportunities for both identity sustainment and identity avoidance at the same time. People and cultural subgroups can now form and maintain social ties and networks more easily than through traditional channels. But meanwhile, the compute-mediated communication allows individuals from diversified

cultures to interact through different ways and formats – words, dialogues, audio and video – so that the uneasiness, diffidence, and unfamiliarity commonly known to cross-cultural real-life interpersonal communication are greatly diminished.

The complexity of acculturation process and of audience and media uses and gratifications has made any inquiry about their interrelation not an easy task. The Internet and other computer-mediated communication technologies and devices that added to the media environment have further complicated the issue. First, the total body of literature devoted to linking the computer-mediated communication and acculturation is relatively small, and there is no theoretical framework built so far. Second, many studies have either investigated only one or two forms of the computer-mediated technologies, or related forms of communication to only one or several aspects of acculturation. There has been inconsistency in the operational definition of acculturation. Acculturation is a complex social phenomenon that occurs at different levels – individual and group levels, follows different courses – behavior and value adaptation, and produces different outcomes – integration and assimilation. Researchers, for the purpose of specific studies, have intended to measure acculturation only by certain features while excluding the others. Third, the significance of mass media in cultural continuation or discontinuation is still likely to change, thanks to the vast growth in communication technologies as well as the rapid movements of ethnics in a world of global cultures.

This study was designed to reexamine the relationship between mass media and acculturation in the current new communication environment. The present and future communication technologies and the increasing frequency and importance of multi-channel computer-facilitated media uses necessitate that repetitive research to be conducted over time. While most studies in the related topics have been quantitative, this study will use the focus group which is qualitative. With the rapid and constant development in computer-mediated communication technologies, variables created for quantitative research have largely been indefinite and inconsistent, and findings have become insufficient and inapplicable quickly. These defects make an alternative qualitative approach both appropriate and necessary. Preliminary results from media users would be helpful to detect and define new variables, and to polish the conceptualization and operationalization of existing variables for further quantitative research. The focus group strategy, with its strength in exploring behavior and attitudes through group brainstorming, serves well the exploratory nature of this study.

The research focuses on one group of the acculturating population in the United States – the international students. More specifically, the study participants were students from three representative Asian countries – China, the Republic of Korea, and India. For the past 30 years, the population of international students has been rising. In 2004, at least 2.5 million tertiary students were abroad, representing a 41% increase since 1999 (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2006, p. 34). Six countries – the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Australia, and Japan – hosted 67% of the world's foreign students, with the United States – at 23% -- taking the lead. East Asia and the Pacific had the largest group of students abroad, accounting for 29% of the global total. China was the world's largest place of origin, followed by Japan, and the Republic of Korea (p. 43). In the United States, international student enrollments in higher education increased by 3% to a total of 582,984 in the 2006/07 academic year, 59% of which were from Asia (Institute of International Education, 2007, para. 1). India, China, and the Republic of Korea were the top three countries of origin, accounting for 37% of the total U.S. international enrollments. This huge flow of students and scholars, along with the emerging global economy and increasing exchanges and interdependence among nations, is noticeably altering characteristics of both the student body and faculty, and higher education itself (Paige, 1990, p. 161). Another reason for such a focus is that students from India, China, and the Republic of Korea have very different cultural backgrounds than that of the United States. Since cultural distance has been widely recognized as an influential factor in acculturation, this study may add to the existing literature with some first-hand information and explanation from people who are currently undergoing the process. Furthermore, while the neighboring China and the Republic of Korea share much commonality, India, which is at the Southern part of Asia, demonstrates many differences. One conspicuous difference is the much higher English proficiency of Indian students compared to their Chinese and South Korean counterparts. Differences in other areas, such as family values, traditions and religions, may also be detected to affect media uses and acculturation, and the correlation between the two.

Therefore, the primary research question of this study is:

What role does the computer-mediated communication play in the process of acculturation among international students from China, India, and the Republic of Korea? The

various forms of computer-mediated communication include computer, the Internet, and all other technologies and devices that have enabled and facilitated computer-mediated communication.

To address the issue, it is necessary to examine different forms of computer-mediated communication separately, looking into how they function at various aspects of the acculturation process and their impacts on some important mediating factors, resulting in several secondary research questions: (1) Do these forms of computer-mediated communication combined serve as functional alternatives and displacements to older media formats? This question assesses the importance of computer-mediated communication forms in the daily life of international students. The next question is: (2) What are the similarities and dissimilarities of computer-mediated communication uses for acculturative gratifications among students from China, India, and the Republic of Korea, and what are the reasons for any differences? Comparative studies on computerized digital media uses and acculturation process have been scarce. Most comparisons were made across media forms or between host and ethnic media, and no record of comparison among cultural groups can be located. Therefore, findings of this study may provide pieces of the story which are now missing.

## CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review

### Uses and Gratifications

#### *Paradigm and Assumptions*

In the 1950s and 1960s, research on media effects experienced a shift from a mechanistic perspective to the idea of limited effects (Sparks, 2002, p. 58). Rather than viewing audience members as passive and reactive and assuming mass media's uniform and powerful influence on audiences, scholars began to emphasize that individuals are not all the same and they react to media content in different ways. Some have suggested that numerous other elements might intervene between communicator and message receivers. Individual demographic characteristics, perception processes and economic status, channels of message dissemination, and the business nature of the media are just a few of a complexity of these mediating factors. It could be argued, accordingly, that mass media are not the sole cause for audience effects but only one source of influence in the social and psychological context, despite it, being an essential one (Rubin, 2002, p. 525).

Uses and gratifications sees media audience as variably active communicators who seek out using the media to satisfy their needs, or go to certain media content for those needs (Greenberg, 1974, p. 89). This mediated communication was termed by McQuall, Blumler, and Brown (1972, p. 135) as medium-person interaction, indicating that the process is not one-way. Media audiences are more willing participants than being overpowered by the media, though they are not equally active at all times (Katz et al., 1973, p. 164). Uses and gratifications underscores the important role that social and psychological elements play in mediated communication. It argues that individuals select and use specific medium types and content under considerable influence by social role and psychological predisposition (p. 165). Rosengren (1974, p. 270) outlined an elaborate paradigm to epitomize how differences in individual biological and psychological needs, intra- and extra-individual characteristics, combinations of problems felt, motives for seeking gratifications, patterns of media consumption and other

behavior, as well as differences in the media and other societal structures can constrain direct media effects.

The uses and gratifications paradigm is grounded in five assumptions initially sketched by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1974 (p. 517) and have been constantly revised since then. A contemporary version of these assumptions are: (1) communication behavior is goal-directed, purposive, and motivated (Rubin, 2002, p. 527), (2) people are the initiator of communication (Katz et al., p. 517), (3) a host of social and psychological elements mediate the communication process (Rubin, p. 528), (4) functional alternatives in the real life compete with the media to satisfy certain needs, and (5) media effects are mediated by people's own initiative.

### *Typologies of Gratification*

Since the early days, gratifications researchers have investigated motivations for people's use of certain media content. Each major study has yielded its own lists of audience needs and classification scheme of media functions. Herzog (1940, p. 64), for example, described audience's motives for listening to a radio quiz program, *Professor Quiz*. Later Herzog (1944, p. 3) discovered that women listeners sought from radio daytime serials emotional-release, wishful-thinking, and advice-seeking gratifications. Berelson (1949, p. 111) found that people read newspaper because they wanted to understand public affairs, to use it as a daily tool for living, to gain social prestige, and to escape. Such research was methodologically descriptive, and it gave way to studies of media functions and influence on individuals during the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1948 Lasswell (p. 51) proposed three main functions of the media on a macro-sociological level. Wright (1960, p. 605) developed Lasswell's interpretation on both the macro- and micro-sociological levels, suggesting that the media served the functions of surveillance for society, correlation for subgroups, cultural transmission for individual, and entertainment for the cultural system as a whole. Weiss (1971, p. 309) postulated a bi-functional view that audience needs are categorized dichotomously into either informational-educational or entertaining-escapist types. Others (Schramm, 1949, p. 259; Schramm, Lyle, & Parker, 1961, p. 173; Pietilä, 1969, p. 199) distinguished media gratifications between "immediate" and "deferred" sets, or media effects between physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects, or audience gratifications between surveillance and escape uses.



McQuall, Blumler, and Brown (1972, p. 135) drafted a typology consisting of categories of diversion, personal relationships, personal identity, and surveillance. Katz et al. (1973, p. 513) viewed mass communication as a helpful way in individuals' maintenance of a connection, or, sometimes a disconnection, with self, other people, or society. Based on this central notion, Katz and his colleagues attempted to comprehend a whole range of individual gratifications sought out of a large variety of social and psychological needs, and they developed a classification of different media in satisfying those important needs. Greenberg (1974, p. 87) identified five factors of British children's gratifications from television viewing – habit, arousal, companionship, relaxation and forget, which contributed quite evenly to the respondents' viewing behavior. Rubin (1979, p. 109) replicated Greenberg's (p. 71) investigation in the United States, adding into Greenberg's (p. 87) list a sixth motivation – learning. In a later study, Rubin (1981, p. 141) adopted a similar technique and extended his sample to older adults.

Communication researchers made typology of gratifications in an effort to explain why people go to the medium or its content (Greenberg, 1974, p. 89). The researchers investigated whether and to which extent similar or different gratifications are obtained from specific medium or content, so as to conceptualize that certain media are superior to other media in gratifying certain needs. This methodology permits one to examine how the media gratify and influence individuals (Katz et al., 1973, p. 165). The ultimate aim is to explore the relationship between the attributes of the media, both perceived and real, and the social and psychological functions they fulfill (p. 179). This goal is made attainable, as individuals choose certain media and certain types of content in their various social roles and out of their specific psychological dispositions. Lull (1980, p. 197), for example, examined the social aspects of individual television uses. He suggested that television could be used as an environmental resource, to regulate behavior and facilitate dialogue, to promote or prevent affiliation, and to enhance social learning, competence and dominance. Some researchers (e.g., Conway & Rubin, 1991, P. 443; A. M. Rubin, 1985, p. 241) managed to link reduced life satisfaction and expectation to television viewing for escapist reasons. Perse and Rubin (1990, p. 37) reported that people with restricted mobility exhibited more ritualized media behavior and reliance on television to compensate for their increased physical and mental isolation. Bryant and Zillmann (1984, p. 1) tested the influence of mood, arguing that boredom leads to selecting exciting content while high pressure results in choosing relaxing programs. In addition, Johnson (1995, p. 522) concluded that gore, thrill, independence,

and problem watching were the four motives could cause differences in adolescents' cognitive and affective interpretations about graphic horror movies. Plentiful studies have tried to connect motives and behavior, goals and outcomes, so that one can gain insight into "what effect a given use made of the mass media, or a given gratification obtained from them, may have" (Rosengren & Windahl, 1972, p.176).

### ***Functional Alternatives and Choices of Media***

Contemporary uses-and-gratifications research has furthered people's understanding about media uses and effects in the ever-changing political, cultural, economic, and technological environments. Besides typology of audience, media and communication gratifications, some researchers made comparison across media – including the evolving communication technologies such as videocassette recorders (VCR), the Internet and the World Wide Web (WWW), and cellular phone -- with respect to their appropriateness and effectiveness. Cowles (1989, p. 83), for example, reported that people felt interactive media have more personal characteristics than non-interactive media. In 1993 Perse and Courtright (p. 485) found that the computer, compared to interpersonal tools such as conversation and telephone, was inferior in social presence and less helpful to meet personal needs. Several years later as computer and the Internet began proliferating into ordinary people's daily life, Ferguson and Perse (2000, p. 157) explored the prospect of the WWW to displace television by examining whether uses of the WWW were undertaken for reasons similar to those of television. Their findings showed that the WWW may functions similarly in providing information and diversion, but Web surfing was still unparallel to television viewing as an excellent means for relaxation (p. 155). Besides, Flanagin and Metzger (2001, p. 153) studied the use of Internet functions in the context of also using other types of media. The comparisons showed that many uses of the Internet were similar to those of the traditional media. In particular, the conversation features of the Internet, realized via email, resembled making telephone calls, and the online information seeking and retrieving could be analogue to reading newspapers, books, and magazines, or watching television.

Wright (1974, p. 209) wrote that a uses and gratifications approach to mass communication is essentially functional. One strategy of functional analysis, which as an approach concerns primarily the consequences of widespread social phenomena including mass

communication, is to observe new medium being introduced into society through successive stages of its augmentation in scope and significance. Although functions are not equivalent to purposes, motivations or needs of communicators at both ends of the messages conveyed, it is possible to conceive of gratifications obtained, or the satisfaction of felt needs, as functional. That the media is just one form of communication for people to select and use is a key assumption whereupon the general view of uses of gratifications is upheld. The media offer functional alternatives to other unmediated ways so that people can seek to satisfy their needs, motives, or desires in many facets of the social and psychological circumstances surrounding them. Rosengren and Windahl (1972, p. 166), for example, noted that people might seek media to supplement or substitute for real-life personal interaction and identification. Flaherty, Pearce, and Rubin (1998, p. 250) suggested that very introverted people might use the Internet as a functional alternative to interpersonal communication.

The various channels of the media compete among themselves for audiences in similar fashions. Each medium may become a functional alternative to one another, or even several others combined, at a time when the medium gratifies better people's needs and wants. The pioneering study by Katz et al. (1973, p. 164) indicated that newspapers served the best for people's sociopolitical integration, while books were best for self perception. Cinema and books, compared to television, were more helpful as means of escape. Television was the least specialized medium as it could meet a diversity of personal and sociopolitical needs. Movies and newspapers, on the contrary, were deemed as the most special or the least multifunctional. Katz and his associates suggested the interchangeability of the television, radio, newspapers, books, and movies. Although none of these channels was permanent displacement to its competitors, it is possible to argue that they may become functional alternatives at a specific time and under some unique circumstances, because they perform superiorly for certain groups of users in their pursuit of certain gratifications. In studying the role of television, Cazeneuve (1974, p. 215) argued that those functions that correspond to more general needs, though specific to television, could and did find satisfaction by other means. Eighmey and McCord (1998, p. 187) reported similarities to the types of uses and gratifications between Web sites and other media, while new dimensions called personal involvement and continuing relationship were observed. Kaye (1998, p. 21) outlined six Web use motivations, and investigated their impact on traditional mass media, especially television.

Again, social and psychological elements affect media functions and personal choices, as this approach assumes in its inception. Today's communicators have "a wider availability of alternative channels, a broader conception of the potential channels, and the capacity for using more diversified message- and interaction-seeking strategies" (A. M. Rubin & Rubin, 1985, p. 39). Resourceful communicators might use several new channels furnished with advanced technologies and devices -- such as e-mail, on-line chat room, and cellular phone -- to maintain interpersonal communication (Stafford, Kline, & Dimmick, 1999, p. 659). Still they talk on wired phone and make face-to-face conversations. Resourceful communicators are less likely to be dependent on any given form of communication, and they tend to seek multiple ways to obtain gratifications (Rubin, 2002, p. 537).

Freedom of choice, however, is often restrained and sometimes reduced. Individuals' physical conditions, psychological disposition, and economic status, as well as their geographic location, social position, personality, lifestyle, and life satisfaction -- to name just a few -- are always the determinant factors of media behavior (A. M. Rubin, 1985, p. 241). Armstrong and Rubin (1989, p. 84), for example, found that people with restricted mobility felt face-to-face interaction was an unsatisfactory way of having themselves heard. So they resorted to radio, telephoning into talk shows to express opinions. Similarly, the Internet becomes a functional alternative to face-to-face conversation for some extreme introverts, who are anxious about direct contact and find interpersonal communication unrewarding (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000, p. 175).

### ***Gratifications, the Internet, and Development in Communication Technologies***

Numerous studies have applied uses and gratifications to the Internet since it first added to the electronic media environment (e.g., Charney & Greenberg, 2001, p. 397; Chou & Hsiao, 2000, p. 65; Dimmick, Kline & Stafford, 2000, p. 227; Eighmey & McCord, 1998, p. 187; Ferguson & Perse, 2000, p. 155; Flanagin & Metzger, 2001, p. 153; Kaye, 1998, p. 21; Korgaonkar & Wolin, 1999, p. 53; Lin, 1999, p. 79; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000, p. 175; Parker & Plank, 2000, p. 43; Perse & Greenberg-Dunn, 1998, p. 435; Song, LaRose, Eastin & Lin, 2004, p. 395; Stafford & Stafford, 2001, p. 22). The unique facets of the new medium have renewed interests in questioning media attendance, including people's motivations for switching to, and gratifications sought and obtained from it. Followers of the uses and gratifications

tradition see the popularity of the Internet resulting largely from individuals' active selection. Thus, they have anticipated that exploring the relationships between communicators, the Internet, and various intervening factors would further validate and advance the core tenets of this paradigm (Morris & Ogan, 1996, p. 39; Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996, p. 4). In the study of Dimmick et al. (p. 227), nearly 50% of respondents reported less usage of telephone since they adopted e-mail. The results showed that telephone served more diversified needs, but still, consumers expected that e-mail allows them to have more opportunities to be satisfied. Dimmick and his colleagues concluded that the two mediums do not substitute for each other.

Researchers have developed upon studies of older media, especially television, new items of gratifications with respect to the Internet usage. Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999, p. 56), for example, observed that an explosion of information, higher level of interaction, security, privacy, and socialization concerns, and economic control are some new dimensions of gratifications obtained from the Internet. Flanagin and Metzger (2001, p. 167) sketched a list of the Web surfing gratifications: problem solving, persuading others, relationship maintenance, status seeking, and personal insight. Charney and Greenberg (2001, p. 379) proposed some other factors, such as coolness, sights and sounds, career, and peer identity. Song et al. (2004, p. 385) put on the lists another important item – the virtual community gratification. In addition, Stafford and Stafford's (2001, p. 22) study indicated that the search function of the Internet was a major motivation for its users, compared to more conventional information seeking and entertainment gratifications. Interactivity actualized by simply clicking and connectivity via emails or other online communication tools, as Ye (2005, p. 156) noted, are principal gratifications that the Internet provides. The big amount and variety of online materials also enhance the chance that numerous other needs are satisfied. Furthermore, Internet surfing may entail bigger cognitive involvement, due to its constant demands on the simultaneous pointing, clicking, comprehending, and selecting (Lin, 2002, p. 3). Ye argued that the Internet users assume more control over the content and formats of media messages than television viewers.

The active audience assumption pivotal in uses and gratifications paradigm aligns well with forms of computer-mediated communication – such as the Internet, PDAs, and video games – and the new technologies – such as broadband, WAP for cellular phone, and the peer-to-peer-based streaming media. As Ruggiero (2000, p. 3) argued, uses and gratifications has been “a cutting-edge theoretical approach” in the early stages of new communication media. This

approach, according to Rubin (2002, p. 541), will be “especially valuable” for understanding a newer and more interactive media environment characteristic of the ever evolving communication forms facilitated by innovations and improvements in technologies. New channels and technologies give users more control over their communication activities by constantly breaking time and space limits and drastically lowering costs and charges. To address this, some researchers (e.g., Charney & Greenberg, 2001, p. 379; LaRose et al., 2001, p. 395; Lin, 1999, p. 79) have conducted studies from a novel prospective perspective, asking respondents what they expect from the Internet in the future as opposed to what they seek in the present and have obtained in the past. Ariel (2004, p. 24) looked into the relationship between Web site interactivity and users’ gratification expectancy. Respondents reported higher expectations for their escapist, emotional, integrative, and cognitive gratifications when they perceived that the Web sites offered larger space for interactivity.

In respect of computer-mediated communication technologies, scholars have begun promoting an adaptation of the uses and gratifications framework to the extended research scope. One reason for relating mass media consumption to newly developed computer-facilitated technologies is to examine whether gratifications change with changed media attributes, and if so, in which ways (Williams, Phillips, & Lum, 1985, p. 244). Another reason is to probe deeper into how forms of computer-mediated communication are perceived, sought, used, and expected by an audience ready to move into the era of ubiquitous computing, human-machine interacting, and net-connecting. Sherry, Lucas, Greenberg, and Lachlan (2006, p. 213), for example, defined six gratifications – competition, challenge, social interaction, diversion, fantasy, and arousal – to explain why people play video games. Reinecke, Trepte, and Behr’s (2007) interview study revealed that female gamers tended to play computer and video games for challenge and escapism (p. 7), and they play online games mainly for social interaction. Zaman, Leuven, and Abeele (2007, p. 1) constructed a likeability framework for video games and other similar fun-generating applications and devices, which enumerated five important gratifications of preschoolers: challenge and control, social experiences, fantasy, creative and constructive expressions, and body and senses. They accepted gratifications approach’s fundamental assumptions, detailing the mediating effects of the basic needs, children’s characteristics, and societal factors.

## **Acculturation and Media**

### ***Acculturation: Concepts, Strategies, and Mediating Factors***

The complex process of acculturation has been seriously studied by many scholars in various academic disciplines for decades. Research has primarily been conducted in the cross-cultural psychology sphere, which concerns the important impact of cultural context on individual behavioral development (Berry, 1997, p. 5). Psychologists working in this field have investigated what happens to individuals who have been established in one cultural context when they attempt to locate an appropriate new place in another one. Their studies have yielded substantial evidence to suggest that individuals generally behave in correspondence with cultural influences and expectations (p. 6). Though culture is a mighty shaper of behavior, the outcomes are not uniformed or easily predictable. Individuals may change their behavioral repertoire to adapt to the new setting, or, they may follow strictly old conventions as they did in the previous setting, or somehow in between. This whole process of acculturation involves some complex patterns of continuity when people go about their lives in the new society. As Kim (1988, p. 37-38) wrote: “the process of change over time that takes place within individuals who have completed ...socialization process in one culture and then come into continuous, prolonged, first-hand contact with a new and unfamiliar culture.”

In 1936 Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (p. 149) presented one of the earliest definition of acculturation: “acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.” Acculturation can take the forms such as resistance to change, stimulating new cultural forms, and delayed adaptation. Although conceptually neutral and double-headed, in practice acculturation tends to imply more change in one group than in the other (Berry, 1990, p. 236).

A number of sociologists have simply equated acculturation with assimilation, or defined assimilation as an extreme form of acculturation. Assimilation, initially defined as a process of interpenetration and fusion by sharing among different groups in a common cultural life (Park & Burgess, 1921, p. 735), has later been viewed as a one-way, linear process in which individuals or groups adopt another culture so completely that they no longer has any characteristics identifying them with their native culture and no longer has any loyalties to their native culture

(Rose, 1956, p. 557). This view, however, tends to simplify the complexity of assimilation process and consequences (Gordon, 1964, p. 67). Gordon (p. 81) underscored that assimilation has multiple aspects by differentiating behavioral assimilation from structural assimilation, as well as from cultural assimilation. It is only upon completion of structural assimilation, Gordon argued, that smaller groups and cultures in society eventually fade into larger host groups and cultures at the expense of the disappearance of their separate ethnic identity and the evaporation of their distinctive values.

With the global trends of migration and immigration, many societies have become culturally plural – people from distinct cultural backgrounds come to live together in a diverse society (Berry, 1997, p. 8-9). All cultural groups and their individual members in these societies, no matter what situations – dominant or non-dominant – they are in, are confronted with the issue of acculturation. People have to decide: (1) how to deal with cultural identity and characteristics – whether to value and maintain them and to what extent such effort should be; and (2) the patterns of their contact and interaction within ingroup and outgroup.

Berry (1991, p. 11) presented a conceptual framework which consists of four types of acculturation behavior. Assimilation is defined when individuals value other cultures and are ready to abandon their own cultural identity. At its opposite is the separation strategy, which means individuals are determined to hold their original culture, and thus, avoid attentively interaction with outgroups. The third option is integration; individuals place a value on both cultures, regarding themselves not only as members of the native group, but part of a larger societal network. Finally, when there is little interest in either cultural maintenance or involvement in others, marginalization is defined. Integration is usually the best strategy for successful adaptation – individuals or groups make relatively stable and beneficial changes in response to environmental demands. Marginalization is the worst choice, while both assimilation and separation involve one loss for one gain (Berry, 1990, p. 237). A possible reason for differences in outcomes, as Berry (1997, p. 10) suggested, is that people who choose to follow the integration strategy often have mutual positive attitudes, a willingness to reach out into both communities, and are more open and flexible in personality. Since the period of acculturation is rather prolonged, it is very likely that individuals try different options and make adjustments until eventually they decide which strategy is the most suitable and satisfying (Kim, 1990, p.



200). However, the sequence of adopting different strategies is highly variable, and no timetable can be drawn to predict each step of the adaptation.

In any culturally plural societies, usually the host groups are numerically, economically, and politically more powerful than those immigrating groups. Even among different immigrating groups, the powers are not equally distributed. These inequalities in power affect the course of adaptation. Berry (1991, p. 40) argued that the integration strategy could only be pursued in societies where dominant groups are inclusive and adaptive to cultural diversity. Alienation, discrimination, or forced assimilation on the part of dominant groups would result in non-dominant groups' negative reactivity. It is also necessary that one examine the societal context of the origin settlement so as to reach a comprehensive understanding about the acculturation process.

On the group and individual levels, still, there are a bunch of social and psychological factors that influence the process and outcomes of acculturation. Searle and Ward (1990, p. 449), for example, proposed a distinction between psychological and sociocultural adaptations. They argued that successful psychological adaptation – self-awareness of cultural identity and mental satisfaction in living in the new cultural context – is positively correlated to personality variables, important life events, and support from society, whereas sociocultural adaptation is predicted by cultural knowledge and attitudes, as well as frequency and manner of intergroup contact. The acculturation strategies pursued and distance between cultures are two key factors that influence both aspects. Later Aycan and Berry (1996, p. 240) introduced the economic adaptation as a third type, suggesting that migration motivation, together with perceptions of kinship disconnection and status loss, are some of the strongest predictors of its achievement.

Furthermore, various pre-existing individual-level variables, such as demographic features, personality, cultural distance, status in the original society, and expectation on the new environment, may also have a big impact. In particular age has a known effect on the way acculturation will proceed (Soruco, 1996, p. 108). The process would generally go smoothly when the acculturating individuals are very young, such as preschoolers. But chances are that these children easily take on assimilation instead of striving for reaching both cultures, because in their cases the hosting culture becomes familiar, whereas the native culture is remote and incomprehensible. Education also appears as a consistent factor related with successful acculturation. This is because education, in itself an enrichment to people's overall capabilities,

is still a correlate to valuable social and economic resources, such as higher incomes and supportive social networks. Furthermore, people always learn the hosting society's history, culture, language, values, and norms through education in their own society – a chance to pre-acculturate. Another influential factor is cultural distance – the similarity or dissimilarity between the two cultures (Ward & Kennedy, 1992, p. 175; Ward & Searle, 1991, p. 209). Greater cultural distance may generate greater needs for cultural learning, and thus, greater pressure and stress during the process. Here the language elements play a vital role of affecting and mediating acculturation, both prior to and during the process. Research has showed that how different the two languages are and how well people acquire a second language are often determinant to cultural group membership and identity (Abrams, O'Connor, & Giles, 2002, p. 225; Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000, p. 709; Masgoret & Ward, 2006, p. 63).

Cross-cultural adaptation involves both emotional and behavioral adjustment processes (Berry, 1990, p. 241), or sociocultural and psychological processes proposed by Searle and Ward (1990, p. 449). Berry (1980, p. 20) formulated the idea of behavioral shifts, meaning the social skills acquisition. Berry (1990, p. 248) noted that individuals and groups may hold varying attitudes toward the ways of acculturation, and their actual behavior may vary accordingly. The acculturation strategies are comprised of these attitudes and behavior. Similarly, Gordon (1964, p. 67) mentioned cultural assimilation and behavioral assimilation. While behavioral assimilation is associated with the degree of actual contact and involvement, cultural assimilation relates to a willingness to pursue cultural learning or cultural maintenance. Searle and Ward's (1990, p. 449) approach was slightly different. In their interpretation, sociocultural adaptation was defined as individuals and groups' fit in different facets of a new setting, and can be measured with the amount of practical difficulties they experience in daily life. Psychological adaptation refers to individuals' emotional and psychological wellbeing. In cases where fierce cultural conflict exists, individuals may experience culture shock (Oberg, 1960, p. 177) or acculturative stress (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987, p. 491), which may lead to psychological disturbances. Hence, the amount and severity of the emotional stresses and the ways in which individuals cope with these stresses are some major indicators of psychological adjustment (Ward, 1996, p. 124).

*Media, Uses and Gratifications, and Acculturation*

Regardless of what concepts formulated or approaches taken, something appears to be common. First, acculturation takes place at both the macro-sociological – group or collective – level and the micro-sociological – individual – level. Acculturation has both the external – behavioral – aspect and the internal – psychological or cultural – aspect. The successful acculturation is bicultural – meaning that individuals are simultaneously adaptive to both cultures (Cameron & Lalonde, 1994, p. 514; Szapocznik & Kurtines, 1993, p. 400). Second, social and psychological factors have big and enduring influence on the acculturation process and outcomes. Third, all individuals, though being influenced by numerous different personal and social elements, hold certain universal needs that all humans deem should be met, including the need for making sense of the surrounding environment and the need for having some interaction with others (Taft, 1977, p. 122). To satisfy these basic needs, individuals will be engaged in different activities – using mass media would be one of the primary choices (Laroche, Kim, Hui, & Tomiuk, 1998, p. 418). This is because mass media in modern society is probably the most available, accessible, and affordable source of information. Through using different types of media, people gain directly all kinds of information and knowledge about the host country (Yang et al., 2004, p.82). In addition, the media may provide useful advices, recommendations, and links for such crucial acculturative practices as host-country language learning and conducting interpersonal communication with the outgroups. As Shibutani and Kwan (1965, p. 99) noted, people's participation into a new society may largely depend on their communication patterns and information-seeking choices.

That the mass media could serve acculturation needs is not new to scholars in communication and cross-cultural adaptation disciplines. In 1922 Park observed increased print and radio consumptions by European immigrants in the United States for the purpose of learning novelty and news (p. 9). Lasswell (1948, p. 51) outlined social transmission as a major function of mass media. He argued that communication technologies connected various disparate components – including cultural subgroups – to convey social heritages and bring about social changes. Kim (1988, p. 114) suggested that the scope of media coverage was much broader beyond daily events, but extended to values, norms, and perspectives for interpreting the society in terms of its politics, cultures, economics, and traditions. Kim viewed acculturation interweaved with four types of communication: intrapersonal communication, interpersonal

communication, mass media behavior, and the communication environment or macro-social system. Individuals and cultural groups become acculturated through learning how to communicate in the host or dominant culture. Ryu (1976, p. 1) proposed that mass media play a crucial role in the initial stage of acculturation. The reason is rather a simple one: – all these forms of media are used by them in the native society. When people first enter a new environment, they have little chance, technique, or confidence to originate interpersonal communication, so that their uncertainty, bewilderment, and anxiety are alleviated. Material resources are scant, and helping facilities are bizarre and difficult to operate. Hence, it is natural that the newcomers turn to the media – newspapers, broadcast radio and television, and of course the Internet – for answers, solutions, and guidelines, because they've been using these channels all the times in their native society (Yang et al., 2004, p. 83).

An extensive body of literature has documented the connections between media consumption and process of acculturation. Keshishian (2000, p. 93), for example, took an autobiographical approach and provided an insider's view of the process of adapting to the host culture and media's role as social and cultural agents that facilitate the process. Shah (1991, p. 311) reported that use of American communication channels – mass and interpersonal – was positively correlated with their attitude toward cross-cultural marriage, whereas use of ethnic media was negatively correlated. Kim (1978, p. 197) surveyed Korean immigrants in Chicago, and found that their uses of ethnic media decreased while their uses of American media increased. Later Subervi-Velez's (1986, p. 71) study of American Latinos produced similar results. Besides, Shoemaker and his colleagues (1985, p. 734) suggested that decreased use of Spanish-language print media was an indicator of progress in assimilation.

Many studies in media uses for acculturation gratifications were focused on television before the Internet dominates. Reece and Palmgreen (2000, p. 807), for example, found that Indian international students in the United States seek out using American television for acculturation needs. Subervi-Velez and Necochea (1990, p. 315) reported a correlation between Latino children's exposure to Spanish-language television and their speaking Spanish at school and with friends. Stilling's (1997, p. 77) study demonstrated a strong correlation between exposure to English-language television and the cultivation of acculturation among Hispanics. Johnson (1996, p. 289) examined Hispanic women's level of assimilation by measuring their English-language use and proficiency. Respondents who identified the most American television

characters and situations also reported more frequent and better English speaking. The host television often functions as an impetus in adaptation toward the new culture, for it provides gratifications of language content and cultural references accompanied with audio and visual context that the audience may find both helpful and entertaining.

Obviously when dealing with multicultural interaction, media are categorized in terms of not only their distribution channels, but their cultural origin. The ethnic media, therefore, refer to those media outlets operated by members or institutes within the non-dominant cultural groups, and are usually published or broadcast in their native language. Once established, these ethnic media have always served as a powerful tool to reinforce native cultural traditions and values. Bekken (1997, p. 490) examined community newspapers published in languages other than English in Chicago from 1880 to 1930. He argued that these early ethnic print press helped shape and voice a collective response to challenges facing the non-dominant groups as a whole. This function has persisted so far, especially after ethnic television began to proliferate, and thus, provided closer links among group members as well as between friends and relatives physically separated in the two countries (Jeffres, 2000, p. 504). Jeffres and Hur (1980, p. 10) argued that ethnic media formed an indispensable part of life to people who are unassimilated and still cling to the old ways and traditions in their native country. They observed a positive relationship between the ethnic mass media use and such measures as ethnic identity – referring to an individual's self-awareness and recognition of one's membership in a cultural group or groups (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988, p. 92) – and native language speaking. Their findings also indicated that the ethnic media content satisfies audience needs by emphasizing news about their own communities and native countries, as well as by providing a wide range of uniquely tailored information about life, learning, and entertainment. The foreign-language press in the United States, as Hwang and Zhou (1999, p. 5) noted, serves mainly three functions: (1) providing immigrant groups whose native language is not English a medium of communication; (2) serving as a source for news about the home country; and (3) aiding the process of assimilation by offering knowledge and advice on the lifestyle of the host country. Soruco (1996, p. 98) underscored uses of ethnic media to preserve cultural bonds and native language, to gain guidance about how to start a new life, and to enjoy entertainment so that feelings of isolation and disorientation are lessened. Therefore, while host-country media mainly serve the assimilation needs –to receive information about participation in the new culture and to gain a

higher acceptance of American cultural values, ethnic media can be functional both back and forth.

Uses and gratifications is a valuable way to explore the connections between media and acculturation. Uses and gratifications posits that the mass media satisfy human needs in the form of strengthening or weakening a connection with others (Katz et al., 1973, p.179). Cultural environments, members in and outside their groups, and old traditions and new values are, undoubtedly, part of this “others.” As individuals assume different social roles in different social institutes, their needs may be varying, so their media gratifications sought and obtained. Katz and other researchers (1973, p. 517) summarized the social origins of audience needs and gratifications, which included (1) tensions and conflicts produced by social situation that compel individuals to seek mass media for easement; (2) awareness of problems stemmed from social situation that leads individuals to look at media content for information; (3) inadequacy of real-life opportunities to satisfy certain needs, which then directs individuals to the media for complement, supplement, or substitute; (4) the affirmation and reinforcement of certain values endowed by society that can be assisted through media consumption; and (5) collective expectations of familiarity with certain media materials that individuals must fulfill to sustain membership of valued social groupings. In the case of acculturation, people switch their role from natives to immigrants or from citizens to sojourners or refugees. Their relationship with the referential social institutes changes fundamentally. While some commonly shared audience gratifications -- habit, arousal, companionship, relaxation, and forget (Greenberg, 1974, p. 87) – remain, the acculturating people, faced with new social situations, also use mass media to ease tensions, seek solutions and opportunities, learn norms and values, and strengthen group ties. This mixture of gratifications might be categorized together as the *acculturation gratifications*, despite their similarity to the social aspects – such as personal relationships and identity (McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972, p. 135) – of media use by those who have no acculturation motivations.

### ***Computer-mediated Communication and Acculturation***

Though literature in the uses and gratifications of the Internet and other computer-mediated communication forms and technologies has been expanding rapidly, only a small portion of it was concerned about acculturation. Of these few, Lillie (1998, para. 1) explored

uses of television and Internet among U.S. Latinos for the needs of cultural identity construction. All participants to the panel study, which was conducted a decade ago, reported using at least two of the many technologies provided by the Internet. The findings revealed that some technologies such as email gratified the users by connecting them with other Latinos to share useful social information, knowledge, and experience. Other technologies, such as chat rooms and discussion forums, created some virtual communities wherein members were maintaining a collective identity shared by other members of the virtual communities. Ye (2006, para. 1) also addressed the social aspects of the Internet by looking into how online social networks function in the cross-cultural adaptation among Chinese international students in the United States. The results indicated that acculturating individuals perceived gaining support from the online ethnic social groups and connections in both the host and home countries. While the U.S. networks helped reduce the actual difficulties during their adjustment to the new setting, those long-distance social ties were useful to ease much of their mental disarrangement.

In an earlier study, Ye (2005, p. 160) found that the Internet use among East Asian international students are mainly motivated by information seeking, social utility, and relaxation and entertainment. Her findings showed that the four main types of acculturative stress – fear, perceived hatred, perceived discrimination, and cultural shock – are strong predictors of social utility and relaxation and entertainment motivations. She suggested that while the Internet serves as a primary source of information, it is also a favorable means for these students to cope with pressures and displeasures during acculturation.

Yang et al. (2004, p. 81) compared media use among Chinese students before and after they came to the United States. They found that acculturative motives were positively correlated with consuming not only the traditional host country media content, such as the U.S. television news programming, but the U.S. television station Web sites and their forums.

These studies attempted to relate the Internet to certain aspects of acculturation, and have established some correlations in between. These findings, however, are not enough to testify that the Internet and other recently developed communication devices and services are invariably helpful to the process of acculturation. Since the Internet provides equal amounts, diversity, and accessibility of host and native content, doubts exist about whether it could impede acculturation at times.

## **Qualitative Research and Intercultural Communication**

Wimmer and Dominick (2000, p. 103) wrote that positivism, interpretive, and critical are three different approaches to social science research. The positivist paradigm, which was modified from techniques used in the natural sciences when the social science first developed, is the oldest and still the most widely adopted in mass communication research. Positivism sees reality as objective, which exists independently from researchers and can be seen by all but not be altered (p. 104). Positivist researchers view individuals as basically similar and try to categorize them according to their behavior and attitudes. Their ultimate goal is to generate general patterns and rules to explain specific categories of individual behavior across many settings. Furthermore, positivism claims that the logic of measurement and quantification is the best way for empirical observations. The paradigm requires researchers to systematically propose explanations based on existing, verified patterns and rules, design the study before it begins, control the settings to limit confounding variables, and analyze the data in use of quantification – such as statistics (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 8).

It was not until 1975 that positivist approach in communication research began to meet some serious challenges. Communication historian and theorist James Carey proposed that research should systematize people's interpretations of existence as a way of carefully inferring from small matters to large social and cultural phenomena (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 7). Since then, many researchers have questioned positivism's core assumptions and practices (p. 9). The main arguments were that physical and social phenomena exist independently of individual perception, and their complex composition makes it impossible for human beliefs to be exact, perfect, all-sided, and absolutely just. This complexity of phenomena is intensified in the field of communication, which is relatively young and interdisciplinary so that affecting elements are often borrowed from other social sciences disciplines. In the past two decades, some qualitative researchers have advocated postmodern, post-positivist, and postcolonist theoretical perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 4). Researchers who followed a post-positivist paradigm believed that the purely objective truth is unattainable even by using the objective, quantitative methods. Knowledge is created by explaining subjectively a variety of interactive and mobile causes for the observed patterns of the phenomena. The post-positivists were skeptical about the artificial settings designed for quantitative surveys and experiments, arguing that these settings would cause constraints that might severely distort the observed "facts." Later, the legitimacy of



qualitative research in communication was further established with the rise of the interpretive paradigm as well as the publication of several critical experiments in qualitative methods during the 1980s.

Lofland (1971, p. 13) stressed a mixture of empirical and descriptive elements in qualitative inquiry, defining it as “addressing the task of delineating forms, kinds and types of social phenomena; of documenting in loving detail the things that exist.” Recent qualitative researchers have emphasized the juxtaposition and superimposition of separate phenomena so as to draw a single pictorial composition of social life (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 12). Qualitative research is a broad approach to social science. Under this umbrella term, qualitative researchers have offered typologies of different research genres and formulated somewhat different assumptions and methodologies. Marshall and Rossman (2006, p. 3) proposed three major genres of qualitative research: (1) phenomenological approaches that exemplify individual’s life experience; (2) ethnography and action research that shows society and culture; (3) research of language and communication. However, no matter what genre individual or groups of qualitative researchers belong to, they agree upon some core premises and ideas of the general paradigm. Marshall and Rossman outlined five characteristics of qualitative research: (1) it is conducted in natural settings; (2) it uses a variety of humanistic and interactive methods; (3) it focuses on the circumstances in which an event occurs; (4) it is emergent; and (5) it is interpretive. Each research genre within the qualitative paradigm embraces the exploration of evolving social structures and processes as its primary purpose.

Intercultural communication is a subfield of communication discipline wherein qualitative researchers are mainly concerned with the relationships between communication and culture (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 23). While traditional functionalist research examined the causal influence of national culture on communication, recent interpretive research in intercultural communication is grounded upon anthropological and sociolinguistic perspectives, and views the relationships as interactive, reciprocal, and evolving. Scholars have borrowed from postmodern and critical views to underscore inequality in power, diversity and pluralism, confusion and formation of ethnic and cultural identities, and dissolution of geographic boundaries in the context of globalization. Bailey (2000, p. 86), for example, videotaped and transcribed 25 service encounters between both African-American and Korean customers and immigrant Korean retailers in a liquor store. These encounters revealed that divergent

communicative patterns between Koreans and African-Americans caused members of each group to feel as if they were treated in inappropriate and insulting ways. Bailey argued that such misunderstanding largely resulted from cultural and linguistic differences of the two groups, as well as from social disparity in America. Lindsley (1999, p. 4) used multiple approaches – interview, non-participant observation of interaction, and analysis of organizational publications – to probe the connections between Mexican cultural symbols and their communication with Americans. The findings showed that many Mexicans working at U.S.-owned assembly plants regarded stability and trust as two core cultural symbols beneficial to satisfying relationships, but they evaluated the American communicative behavior as tampering with these ideals. Furthermore, Gareis (2000, p. 67) conducted in-depth interviews about German international students' experiences and perceptions of friendship formation in the United States. She found that all respondents encountered some difficulty in making American friends, because cultural differences aroused confusion and misunderstandings. But overall, students were satisfied with their friendship experiences, which contradicted the common views about intercultural friendship in the United States.

## **Computer-mediated Communication and Acculturation of International Students**

### ***International Students and Acculturation***

One particular group formed during the huge population movements across national boundaries is international students, defined by Paige (1990, p. 162) as “individuals who temporarily reside in a country other than their country of citizenship or permanent residence in order to participate in international educational exchange as students, teachers, and researchers.” UNESCO (2006, p. 3) also introduced the concept of “internationally mobile students,” referring to “those who study in foreign countries where they are not permanent residents.” The initial status of sojourners, the purpose for education, and the cultural backgrounds are the three major characteristics that distinguish international students from immigrants and refugees, or from their fellow American students. These characteristics have some strong social and psychological implications that would influence the acculturation process of international students, and would eventually affect their media uses and gratifications.

Berry (1997, p. 8) argued that although the basic process of acculturation appears to be common to all subgroups within the same cultural group, the course and difficulty, and sometimes the outcomes, may vary. Berry identified voluntariness and permanence as two primary factors that may result in such varieties. While immigrants and international students experience acculturation voluntarily, refugees and indigenous people are often pushed into the process under social forces. As a result, the status of being immigrants and international students or refugees and indigenes may alter people's attitudes toward the new culture, their perception and expectation about how well they are received, and the acculturation strategies they will follow. Also, among those who have migrated into the new culture voluntarily, some become permanent residents while others are still likely to go back to their origin society. Sojourners such as international students and guest workers belong to the latter type. The temporality of stay determines that international students remain psychologically orientated toward their native countries where they own citizenship. Thus, in spite of the eagerness for cultural learning, they still attach much importance to preserving their original beliefs, values, and behavior. Paige (1990, p. 168) suggested that some international students might intentionally keep distance from the host culture as a way of devoting to their native heritage. Some others might emotionally resent and resist assimilation, but still, the practical needs to cope with the new society and academic environment would press them to make behavioral adjustment.

Second, international students' relatively high educational background and their age produce a mixture of relief and stress that affect their cultural adjustment process. While high education enables them to be more prepared intellectually, the adult age and long duration of being educated in native cultural institutes may, in reverse, become obstacles. The unevenness between their actual ability in the new setting and the expected proficiency may cause a slump of self-esteem. Furthermore, many international students, in particular those at graduate level or higher, may suffer great degradation in social status (Paige, 1990, p. 167).

Third, distance between one's own culture and a new one is found to influence acculturation. This factor, as discussed earlier, is not unique to international students but to all members of a group. Masgoret and Ward (2006, p. 64) mentioned difficulties in intercultural interactions originated from differences in rules and conventions. The authors discussed, in particular, one important variation of values: individualism-collectivism. While people from the individualist societies, such as the United States and many European countries, value directness

and are more willing to express negative emotions in public, collectivists, particularly those from East Asian countries, respect group harmony and face-saving to a greater extent, and thus seldom disagree openly. Among many aspects of cultural dissimilarity, language is a crucial one (Park, 1922, p. 5). Research has found that the degree of cultural adjustment is often evident through second language use and proficiency (Abrams et al., 2002, p. 225). The Asian international students in the United States, for example, could generally be confronted with huge language difficulty and barriers due to the absolute dissimilarity between English and their native tongue (Ye, 2005, p. 155). Noels, Pon, and Clement (1996, p. 246) investigated the relationship between one's personal identification and second language confidence – referring to one's self-perception of being able to communicate in the second language when situations require. Their study indicated that when people had higher self-evaluation of second language skills and less anxiety during communication, their identification with the outgroup increased and identification with the ingroup decreased, and vice versa.

### ***International Students and Computer-mediated Communication***

As sojourners pursuing higher education in a new culture, international students must use mass media to gratify their needs. Some of the needs are basic, such as entertainment, information, and news. Some related to academic learning are shared by most college students regardless of their backgrounds. Others, including those for cultural learning and cultural maintenance, are unique to international students.

Over the years, television has been recognized as the primary medium for acculturation purposes (Jeffres, 2000, p. 505). The content diversity television offers draws mass audience to it, making the medium a noticeable source of influence on people's behavioral shifts and social changes. For acculturating individuals, television, accompanied with books, newspapers, films, and radio, has served a variety of their gratifications. While these forms serve such general gratifications as providing information and entertainment, they have also been differentiated as the host and the ethnic media that satisfy the acculturation needs of opposite orientations.

Media uses by International students are different from immigrants, refugees, or sojourners of other purposes in at least two ways. First, the temporary stay and relatively low income reduce international students' desire and capacity of purchasing media equipment and services (Bradley, 2000, p. 426). International students, especially those from developing

countries to developed countries, are mostly dorm and cheap apartment dwellers who own almost nothing except few basic furniture and appliances for eating, studying, and resting. Heavy academic workload costs much of their time, confining them in classrooms, libraries, labs, and their beds. These students either pay huge fees and tuitions, or earn stipends as teaching and research assistants to cover their bills (Paige, 1990, p. 170). Relative impoverishment may further restrain them from buying expensive media equipment, or subscribing to cable and satellite television service, or buying books. Another factor is the bulkiness of television sets and books, for international students are always ready to move – for graduation, transfer, or employment. Second, the location of international students may limit the accessibility of ethnic media, whose target markets are mainly the immigrant communities in major metropolitan cities (Cornitcher, 1999, para. 5; Zhou & Cai, 2002, p. 426). Unless a college or university is at or close to a place hosting some large and notable immigrant communities, the students there are unlikely to get easy access to ethnic print publications or ethnic television programming. Besides, extra charges could apply due to the small circulation of ethnic newspapers and native-language books at the campus area. The ethnic television programming, both U.S.-produced and transmitted from abroad, is delivered through cable or satellite systems and usually put in the premium tier – indicating high subscription fees. Since the uses of mass media is part of daily-life necessity in modern society, it can be argued that international students in the past would have selected from various traditional media channels – television – as their major source of gratifications. Different from books and movies, the investment on television set is one-off for all times. The network programming is always free, and its content, though not that attractive, is still informative, entertaining, and diversified enough to satisfy a wide range of their needs. For international students, the scarcity of ethnic programming might have made television more of a medium for cultural learning and assimilation than for cultural maintenance, separation, or integration. It should be mentioned that radio, despite its cheapness and easy carry, is not typically desirable to international students who often have much trouble in listening comprehension of a second language.

This was, however, before the Internet took the reins. The very stability of television superiority is under increasing threat since 1993, when the World Wide Web began to exist as an easy access to the Internet (Walker & Ferguson, 2000, p. 163). In 1973 Katz and his associates (p. 175) found that television, among others, was the most unspecialized medium. Today, it may

be safer to argue that the Internet has replaced television to become the champion of versatility. Nearly all television networks and stations are putting their programs and products on-line. The wide bandwidth and streaming media technologies, together with the ever-enlarging high-definition computer screen, have enabled Internet television viewers to watch any shows at any time and in great comfort, and the cost is always close to nil. It should be mentioned that nearly all higher education institutions today provide free high-speed Internet access on campus. The versatility, cheapness, and accessibility of the Internet should be extremely attractive to international students, whose sojourner status, financial insecurity, academic pursuit, and cultural backgrounds have largely reshaped their way of life in the new environment. Hence, while none other medium, solely or combined, is able to fulfill all the expectations of international students, the Internet may do.

Surely the Internet does not play a lone hand. If the Internet constituted the heart and arteries and veins of a new era of communications, then the countless technological innovations were its flesh and bones. Faster CPUs, cable modem and wireless router, media player software, upload and download tools, real-time communications and social networking services, webcam, Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) and Third Generation (3G) for cellular phone, Internet and intranet electronic games, and iPods and MP3 players – these are just few hardware, software, equipment, and standards that help realize people's every dream about the Internet.

### ***Computer-mediated Communication and Acculturation of International Students***

Melkote and Liu (2000, p. 499) proposed the concepts of behavior acculturation and value acculturation after they studied the role of Chinese Internet content in the acculturation of some Chinese students and scholars in the United States. They observed that respondents displayed higher level of behavior acculturation – operationalized by behavior in dressing, eating and drinking, strategies in shopping, and social rituals and norms – are more dependent on Chinese Internet content. Meanwhile, measurements of value acculturation – the ideas about sex, religion, health, and family relations – showed that these respondents had low degree of American value acculturation and high degree of Chinese value sustainment. Melkote and Liu argued that Chinese Internet content, with its abundance and diversification in American news, knowledge, and information offered in Chinese language, was very influential to the adaptation of American way of life. On the other hand, the abundant and diversified online news,

knowledge, and information about China promoted students overseas to be more exerted to preserve their cultural traditions and values. The authors called this phenomenon *pluralistic integration*, which was consistent with Gordon's (1964, p. 81) high degree of behavioral assimilation with low degree of cultural assimilation, and was also similar to Berry's (1997, p. 28) notion of integration strategy.

The year 2000 only marked the dawn of a new era. Then many technologies, creations, and products were either unborn, or still in their infancy; and people at that time were just about to go: CPU power was still low; dial-up access was the standard way; streaming multimedia and webcam were invented but not fully commercialized; portable MP3 players just celebrated its first birthday; network telephone and long-distance call via cellular phone were beyond most people's imagination; and prices of most devices and services were prohibitively high. But things have changed fundamentally. Researchers thereafter have responded to the new trends by reexamining media and acculturation in the new context. Hwang and He (1999, p. 5) argued that the availability of Chinese-language media was a powerful factor to hamper the impact of English media use on the immigrants' acculturation. The acculturating individuals in the past, especially those international students at small towns, consumed relatively big amount of host country mass media simply because they had few options. Though somehow unwillingly, they were accelerated in the actual course of both behavior and value adaptations. The Internet could have become an obstruction against host media to exercise influences, as it has virtually resolved the unavailability of ethnic media, and thus reduced chance of semi-compulsory acculturation. Another argument is that deficiency in the second language would reduce the comfort level of usage. Research has suggested that second language proficiency is a powerful mediating factor that influences media use and its effect on acculturation patterns (e.g., Kim, 1990, p. 191; Lee & Tse, 1993, p. 57; Clément, Baker, Josephson, & Noels, 2005, p. 402). Although the Internet brings equal amount, diversity, availability, and accessibility of host and native content, the users, despite their needs for cultural learning, would naturally go to their native tongue for more comfort, entertainment, and relaxation. Furthermore, the Internet and other forms of computer-mediated communication may jointly create a virtual and integrated ethnic media environment wherein people's gratifications for connection, escape, and personal identity are greatly satisfied. As a result, their learning progress would be slowed, and eased mental stress would alter their attitudes toward the importance and imminence of adaptation. On the other hand, it can still be

argued that the Internet provides great convenience and easy, cheap, and constant access for the users to learn new cultures so that their sociocultural adaptation can be successful (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 449). Acculturating individuals build self-awareness of cultural identity and mental satisfaction in living in a new culture permeated by computer-mediated communication technologies so that their psychological adaptation can be achieved. Therefore, rather than becoming a hindrance, the Internet and other computer-mediated devices and services actually promote the benign process of integration.

Some communication scholars have recently disagreed with the tendency of grouping distinct technologies together under an umbrella term, such as “new media” and “information and communication technologies” (Barnett, 1997, p. 193; Radovan, 2001, p. ). They argued that all technologies are fundamentally different, because each of them supports a specific set of functions and is thus socially defined in different ways by its users. Leonardi (2003, p. 160) studied how first-generation, working class American Latinos used new technologies to gratify their needs relating to cultural values. While the participants perceived cellular phone being effective to make interpersonal contact, they viewed the Internet and computer impeded building good social relations. Leonardi raised some doubts as to the appropriateness of imposing findings of one technology on other similar ones. Even if the Internet would be found to serve cultural adaptation, this result would not infer that cellular phone, or iPods, or forms of computer-mediated communication collectively would do so. Therefore, it is necessary that this study examine these technologies separately.

### *Acculturation of the Asian International Students*

The Asian International students in the United States are the subjects of this study. Typically, the participants will be university students from China, the republic of Korea, and India. In addition to the large number of students from these countries, there are several other reasons for such a focus. First, each of the three countries boasts its richness in culture, traditions, and values that are noticeably dissimilar from the United States. The great cultural distance and a pride in cultural heritage may bring more real-life troubles and acculturative stress to these students (Ye, 2005, p.154), and would possibly push them to seek more often the mass media for gratifications of all sorts. Second, young people from these three countries are generally sensitive and adaptive to latest media technologies. Findings of a 2007 comparative



study in old and new media use by people from different cultures seemed to support this assertion (Korzenny & Korzenny, 2007, p. 1). Researchers at Florida State University surveyed about 2,500 adults divided almost equally among five cultural groups: Non-Hispanic Whites, African Americans, Asians, Hispanics who completed the questionnaire in English, and Hispanics who completed the questionnaire in Spanish. A critical message found was that all groups were consuming huge amount of time – approximately 40 hours per week – on television viewing and Internet usage (p. 5). Asians differentiated themselves mostly with an extraordinary enthusiasm into most new media technologies.

Based on the above discussion, three research questions were formulated:

RQ1: Do forms of computer-mediated communication combined become functional alternatives to the older mediums for international students from China, India, and the Republic of Korea?

RQ2: What uses does each specific computer-mediated communication technology serve in the Chinese, Indian, and Korean Students' acculturation process?

RQ3: What role does the combination of different forms of computer-mediated communication play in the process of acculturation of international students from China, India, and the Republic of Korea?

### ***Cross-cultural and Individual Differences***

While China and the Republic of Korea share many similarities with regards to geographic locations, historical ties, and cultural kinship, India, as a South Asian country, demonstrates notable differences. Hence, comparisons will be made across the countries to see if similarities would lead to agreements, whereas dissimilarities produce dissensions. Specifically, the well-known disparity in English proficiency between Chinese and South Korean students and their Indian counterparts will be addressed. Korzenny and Korzenny reported salient correlation between language preferences and media use. The impact of language was evident in choosing Spanish questionnaire by some less acculturated Hispanics, but also in the other Hispanic group and Asians, who kept participating in both English and other language media. The relationship was consistent both in old and new media. Results from the present study, therefore, would be useful to validate this connection.

RQ4: What are the similarities and dissimilarities of computer-mediated communication uses for acculturative gratifications among students from China, India, and the Republic of Korea? Is second language proficiency a salient factor in causing differences? Are there any other causes?

Furthermore, the intended duration of stay is another factor worth exploration.

Differences in acculturation and media use patterns are expected between people who have planned – or at least have wished – to work in the United States after graduation or even to migrate and those who are determined to return home in the near future. Whether such differences do exist and in which ways these two types of people differ will be determined through the answers from the study participants.

RQ5: Regardless of cultural backgrounds, does the intended duration of stay cause differences in individual's computer-mediated communication uses for acculturation gratifications?

## CHAPTER 3 - Method

This study explored the impacts of various forms of communication on the process of acculturation. Qualitative research methodology was deemed appropriate for this study because: first, the subfield of intercultural communication has been a fertile ground for interpretive research since the 1980s (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 23). Classic acculturation theories emphasize that the process and outcomes of acculturation are greatly influenced by social and psychological factors, which is in accord with interpretive approach's accentuation of social construction of cultural knowledge and identity.

Second, much of the research in the relationship between communication and acculturation has investigated only one or two forms of the computer-mediated technologies (e.g., the Internet or WWW) used by a particular cultural group (e.g., Chinese, or Korean immigrants). Or, it has related forms of communication to only one or several aspects of acculturation (e.g., second-language proficiency, ethnic identity, and acculturation stress). The majority of these studies have been quantitative surveys. The objectivist researchers formulated certain variables and tried to link these variables through the logic of measurement and quantification. In order to establish prefigured correlations, they often reduced the complexity of the social phenomenon of acculturation, or isolated the existence of specific elements that they perceived as less important or irrelevant to their studies (e.g., interpersonal communication). These problems have caused the insufficiency of existing quantitative studies, and have thus made room for other types of inquires using qualitative methodologies.

Third, the body of literature devoted solely to the relationships between computer-mediated communication and acculturation is very small, and no theoretical framework has been formed and widely espoused so far. Findings of most existing research have already become obsolete, seriously inadequate, or entirely inapplicable, due to the rapid and constant development in computer-mediated communication technologies. Innovations that are continuously added to the existing computer-facilitated media forms have not only expanded the capacities of these media, but caused them to be highly mutable and unpredictable. As a result, variables created for quantitatively measuring computer-mediated communication appear to be

mutable but indefinite. Also, inconsistency of terminology occurs frequently among different studies. This argument is justifiable with the ambiguousness of the definition and scope of computer-mediated communication discussed in many former studies. Researchers have tended to refer to these sorts of communication forms simply as the “new media”, yet without an explicit explanation of the meaning of new media (Leonardi, 2003, p. 160). This indecisiveness as to what the affecting valuables really are reduces validity and reliability of quantitative methods, and thus makes a qualitative approach appropriate and necessary.

Fourth, qualitative research is suitable for studies involving those who are frequently socially marginalized and oppressed (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 6). International students in the United States, though not necessarily being marginalized or oppressed, belong to social groups who are often invisible and underrepresented. Hence, respondents from these groups, in fears of being perceived as alien strangers, might experience higher degree of tension in artificially designed environments for quantitative studies, whereas they would feel more relaxed and open in natural settings. Besides, while international students might become passive subjects to preset experiment procedures or survey questions, they could contribute more of their unique opinions, experiences, and understandings about societies and cultures during face-to-face verbal interactions with the researcher, particularly to researchers who are in the same situation..

Finally, while quantitative research might have addressed the research questions of which forms of communication influence the process and consequences of acculturation, this qualitative research went further – it probed for the depth of media use patterns among international students and the social, cultural, and psychological reasons behind those patterns.

Therefore, the purpose for embracing the qualitative paradigm was an exploratory one – to investigate the inadequately-known computer-mediated communication as well as the largely invisible groups of international students, to identify important categories of meaning, and to generate hypotheses for potential quantitative studies.

### **Focus Group Method**

The qualitative research strategy of focus group has been used extensively in various academic disciplines and practical fields, including marketing research (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 13), educational research (Flores & Alonso, 1995, p. 84), and health communication (Lederman, 1983, p. 233). Focus groups work particularly well to explore people’s perceptions,

ideas, feelings, and opinions about issues, services, phenomena, and products (Krueger & Casey, p. 12). In the field of media research, focus group interviews have often been conducted for understanding audiences' attitudes and behavior (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000, p. 119).

A focus group usually consists of six to 12 homogeneous members being interviewed simultaneously. A moderator leads the group by asking a few open-ended questions followed by some probing questions. These questions function to promote controlled group discussion about the focal topic, through which the researcher gains preliminary information for interpretive analysis. Krueger and Casey (2000, p. 10) proposed five features of focus group interviews that relate to the ingredients of a focus group: (1) the people as participants, (2) the characteristics that the participants possess, (3) qualitative data produced by focus groups, (4) a focused discussion, and (5) the discussion helps understand the topic of interest.

Greenbaum (2000, p. 9) listed several elements that make focus groups work, which include the ability to use both verbal and nonverbal inputs for the learning process, the group dynamics, the concentrated attention of the participants, and cost-effectiveness. Of these advantages, the group dynamics during the interview is essential because it may strongly promote self-disclosure among participants. One key assumption of focus group research is that individuals are the source of both rich and accurate information, but they need help from a trained other – the moderator – and the stimulation from peers to volunteer the information (Flores & Alonso, 1995, p. 84). While self-disclosure comes naturally and comfortably for some individuals, it is difficult or uncomfortable and requires effort and courage for others (Krueger & Casey, 2000, p. 8). The creation of a comfortable and permissive environment in discussions, accompanied by the gentle encouragement from the focus group moderator, may promote those shy and reserved people to express their ideas and opinions more easily and confidently. Further, dynamic group interactions may encourage those who originally have nothing to share to make contributions, and may sometimes lead the research to new and unexpected directions.

The group interviewing approach may also increase the participants' level of self-disclosure by reducing power disparity among group members. Participant homogeneity, as Krueger and Casey (2000, p. 9) noted, is fundamental to a focus group. The group members feel more secured among others similar to themselves, and are thus more inclined to divulge information unobtainable by traditional information-gathering methods. In fact, the dynamic group atmosphere and homogeneity among members did function well in the focus group

discussions for this study. Some quieter participants, when approached by the moderator, displayed no sign of embarrassment and were quite prepared and willingly to give their answers.

In addition, the focus group as a group-oriented method which relies much on the cooperation and harmony among group members may be particularly suited to interview with people from collectivistic cultures (Bradford, Meyers, & Kane, 1999, p. 104). Since the Chinese, Korean, and Indian cultures generally value collectivism, it is possible that people from these cultures find a group setting more natural and comfortable. Furthermore, researchers familiar with the focus group method noted that the in-depth, detailed information gathered during group interviewing always reveals the motivations for attitudes and behavior.

The present study used focus group interviews also because it is an effective method in cross-cultural research or work involving ethnic groups (Denning & Verschelden, 1993, p. 569). The study was designed with a hope to understand reasons and motivations, which was expected to be achieved by group interviewing (Bradford, Meyers, & Kane, 1999, p. 104). Cultural variables such as subcultural values and group norms are often highlighted through the interpersonal communication among group participants. The group interviews enable researchers to ask open-ended questions and expect more than just right or wrong answers. Discussion and other forms of interactions among group members and between participants and the moderator or the researcher are always encouraged. Participants can talk to one another and raise their own questions; they can share each others' knowledge, experiences and viewpoints and give comments freely. It is through these types of communication that researchers gain insight into not only what people think about different cultures, but how they think and why they think that way (Kitzinger, 1995, para. 5).

These advantages of focus group method served satisfactorily the exploratory nature of the present study. The group interviews, which were designed to see how the acculturating individuals interpret in their own vocabulary the importance of computer-mediated communication in their life and process of acculturation, produced large amount of preliminary data useful to both the present interpretive analysis and further objectivist research.

### ***Participants***

There were three focus groups in all, conducted respectively with a total of 27 international students from China (11 participants), India (seven participants), and the Republic

of Korea (nine participants). All the participants were currently enrolled in a large Midwestern university. No ethnic print media in Chinese, Indian, or Korean are distributed at a regular base in or near the town where the university is located. The ethnic television programs are available, but only via satellite at a premium rate.

The participants were recruited on a convenient sample basis by using the method of snowball sampling. That is to say, the researcher invited her fellow students to participate, and ask them to invite their fellow students to also participate. Recruiting questionnaire or other screeners were not used to select participants for this study. This was largely because groups that were naturally occurring – formed by people know each other – were deemed to be helpful to stimulate discussions and thus produce richer data (Kitzinger, 1995, Sampling and Group Composition, para. 4). It was assumed that it might be hard for a group of strangers to talk about their media consumption and acculturative stresses and progress – something deeply embedded in their personal life – in front of another stranger from a different culture, i.e. the moderator. But friends, roommates, and fellow students might brainstorm ideas, help recall relative incidents, and make correction, comments, or supplementary explanation without worry about causing embarrassment on judgment.

Once being recruited, every participant received an email from the researcher, in which she explained briefly the purpose of the study and the focal topic. The researcher made a reminder phone contact to all participants one day prior to the focus group meetings to confirm their intention to attend. Despite such effort, three recruited Indian students and three Korean students changed their minds and did not show up on the day of the meeting.

### ***Conducting the Groups***

The researcher acted as the focus group moderator for all three meetings. Every participant, upon arrival at the session, was assigned a number (from 1 to 11) that would represent them during the discussions. All group members were then asked to complete a brief participant questionnaire about their personal characteristics (see Appendix A). The use of pre-group questionnaires, as Edmunds (1999, p. 93) noted, could enhance the moderator's understanding of the participant. Though results of such surveys are not statistically valid for quantitative analyses, they indicate the participants' habits and attitudes that might pertain to the topic being discussed. Hence, background information about the participants may help the

researcher to explain why they responded in a certain way during the focus group interviews. The questionnaire included in the present study provided a list of multiple computer-mediated communication technologies, other devices that connect to the Internet and services that facilitate computer-mediated digital consumption, and all sorts of older mediums. The participants were asked to indicate whether they used each of these specific communication forms, and in which language – English, native, or both – they used them. A question about their intended duration of stay in the United States was asked to address RQ 5.

After all participants completed the questionnaire, the researcher announced that the focus group interview would begin. An assistant recruited by the researcher then started audiotaping. The assistant was also responsible for taking notes about who (by the assigned number) said what during the discussion.

To begin with, the moderator gave an introduction to the participants (see Appendix C). The moderator introduced herself, her thesis themes, and some potential benefits that this research would provide to the focus group participants. She reiterated the focal topic: what role do the forms of computer-mediated communication play in your life as international students in the United States and in your acculturation process? Considering that the term acculturation might be unfamiliar to many participants, the moderator then defined it and gave some simple examples. The moderator informed the participants that the whole discussion session would be audiotaped and transcribed for the analyses for this study, but no other uses would be made of the data and all participants would be kept anonymous. All participants were called by the number assigned to them during the sessions, and they were identified as their country code (“C” for China, “K” for Korea, and “I” for India) combined with their assigned number in this thesis report.

The three focus groups were held at different times within two weeks. The first group interview, which was conducted with 11 Chinese students (four males and seven females), lasted about 80 minutes (the recording time was 1 hr 17 min 53 s). Seven Indian students (six males and one female) attended the second group discussion, which lasted 50 minutes (the recording time was 45 min 59 s). The third focus group was held among nine Korean students (six males and three females) for about an hour (the recording time was 1hr 4 min 1 s).

All discussions were conducted in English. The moderator encouraged the groups to exchange their ideas in their native language, and then, give their answers in English. Upon



careful observation of each participant's level of participation, she also encouraged some quieter members to speak more. Such encouragement seemed to generate positive results. For these quieter participants, the problem was not that they were unwilling to talk, but that they felt uncomfortable in taking the initiative of talking. Every participant, though not responding to all the questions, at least made some inputs to some of the issues discussed during the session.

## **CHAPTER 4 - Results**

The answers to the pre-group questionnaire revealed some background information about the participants. Of the 27 participants, five were in their thirties, one was 45-years-old, and the rest were in their twenties (the youngest was 20). Eight participants were married, and six of them currently live with their spouse. Three participants had children, but only one was living with his children. While most unmarried Chinese and Indian participants live with roommates from their own countries, the majority of unmarried Korean students live alone. Seventeen participants had been in the United States for more than one year but less than five years, one had stayed for seven years, and others from two to nine months. Of different forms of computer-mediated communication, computer and cellular phone, the Internet, search engines, emails, and real-time communication services were used by all participants. Other forms including portable music devices, online forums, E-book, blogs, streaming video, and online networking were also popular. In terms of the older media forms, most participants reported that they use printed books and newspapers, radio, and CD player, but not very frequently. While the majority of Korean and Indian participants own television sets and DVD players at home, the two types of devices were less popular among the Chinese.

All the content generated by the participants during the focus group discussions, as long as it related to the themes of this study, was transcribed into quotations in print. The specific quotes included in this report were mostly unaltered except when some key words of a sentence were missing or the expression was unrelated to the topic and extremely redundant. Then the researcher remedied the missing elements to make the answer meaningful, or she deleted the irrelevant part. The added content was put in brackets, and omissions were indicated by inserting three ellipsis points. All participants were identified by his or her country code with the number assigned to them.

### **Findings with Regard to Each Research Question**

***RQ1: Computer-mediated Communication Has Displaced Older Mediums***

The first research question sought whether different forms of computer-mediated communication combined have become functional alternatives to the older mediums for international students from China, India, and the Republic of Korea. The focus group participants were asked to list their uses of all sorts of computer-related technologies and services and talk about their functions. The information gathered from the discussions indicates that computer-mediated communication functions excellently for Chinese, Korean, and Indian international students to obtain their major gratifications. For these students, the forms of computer-mediated communication have become virtual displacement for the older media.

First, various computer-facilitated digital media serve most types of gratifications that were once served by the older media, which can be classified into seven categories – information, learning, news, facilitating daily life, diversion, social network, and acculturation.

***Information***

All the participants agreed that computer and the Internet provide an easy and convenient way of information-seeking, and their functions were very satisfying. Search engines such as Google are the primary resource use for information gratification. The participants rely heavily on search tools when they seek information about American products and services. But for gaining practical knowledge about the American ways of behavior – such as the formal social manners – many students would go to their familiar BBS and online forums:

C11: [I use] search tools [for information].

C10: [search tools] for service, something, that offer a product, and maybe promoting provider of some company to offer some devices – marketing – something like that.

C11: I think it can help me find what I need quicker than before. Because in older media, you have to follow all the organizations . . . like book, you have to read it chapter by chapter . . . but for Internet, I can search by word. So it provides better efficiency.

I1: I talk on the forums one to two hours every day. I will give like 10 minutes, or 15 to 20 minutes a day every place, talking about one to two hours a day on average. Mostly but . . . I think emails, googling, finding all the information, catching the news.

K2: Search the papers.

K3: [Online] weather cast.

Some Chinese students challenged the authority and authenticity of the online database. They argued, despite the magnitude of information hosted by the Internet, that the applicability and reliability of such information and knowledge are doubtful. This problem was also a

concern at the Indian group discussion. The Indian participants proposed a way of tackling it. They believed that the users should be self-responsible to distinguish right from wrong and make wise use of the information presented by the Internet:

C4: You always get too much information from the Internet. It's confusing and it comes from every angle . . .

I7: It depends on the source of the information, like what source are they going to. If you are going to a field you've been there a lot of years –let's say *PTW* search engines. If you go to *Site Finder* – it's a search engine of use. It's a place where you can find other sites' information, so I would be more comfortable searching those things. I just don't want to go to *Google*, and take some kind of page, read somebody like me help with.

Several other participants: Yeah, like *Wikipedia*.

I7: *Wikipedia* is also not that expert provided. Let's say if I search through Google and I find my advisor's homepage, and if I saw what he has done, and if I know that he is a nice researcher, I will probably cite him. But if not . . .

I1: Definitely, I mean, if you are sure the kind of information you are looking for, it's very enough to just see it and stop. But if you are just going to searching, just to get a simple idea of whatever you are looking for, then *Wikipedia* is almost as good.

I6: Yes, actually, as you said, there is too much information on the Internet. It depends on how you use them, and how specifically you can define what you are looking for.

### *Academic Study*

While many participants still use printed books and journals sometimes, they regard e-journal an indispensable part of their academic learning. In fact, e-journal seems to take the place of its print version and play a pivotal role in their study and research. One Indian student said he did not use print books even for exams and research, because he found the online materials were enough and he had no time for others. This argument was confirmed by his group members:

C4: E-journal for study.

C9: Our methods of research are heavily connected with the Internet. I think if the computer is down, everything is down.

I3: I don't even do that (read print books for exams). Before the exams, I do something on the Internet, whatever I find. Mostly, whatever lectures I have been given, whatever I have returned the lecture – that's more than enough. I don't find more time to use anything else. Yeah, [The Internet has become my primary source for study].

K6: I read through [books in library], and just download the pdf files from the database.

K2: We don't need to come here to library. We can search everything in the . . .

### *News*

The Internet has become the major source of news for the international students. Many Chinese and Korean respondents said they consume regularly online word and video news about America and their home countries, and in both English and their native languages. The Indian students, due to the variety and disunity of the Indian indigenous languages, mainly consume English news about America and India:

C11: Watch online news

C1: I think most of time English news if we are watch online.

I1: Catching the news.

I3: I read news.

I5: Indian News. [Clips].

I1: That's because the *CNN* is obviously online. So . . . It has become part of my routine every day: emails, and then, *CNN.com*. I would say I'm related more on the Internet for the news than papers. If it's more for the opinions or stuff like that – newspapers.

K1: Read the newspaper, Internet newspaper – both Korean and American.

### ***Facilitating Daily Life***

One of the salient features of the Internet is e-business. Services such as buying and selling, and online banking have distinguished the Internet from most other mediums. All the Indian participants, for example, reported that they frequently do online shopping and banking. A Chinese participant noted that today's media are different because their users are no longer the passive receivers. With the Internet, every individual makes their own decisions. The technologies supply these international students with much more convenient and comfortable purchasing experience in the United States, but without extra charges. In addition to the online services, cellular phone also served as a quick way of purchase sometimes:

C3: E-business. Yeah, you find things from the Internet, especially in America, because we are in a small town. So we have no big shopping center. So we have to buy many things on the Internet.

C11: For me I often call companies to order something because it's quick. So I prefer call some free toll. I don't call when it charges me.

I6: And another thing what is different in India – you can't do over the Internet in India, it's very popular here – that you can buy stuff. I mean you hardly need to use the cellular phone.

I3: Yeah, you can order anything online here, but it's not that in India. [For banking], everything is online.

I5: Mostly [pay bills online].

I1: Direct transfer has made it very easily, right?

K6: I know that my wife makes automatic transfer through Online banking. In Pennsylvania, just the school, the university supports the Internet. We didn't spend for it.

K1: I'm not familiar with writing checks, because I cannot remember [how to write] those numbers, like five hundred, one thousand, so usually I use online transfer.

K2: Too much [online purchase].

K9: Yeah, I do online purchase both in U.S. and in Korea. But you know there are something which is not real, even though something looks like in the right size, actually the stuff there is not so good, because they use some light, and they look like very great, but sometimes it's not.

K1: It depends on what type of the stuff you want.

### ***Social Network***

Answers from the Chinese participants show that computer-mediated communication technologies provide them many choices of building and maintaining their social networks – both online and in reality, and with both Chinese and Americans. While emails, cellular phone, and U.S.-based networking services like *Facebook* mainly facilitate their interpersonal communication in the United States, the real-time communications services – *MSN* and *Tencent QQ* – are the primary channel for these students to keep frequent contact with families in China. *MSN* and *Tencent QQ* enable the students to not only exchange text messages with parents and friends, but actually hear their talking and see their face and gestures through the web camera. The cost and functional efficiency that these real-time communications services provide are unparalleled by any other tools or services, and their importance in these students' life is remarkable:

C1: Email.

C11: [I send email] to friends, classmates, family.

C9: Communication via the university (the name of the university was omitted) networks.

C1: And real-time communication like *MSN* messenger . . . mostly talk to my family . . . most Chinese participants: friends . . . also American friends.

C9: [*Facebook* is for] online communicate.

Things are slightly different for Indian and Korean students. Similar to their Chinese counterparts, the Indian and Korean participants use all the digital communication technologies to facilitate their real-life social networking. But when they contact their families outside America, cellular phone, instead of the real-time communication services, becomes their primary

choice. The Indian students explained that services such as *Yahoo Messenger* and *Google Talk* usually require high-speed Internet connection and hence is still not very common in many regions of India. Whereas in Korea, the Internet connection is fast, but the students are concerned about the time difference and do not want to disturb. They considered cell phone the most convenient:

I4: We call them (our Indian friends), and we meet them

I3: Search for them through the Internet.

I4: [For Americans,] I call them.

I3: Most of my friends on *Facebook* are from my department who I have friendship here in U.S. There are Indian people [on *Facebook*]. But I use some others. I use mostly *Orkut* to contact the Indian friends. There are some other people who I want to contact, then I use *Facebook* – other than the Indian people.

I1: Maybe. I mean, I think I have a few [American friends]. Some of them use *Facebook*, so I use *Facebook* to talk to them. Other than that, direct contact cell phone, or the email, yeah.

I2: Cell phone [to contact our family].

I5: Yeah, we use it (cell phone) most of the time.

I3: We use online chatting, but not that popular – to those who are in India. Two of my family – my brother and my sister – they are in other countries like U.K. or some other country, then we do chatting through *Yahoo Messenger*. But to contact my parents in India, then I use cell phone. Because Internet is not that popular, that common, in India.

I6: No, Internet is common, but our parents are not as used to it as we are. . . . Friends [in India], messenger . . .

I3: Yeah, we use *Yahoo Messenger* to contact friends . . . . You know in India, if you are checking your emails, if you click on some . . . if you got some emails and you click on it, you have to wait sometime, like five minutes. It depends, but it's still delayed. It's not like you just click and you can see that.

I6: No. if you go online in big cities or some others, you can open it immediately. It depends on where you are.

I1: Yeah, it's there, but it's not that even common in India. You have to wait.

I3: It depends on speed, what speed you have chosen.

I6: So basically in big cities you have the option of high speed. It depends on what you want . . .

I3: But in most part of India, Internet is not that fast as we have here.

I5: In India, real-time communication is not that popular. That's sort of. You have a low speed Internet, then you will have to limit yourself to type-in chatting.

I6: You cannot do voice chatting.

I1: Indian families are limited to their speed, so it's not a very high-speed Internet connection by phone without segment. Like if the connection can be faster, then you can call an on-line conference, video. But cell phone is the basic.

I6: I mean when we came here, like I've come for four years, the original rate [for long-distance phone call] is going down.

I3: [The rate is] falling each year. But if you want to talk to your girlfriend, it's expensive, because she will take obviously more time, right? Time then is supposed to be money, right?

I1: So for girlfriend, [online] chatting is good.

I3: *Yahoo Messenger* is good for a girlfriend. If you want to talk to a friend, then phone, so you can talk directly. It depends on how much longer you want to talk. You can call her (girlfriend) for two minutes and say "come online," right?

K2: Check email . . . communicate with people.

K6: *Cyworld*, like *Facebook*.

K2: [On *Cyworld*], we download some pictures, and leave message.

K9: We share pictures [on *Cyworld*], very similar to *Facebook* . . . For the Korean people here, I just use phone.

K1: Usually I call my [Korean] friends to make together.

K2: Our [cell phone] service [in Korea], let's say, have the text message, so we can send text message to their (parents and friends') cell phones. Mostly we just call them, or email. The problem is that my friends [in Korea] are all in the company at the time, so they cannot use web camera during their work time.

K4: We have time difference, so it's convenience to just pick up the phone and compared to the camera and computer . . . Phone and cell phone is the primary channel that the Korean students talk to their family in Korea.

K9: For family, I call them once a week. I don't use online chatting, because of the time difference, also my father is not well known about the Internet.

### ***Varieties of Diversion***

The Internet entertains – this is a consensus reached among participants from the three countries. Except one Chinese participant, all students reported that they watch online videos for entertainment. Many Chinese and Korean participants listen to music on MP3 or iPod, whereas most Indian students reported that they seldom use these portable music devices and they do not own them. Twenty-five interviewees reported that they blogged. The reasons for blogging, as identified by some bloggers, included a sense of sharing, exchanging ideas, and forming virtual communities:

C9: And I watch free movies [online].



C3: I think all [of us] watch online movies or download some clips. And we watch them both in English and Chinese.

I2: Watching movies.

I3: I watch online TV channels, sometimes.

I1: Happiness is something different. I think the word high-speed Internet would be more appropriate.

I6: Because if you are in India (low speed does not allow fluent on-line video play), you are not happier.

I3: I don't use them (MP3 and iPod), but my friends use them.

I6: Indian people use some MP3 player, but iPod is more popular than any other kind.

I3: In India it's (iPod) not that common.

I4: It's not that popular but it's gaining momentum.

I4 and I6: Yeah, we blog.

I6: I blog for cricket.

I5: Me too.

I6: Cricket – it's online . . .

I3: It's a game, much popular in India.

I1: It's like they call football, and we have cricket. It's a fashion.

I3: We have a game called cricket, which is more popular in India.

I4: A match happens, a match is over, once it's about to happen, and then you could decide whether you like something about how your teams play . . .

I5: Like these other two players comment on each other how he played, how his performance in that game.

I2: About the game, basically.

I4: Just like writing a blog article after something has happened.

Mostly, it's after it has happened.

I1: And before.

I3: Yeah, [we form an online community for the game]. Some [bloggers] are here, some – who are watching online – are in India.

I7: It's all for cricket, I mean, that's the only thing I watch – streams . . . I blog online, but not for cricket. He is a cricket guy. He blogs online because of it. I think the purpose of blogging is like sense of family. Like my intimate, he is sharing ideas what he thinks, and we just, as a community, we're just contributing with idea – agreeing or disagreeing or what differences. I blog all of my thoughts . . . I have some experience which I learnt abroad – popular culture – I wrote all about those.

K2: What else . . . have fun.

K7: Yeah, [I go to the Internet] to watch movies, Hollywood movie or American TV show. And I play video games.

K1: I play [video and online] games a lot, not addicted.

### ***Acculturation***

Certain types of acculturation uses were proposed naturally when the group discussions took place. For example, when being asked if they like American television shows, all the Chinese participants either said “yes” or nodded their heads. Current hit shows such as *CSI*, *Heroes*, *Lost*, and *Criminal Minds* immediately became the interest of discussion. Some participants agreed that the media did help American popular culture penetrate into their life. As for the Indian group, the participants believed that American movies and sitcoms are the best media content for cultural learning. The Korean participants also thought that they have learned some American culture from watching Hollywood movies. Since they usually get access to movies via the Internet and they watch sitcoms on DVDs, these digital technologies have become a key supportive component for satisfying gratification related to acculturation. It should be pointed out, though, that participants had major disputes over the effects of media on cultural adaptation, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. Furthermore, cell phone, emails, and services such as *Facebook* and *MSN* have become the major channels through which the international students establish and maintain communication with the outgroup members:

C10: I think media help a lot in our learning of American or western culture.

C1: You can gain some opinions from the TV shows, and news about how we have a different opinion about the international events.

I6: Yes, we’ve learnt a lot about American culture through movies, media.

I1: Movies are . . . movies have big effect.

K4: Yeah, I learnt something form soup opera.

K9: Yeah, of course the media has some effect in cultural learning. Nowadays I watch the CNN or I access the *CNN* on the Web site, and then I become interested in the American culture . . . .

C2: It depends. Suppose you have an American friend and he prefer to use email and I always contact him with email. If he prefers to use cell phone, I call him.

I4: [For Americans,] I call them.

I1: But here, it seems to me that *Facebook* is more popular. So keeping in touch with friends or lab-mates or, you know, people are beside with you, *Facebook* would be my choice. These people we keep in touch with on *Facebook*.

K4: I live with American roommates, so I improve my English with them, talk to them, and we also use *MSN* we still in the apartment . . .

### *Older Mediums*

With regard to the older mediums, 10 Chinese students reported that they seldom read newspapers. One Chinese participant said she buys two to three types of English fashion magazines every month. None of the 11 students listen to any forms of radio. Several said they heard some radio sometimes on the school shuttle. Only two of them own a television set, while some others said theirs were broken. For the television owners, they have only free basic network channels, which they claimed are quite enough for their needs. Although a few students indicated that they read books for both academic learning and pleasure in the questionnaire, none of them mentioned the entertaining aspect of printed books during the discussion. CD or cassette players, or VCR or digital player were never mentioned, either.

C10: Book. Textbook.

C9: I read *Collegian* (the student paper) everyday for campus news.

C10: I never read the *Collegian*.

C8: Magazines. I buy them . . . fashion maganizes – *Elle, Vogue* . . .

C1: never heard radio.

C6: But some people want to listen to radio. Like in the morning, he is doing something else, the same time he can listen to radio. But I never listen to it here.

Several Chinese participants: I only have a broken television sets.

C10: I watched television every day until this basketball season came. I only have basic channels but I think it's enough. Every day I watched news and shows . . . *CSI*.

C4: [Use the *Yellowbook*] . . . [when] you need the phone number.

C10: All that [older] media, is that the information comes to you . . . you are inactive. It's not like search engine, you search something.

C11: The only case I use the older media is when the Internet is unavailable. When I go out or driving, maybe I need a *Yellowbook*, print the map, but I also got it from the Internet. I mainly watch morning [TV] news and shows – for the weather . . . . But we only get four or five channels for free. I spend about an hour a day on TV.

For the Indian group, most students said they do not frequently watch TV, even online.

Five students reported that they own a television set at home, and six have DVD players for watching sitcoms and movies. Most of them read newspapers at least a few times every week. One participant said he would use print books and journals for academic purpose. The others, however, reported that all their learning and research are done with the computer and Internet:

I6: I watch TV regularly.

I4: I read newspapers. I don't watch TV, not even online.

I1: Not regularly. I mean, *Collegian*, yes, but not as much as every day, but then I try to attach to *The New York Times* when it is possible. You know, sometimes it's twice a week, sometimes it's just once a week. I'm not really regularly . . . If it's more for the opinions or stuff like that – newspapers.

I5: We do [read books], for the exam.

I3: I don't even do that. Before the exams, I do something on the Internet, whatever I find. Mostly, whatever lectures I have been given, whatever I have returned the lecture – that's more than enough. I don't find more time to use anything else. Yeah, [The Internet has become my primary source for study].

All other Indian group members: Yeah.

I6: I watch [on TV] *CNN*, *ABC News*, and I watch all those sit-coms, *CBS*. I have taken the cable – the basic package. There is one Indian channel. The reason for not watching it: the problem (that Indian channel) is that they squeeze in that channel programs like . . . that we have already watched. But sometimes they offer some old movies that I can watch.

I6: I don't watch sitcoms online. I watch them on DVD. I own a DVD.

Six Korean participants reported having television sets, cable and satellite services, and DVD players. None of them, however, said they use them frequently or regularly. Two Korean students read the school paper sometimes. Some participants search books in library, but more often online:

K6: I read the paper *Collegian* just three or four times every week. I don't read news online.

K2: [Watch] movie, just movie channel.

Second, there was a general agreement among participants of all focus groups that their life would go on quite normally and smoothly if they would be deprived of any forms of the older medium. In fact, some of them already stop using those medium formats unconnected to the computer and Internet, or they use them only occasionally. Many participants do not read magazines or newspapers; some do not listen to radio or watch television. The two Chinese television owners reported less than two-hour television viewing every day, but they said the time that they spend online was uncountable, or *many many hours* in their own words. For Indians, all of them said they could not live without the Internet – more specifically, the high-speed Internet as one participant emphasized. Without the high-speed connection, as that

participant explained, the marvelous performance of streaming media technologies, the uploading and downloading, or the real-time communication could hardly be achieved.

The participants' answers demonstrate the central importance of computer-mediated communication technologies in the life of the interviewed international students, and the older medium has been dwarfed and marginalized:

C1: I would die if I can't use any forms of computer-mediated communication. I mean all my entertainment, studies and research are related to the Internet. Without Internet . . . it's not about computer, I think it's most about the Internet. I can live without computer, but not without Internet.

C11: It gives me trouble.

C9: Our methods of research are heavily connected with the Internet. I think if the computer is down, everything is down.

C3: As long as I have the Internet, [I'm quite satisfied].

C10 and C11: Can I print the materials? If so, that's fine, because we can almost find everything on the Internet.

C5: If it's just the media, I think the Internet is enough. I use the Internet for contact with my families, and e-journals and emails, and e-books – both in English and Chinese, and news.

C11: In my opinion, if the Internet is available, the computer can do what the TV and radio do, I can't displace the TV, the radio. If the Internet is available when I'm driving, I can displace the radio on car.

C10: I'm not sure if we are satisfied with these computer forms. But do we have better choice?

I6: For everything. All the other members: For everything.

I1: Seriously, if I didn't have Internet connection, it would drive me crazy.

I3: It's very difficult to stay without Internet.

I1: We need access to it at sometime in a day.

I3: 24 hours.

I6: Yeah, if the Internet is available, then you can find everything else, so it's not quite a matter.

I3: I think television, nowadays, I would use it more for watching DVD or something. Watching any channels, I don't think I prefer that.

I1: I think the word high-speed Internet would be more appropriate.

I3: He calls laptop as time machine. It eats all your time.

I2: It's a time-eating machine. Whenever I open it . . .

I3: You can spend any number of hours, I mean sitting on laptop and blogging, doing whatever you want.

I7: I agree that we can't live without the Internet, probably because most of my documents of research are on . . . It's like a little sharing community. So it's easier to get online than be going to library, searching through everything, getting distracted by everything. If I go to [the Internet], I know I'm going to be in that particular field and I can search those things. But if I go to library, I may find some interesting books.

K4: We can live [without any traditional media]. Why not? We can have any kind of the information from the Internet. So we can make the printout. Why not?

K9: I have television, but I spend more time on the Internet, because I do not have much time watching TV . . . If I cannot access the Internet, for one day that's okay, but for few days, I would be crazy. One time I just used my neighbor's Internet, and then somehow they blocked the Internet connection, then I can't use it. Even though in the night, 11 or 12pm, I went to the library, and then I checked my email or I chatted with my friend or I studied, because I wanted to connect to my friend. So I had to go to some place to connect to the Internet. Yeah, it's very very surprising for me. People are addicted.

There was minor disagreement among the Chinese participants. One participant argued that while the Internet and other forms of computer media provide easy access to large amounts of information, they may not function so well in satisfying those needs related to social life as the older media would do. Another Chinese student argued that newspapers and television stations could not be extinct, because they are the content originators, while the Internet is only a carrier.

C8: no. I would be dissatisfied if I would just have the Internet. I go to (the university student) Union to watch television sometimes. Internet is a way of searching information, but for me, that kind of social life, TV, magazine, newspaper – other kinds of communication – they offer me the social life . . . I don't think the Internet can benefit the social life . . . a real good piece of newspaper and magazine is a kind of art . . . human work. The Internet always seems to me is just a quick and very convenient way for my use of information but it's not a way for human development in art or something alike . . . The Internet is never a way of life for me.

C3: I have a question: if we can't download any movies or shows from the Internet. (Interrupted by C1: I will die.) So I don't think Internet is the most important way for me. I think if there's no older media, there would be no source of the TV or movie to the Internet . . . so the older media is also important. So we can't live without the older media, but we can live without the accessibility of them.

In addition, some Korean participants felt that the life without any forms of older media would not be very satisfactory. One student was concerned about less convenience, while another student believed that the print paper would always exist because people still prefer the feeling of its texture:

K4: When it comes to the convenience, we can't always without that [traditional media]. But just live, we can. Our life won't go wrong just without this.

K9: I can live [without the older formats of media]. Maybe not happy, because I like the paper form feeling it – contacting feeling like that. I've used to watch the paper in the paper. So I still like to do that. People around 30 or 50 years ago thought maybe the paper will disappear when the other medium come up, but still, people like reading a newspaper as a paper. Actually it's decreasing, but I think there's a limit. So people keep living with a paper.

### ***RQ2: Acculturation and Different Forms of Computer-mediated Communication***

The second research question sought the different functions of different forms of computer-mediated communication in the Chinese, Korean and Indian students' acculturation process. Data collected from the focus groups show that most of these technologies, devices, and services play a role in acculturation, and their functions have overlaps but also certain specialized areas.

First, computer and the Internet, together with search engines, BBS and online forums, are closely related to the behavior acculturation of the international students. Behavior acculturation, as Berry (1980, p. 20) posited, is the process that individuals learn and acquire social skills of a new culture. The Internet is helpful to behavioral shifts because it provides unlimited information and knowledge about the host society. Search engines allow users to be the active information seeker, and bring the desired content in seconds. As for the online communities, these are places where new information is created by both professionals and amateurs, and the information is created because someone wants it and asks for it. The interactivity, spontaneity, equality, and need-based feature of the Internet database are highly desirable to the international students, who, as strangers to the new culture, require all sorts of knowledge to enrich themselves so that they can fit in. All the participants were asked what they would do when they were faced with real-life troubles or dealt with something new in the United States. The following were their answers:

C1: I prefer *Google* or other computer-related tools for such information, but if you are talking about the formal dinner manner, I may not be very sure about what I get from the Internet, so maybe I will first go to the Internet and next go to my friends to make sure that it's right.

C9: I will go to search engine.

C11: *MitBBS* ([www.mitbbs.com](http://www.mitbbs.com) is the most popular online community for overseas Chinese) – my first choice. It's Chinese. Of course, there is a lot of information on that network.

C5: Chinese [online community] in America.

C3: The Chinese BBS and forums are not the only resources. There are a lot of English ones. Sometimes I went to buy products or items, I usually just go to the *Google* search engine, and search for the information, and I will find a lot of American people discuss about the product. Then I can have an idea about that.

I6: [Computer and the Internet make the life here] easier, but I don't know if it's happier.

I1: [If I would buy a car insurance for the first time], actually, I would first go to the Internet, learn something about all the process and stuff, and then if I have questions, then I will consult with a friend who has already bought that insurance, you know, just to make sure that I'm not going on the wrong train. But I will do the learning part first by myself using the Internet.

Second, the real-time communications services mainly serve the psychological acculturation of the international students. This is more evident among the Chinese students than in the other two groups. Specifically, programs such as *MSN* and *Tencent QQ* contribute considerably in decreasing the acculturative stress experienced by the Chinese participants. Searle and Ward (1990, p. 449) defined psychological acculturation as the self-awareness of cultural identity and mental satisfaction in living in a new environment. The acculturative stress, which includes a number of language, academic, and cultural challenges associated with acculturation, is negatively correlated to individuals' psychological well-being (Ye, 2005, p. 154). Ye (p. 157) identified perceived discrimination, homesickness, perceived hate/rejection, fear, cultural shock, and guilt as the major components of such stress. Although the students did not think that they were evidently discriminated or rejected, or experienced tremendous shock, fear, or guilt, they did report certain degree of homesickness, or, more accurately, a feeling of loneliness and being lost that is shared by people when they are apart from their families. Due to the cheapness and efficiency, these real-time services have replaced long-distance cellular phone call and become the primary channel through which students from China keep frequent contacts with family members and maintain their social networks in their native countries. For the Indian and Korean students, they use cellular phone to talk to their parents and friends in India and Korea, but they also chat online with siblings and friends through *Yahoo Messenger*, *Gmail*, or *MSN*:

C1: And real-time communication like *MSN* messenger . . . mostly talk to my family . . .

C9: Talk [online] with my family.

C5: Without the Internet, I will feel homesick. I could call my family, but the Internet is free – I mean you just pay one fee. But calling is time-limited. I prefer to use email to contact English-speaking people as long as it's not very urgent.



I2: Cell phone [to contact our family].

I5: Yeah, we use it (cell phone) most of the time.

I3: We use online chatting, but not that popular – to those who are in India. Two of my family – my brother and my sister – they are in other countries like U.K. or some other country, then we do chatting through *Yahoo Messenger*. But to contact my parents in India, then I use cell phone.

K2: Our service [in Korea], let's say, have the text message, so we can send text message to their (parents and friends') cell phones. Mostly we just call them, or email.

K9: For family, I call them once a week. I don't use online chatting, because of the time difference, also my father is not well known about the Internet.

Many Chinese and Korean participants who felt that their English is poor said they prefer to use email to contact the English-speaking people. While talking on the phone in English causes them much stress, they become more relaxed and confident when they are writing emails. Hence, it can be argued that email is helpful to reduce the acculturative stress deprived from the language barriers:

C11: I agree that the computer media help me reduce the acculturative stress. At the beginning, when my English was too bad, I can't talk with my advisor, so I preferred use email to contact.

C6: I think I always feel nervous [when speaking in English]. Maybe my English is very poor. I think sometimes I can't say or express myself. I use *MSN* to talk to my family [in China] everyday about one hour.

C1: I think I prefer email too when I talk to English-speaking people, because sometimes it's less embarrassing, and it's more convenient

C11: I think [English proficiency] is an important reason for us to prefer email.

C10: For me, English is a big deal. I'm very nervous when I call – a company – maybe I never contacted them before. I remember once I called to a company, the person on the phone also has strong accent, so I can't understand him, and both of us feel, I can feel that he also feel upset, and me too, so I like to write.

C6: For many people, if they don't speak [English] very well, they fear of calling by cell phone. Maybe writing gives him or her enough time for checking.

K2: I use both email and cell phone to contact Americans, and I prefer email. Because of English, it's difficult to talk on the phone.

K4: Yeah. If I have to describe detailed thing, I prefer email. But if I have some emergency, I have to do this (call them).

Further, the computer-mediated communication technologies are beneficial to psychological adaptation because they lay on a variety of entertainment and ways of escape and self-expression to help the students relax from heavy workload and the intensity of adjustment.

Most students rarely watch television or go to theater because they watch and download free online shows and movies. They seldom read newspapers, magazines, or recreational books because they read them online. They make friends and develop social networks online, and they write blogs and upload clips to exhibit and share their sentiments, information, knowledge, opinions, talent, and creativity:

C3: I think all [of us] watch online movies or download some clips.

I6: I'm not saying that I'm not happier with the Internet. It depends.

I3: If we watch a nice movie, then we are happy. If the movie is not good, then I can be angry.

I4: That's not the Internet to blame, right? You'd better live with whatever you watch.

I6: No, Internet is to blame, because without the Internet, you couldn't access to that movie.

I7: I think the purpose of blogging is like sense of family. Like my intimate, he is sharing ideas what he thinks, and we just, as a community, we're just contributing with idea – agreeing or disagreeing or what differences. I blog all of my thoughts . . . I have some experience which I learnt abroad – popular culture – I wrote all about those.

K2: Check email, search the papers, communicate with people, and what else . . . have fun.

Third, emails and cellular phone contribute to the international students' sociocultural acculturation proposed by Searle and Ward (1990, p. 449). More specifically, both forms affect the social part of sociocultural acculturation by influencing the frequency and manner of the students' intergroup contact. Compared to older channels of communication such as letter and telephone, both emails and cellular phone provide more convenience and comfort so that easier and closer contact among cultures can be established and kept more frequently. Each form also possesses its unique features. Though neither form supports the face-to-face contact, cellular phone is more direct because it offers sound. The interactions on the phone are instantaneous, whereas responses could be much delayed via email. Many Chinese and Korean students prefer using email to contact people from other cultures – their professors, classmates, and colleagues – because they are unconfident in expressing themselves clearly in oral English. But in cases when the issue was urgent, they could still make a call. The rest of the participants who do not worry about their English proficiency would still consider cultural differences before they choose to write or call. Hence, it can be argued that emails and cellular phone supplement each other to serve the cross-cultural communication. Jointly the two forms provide freedom of choice for

different individuals in different situations and occasions, and they help reduce the difficulties in communication between cultures and improve cultural understanding:

*Q: Do you frequently call your professors?*

All the Chinese participants: no, no, no! When I contact English-speaking people, I prefer email.

C8: I call my professor a lot, because I can't finish my homework.

C10: Most of the case when I need to talk to some foreign friends is not an urgent case, is just "do you want to attend a party" or "do you want to go somewhere to dinner"? So it's not very urgent. When I really have some emergency, I will call my husband or call some Chinese friends, I think. Sometimes if some problems I'm not familiar with, for example, our car is hitted by another one, and we don't know exactly the rule here, we have to call American friends. I think because most of the things we can deal with our Chinese friends.

C3: I don't think it's the point that whether email or cell phone helps us communicate with American friends, because email has its own effect on many communication and cell phone has another one. Like email, we can send the attachments, and maybe the friends have no time when we call, so we need to email them, then, when they have time, they can track it. Not very urgent things, we need to use that. But phone call it's different. Sometimes you don't know which person you need to contact with – like if you receive a medical bill and you need someone to get information – I think it's the best way to call them because there's phone number on the bill . . . if you but something online, you can call the customer service. But email, sometimes even you called them, and they would ask you to email them to explain the problem more clearly because usually on the phone maybe it's not very useful way to do that. So it's different. I don't think it's the point that email will help us more to communicate with others. I think it's the same in China.

C2: It depends. Suppose you have an American friend and he prefer to use email and I always contact him with email. If he prefers to use cell phone, I call him.

C11: It depends on what you are talking about, because something you can describe, you just use cell phone. Sometimes something is difficult to describe, then . . .

C10: For me the reason I like to use email is because I think my English is not good enough. And sometimes I need to design a device, I can't explain very clearly by call. So I have to write an email and maybe draw a picture and send to several companies at the same time, but if I call them I have to call one by one, it's not high-efficient.

I3: Most of my friends on *Facebook* are from my department who I have friendship here in U.S.

I1: Maybe. I mean, I think I have a few [American friends]. Some of them use *Facebook*, so I use *Facebook* to talk to them. Other than that, direct contact cell phone, or the email, yeah.

K4: I contact the American friends on *MSN* every day.

K2: I use both email and cell phone to contact Americans, and I prefer email. Because of English, it's difficult to talk on the phone.

K4: Yeah. If I have to describe detailed thing, I prefer email. But if I have some emergency, I have to do this (call them).

***RQ3: Forms of Computer-mediated Communication Combined Facilitate Acculturation***

The third research question sought the role that forms of computer-mediated communication combined play in the process of acculturation. Results of this study seem to indicate a positive relationship between them.

Berry (1991, p. 11) proposed four types of acculturation behavior, among which the strategy of integration, meaning that individuals value both the native and host cultures and regarding themselves as the members of both societies, is the most desirable. Berry suggested that the outcomes of his integration strategy is similar to the presence of structural assimilation – a high level of intergroup contact – combined with a low degree of cultural assimilation – a high degree of cultural maintenance – proposed by Gordon (1964, p. 61). Besides, Melkote and Liu (2000, p. 499) presented the idea of behavior adaptation and value adaptation, while Searle and Ward (1990, p. 449) identified the psychological and sociocultural aspects of acculturation. Answers from the focus groups show that different forms of computer-mediated communication help international students to be more quickly and smoothly adapted to the new environment. Also, these forms of communication facilitate healthy psychological adjustment by strengthening the students' family ties and promoting their social communication so that their mentality integrity, emotional certainty, and life satisfaction are enhanced.

But the situations are more complex with regard to cultures and values. The participants disputed a lot about the effects of mass media in their learning process of the American culture. Some believed that media is a source of influence, whereas others disagreed, arguing that the media has nothing to do with culture. All participants said they are interested in the American culture, but still value highly their native culture.

C1: I don't think that media have [the power in helping us improving English]. I think it's most important to contact directly with people. So media, older or new forms, doesn't help.

C10: I think we are all pushed by our situation. We have to have class in English and write homework in English, that helps a lot. Not the media.

C8: The word and wording that people use on the Internet is so unofficial. If you read newspaper, you will learn the real way – the official way of speaking and wording of English. But you go to the Internet, everything is just like “yeah” or something alike. So I

would first go to the interpersonal communication, then the traditional media, then it's new media.

C11: No, I don't think I learn a lot about the American way of life by watching TV . . . English programs just improve your English. It can't change the...

C10: But I like to watch news – not about those important one, but those entertainment news. I watch about two hours a day. I think media help a lot in our learning of American or western culture.

C1: You can gain some opinions from the TV shows, and news about how we have a different opinion about the international events.

C3: The English formal or informal talking on the mass forum. They use a lot of official language, so we can find how they do in their daily time.

C3: So like in China, when we went to the restaurant, we don't pay any tips; but here, not Internet tell us we need to pay the tips. But when we go to the restaurant, we have to pay the tips, right?

C8: Yeah. Media really plays a very important role [in cultural learning] . . . The American programs, the media, is back on you. You should be changed.

I6: Yes, we've learnt a lot about American culture through movies, media.

I3: Yeah, if you think critically, you are right. [Media would have had bigger effect if I came at a pre-Internet time].

I7: People learn a lot from their communities, sometimes. Like ISA (the Indian Students Association) here is a bit stronger . . . . So if people are active, the community is active, then you will learn more about what's going on from them. But if the community is weak, let's say only four or five people are here, then of course, we will be more relying on other sources.

K2: The most helpful way of improving English is watching movie . . .

K4: Yeah, I learnt something form soup opera.

K9: Yeah, of course the media has some effect in cultural learning. Nowadays I watch the CNN or I access the CNN on the Web site, and then I become interested in the American culture . . . . So when I watch the news or Internet news about the other culture, I become interested. So I've changed.

One interesting finding is that the students tend to think that the pre-Internet-mediated mass media could have exerted stronger impacts on their cultural adaptation toward the host society. Many Chinese students, for example, thought that the American shows are attractive, and watching television would have improved their English proficiency if they had spent more time on it. One Chinese group member recalled the experience of her cousins, suggesting that she could have been pushed more toward the American ways of life if she would have come to

the United States decades earlier. Answers to the questionnaire, which display that English is the primary language used on all older mediums, may also serve to support this argument:

C11: I think [the media] helped [in our English learning], but before.

C9: If you spend 10 hours a day on TV, I think you will improve a lot.

C10: If without the computer and Internet, I think we would be more forced to contact with Americans and learn their ways. I have two cousins who came here 20 years ago. They were all married to American guys, and their friends are almost all Americans. When they first came here, there were almost no Chinese people . . . . At that time, they had no Internet, and they were quite “American.”

The Indian students did not regard English-speaking a matter of culture. They believed that movies and sitcoms are powerful in cultural learning. They suggested that while movies always exaggerate the reality, sitcoms such as *Friends* and *Everybody Loves Raymond* are the more reliable teachers for American culture, because the life illustrated there were closer to the everyday reality they experienced. The Korean students agreed with their Indian counterparts, saying that movies could teach culture, but not necessarily the real culture:

I7: Culture is something different, and even not working through language.

I6: Yes, we've learnt a lot about American culture through movies, media.

I1: Movies are . . . movies have big effect.

I3: Yeah, if you think critically, you are right. [Media would have had bigger effect if I came at a pre-Internet time].

I5: Mostly movies at that time.

I2: But that's different.

I5: Yeah, it's different.

I7: That's entirely different. Well, in all the movies that I see is that they are always drinking, a lot of party, a lot of lures, and all those . . .

I6: The thing is before everyone came here, everyone thought real American students were sorts of this, but . . . when you came to a place like (this university town) . . .

I3: Movie is more entertaining rather than learning. You have to take movie as an entertainment.

I1: I'm thinking of a good question: like how sure of you that you've watched that being shown on TV is the real, like the life here.

I3: Yeah. Most of the time things are exaggerated.

I6: I think more than movies, if you watch sitcoms like *Friends* or *Everybody Loves Raymond*. I think I learnt more about the American culture through them than others.

I7: Huh, sitcoms. I think sitcom is the best. I probably started watching some satires, some popular sitcoms. You know those languages that they use, because sometimes

coming from India, your slang will be different. I mean thank you in every sense doesn't mean "thank you," it might be . . . Let's say you can play with somebody, and if I run against him or her and I would say "thank you," they would not take it like a polite "thank you," they might be thinking: why are you being so sarcastic? So you didn't know slang.

K2: The media thing is, you know, it cannot be 100% perfectly same as real life. We can learn something at least. But we cannot believe it 100%. We can learn, but that is not true. Some like violence, American movies, mostly violence.

K4: That's little bit exaggerated.

K2: Like we feel: oh, all the Americans they have guns. But we came here, nobody has gun. So, we can learn something, but we can't believe 100%. So I also learn the other part from my experience.

It is still unclear whether forms of computer-facilitated communication affected value acculturation or not. But there is no indication that computer and the Internet block the international students from learning the host culture or slow down the progress of learning. Even if the pre-Internet-mediated mass media could have accelerated cultural adaptation, forced changes would cause much pain and acculturative stress. Further, the Internet and other related digital media present to the international students abundant information about their home countries, and could thus become a contributive factor in their cultural maintenance. Therefore, it can be argued that overall, forms of acculturation communication play a positive role in the acculturation process of these international students.

#### ***RQ4: General Similarities and Minor Dissimilarities***

The focus group participants from China, India, and South Korea have many similarities in terms of their computer-mediated communication uses for acculturative gratifications. Basically, all three groups use different forms of computer-mediated communication much more often than using older medium forms, and they agreed that their life would go wrong if they were deprived of computer and Internet connection. All participants use computer-mediated communication technologies to satisfy their multiple needs, including those within the acculturation category.

There are only minor dissimilarities among different cultures:

#### ***Second Language Proficiency***

As the researcher expected, the disparity in English proficiency between Chinese and Korean students and their Indian counterparts causes differences in their media uses and

gratifications. First, answers to the questionnaire show that six out of seven Indian participants use all kinds of media in English or both English and their native languages, whereas the Koreans and Chinese use more frequently their native languages. The difference is most obvious with regard to blogging: only one Indian participant indicated that he blogs in his native language; in contrast, no Chinese or Korean students use English as their primary language for blogging. Second, some Chinese and Korean participants said they prefer email when contacting Americans because they are worried about their poor English and feel nervous on the phone. To them, email offers an effective alternative to help reduce acculturative stress aroused from the language barrier. The Indians, of course, do not have such concerns. Third, English incompetence stops some Chinese and Korean students from seeking active interpersonal communication with the Americans and other English-speaking people, which may eventually reduce their interest and willingness to learn the host culture or be more involved in its society:

All the Chinese participants: no, no, no! [We don't frequently call the professors]. When I contact English-speaking people, I prefer email.

C10: For me the reason I like to use email is because I think my English is not good enough. And sometimes I need to design a device, I can't explain very clearly by call . . . . But for me, English is a big deal . . . I'm very nervous when I call . . .

C11: I think [English proficiency] is an important reason for us to prefer email.

C6: I think I always feel nervous [when speaking in English]. Maybe my English is very poor. I think sometimes I can't say or express myself . . . . I'm little interested in American culture. My professor here is a Chinese, so there's many Chinese students. When I came here, I'm connected to many people in Chinese. So I connect very little with Americans.

K1: [English is a] huge issue.

K2: Huge . . . . English causes trouble during presentations . . . . I use both email and cell phone to contact Americans, and I prefer email. Because of English, it's difficult to talk on the phone.

K4: Yeah. If I have to describe detailed thing, I prefer email. But if I have some emergency, I have to do this (call them).

K7: [I live with] American – African-American, so it's difficult . . . just say “morning” or “goodnight.” Yeah, for most time, I'm with my Korean friends.

### ***Networking Services Preferences in Different Countries***

One dissimilarity that the researcher did not expect is that different preferences of communication software in different countries have an obvious impact on the students' social networking formation when they came to the United States. In China, *MSN* and *Tencent QQ* are



the most popular instant messaging computer programs, whereas American Online's *AIM* is the most popular in the United States. Most Koreans used *Daum* and *Nate-on* (both are popular instant messaging services in South Korea), and the Indians used *Yahoo Messenger* before they came to America. It appears that the students from these countries have largely kept their former use patterns without switching to the *AIM* system. Most participants even did not know what software that Americans are using for instant chatting. As a result, these students retained in their messenger list all the old contacts, developed new instant messaging contacts on campus with people of the same nationality, but rarely with the Americans:

C10: I don't have American friends in my *MSN* list.

C4: I don't think Americans use quite often *MSN*. They use *AOL* or something different.

I3: We use *Yahoo Messenger*, we use Gmail, *Google Talk*. *Yahoo Messenger* [is the most popular real-time communication software in India,] I guess.

I5: But for now, *Yahoo Messenger* is still in, but *Google Mail* . . .

I3: *Google*. [I still use *Yahoo Messenger* here]. No, [I don't have any American contact on my messenger list.]

As for services such as BBS and online forums, again, many international students tend to seek help from those communities that they had known and gone before. The majority members of these online communities are either the immigrants or sojourners of the students' country of origin, or are currently in their native countries:

All the focus groups were asked specifically how they used *Facebook*, the latest networking program in fashion. Launched on February 4, 2004, *Facebook* is now the 5th most-trafficked Web site in the world with more than 69 million active users (Facebook Press Room, n.d., Statistics). *Facebook* is also the 2nd most-trafficked social media site and ranked No. 1 in terms of online photo sharing application. However, more than half of the Chinese interviewees reported that they heard the name frequently but had never tried the service. Only two Chinese participants could discuss the service and claimed that they used it, while the others knew little. No Chinese students used or were knowledgeable about the *xiaonei* Web site, which is an equivalent to *Facebook* in China. Hence, it seems that these Chinese students are less quick when it comes to adopting the newest and most fashionable networking services after they came to America. One possible reason for this, as a Chinese participant noted, is that some design features of *Facebook* caused unsuccessful application – she was rejected for the first time

because she used an email address ended with *.cn*. The moderator could feel that most Chinese participants were eager to try *Facebook*, even though they did not express the desire verbally.

Of the Indian group, five members reported that they have a *Facebook* account and make contact sometimes. But they use *Orkut* – an equivalent to *Facebook* – much more frequently. While *Orkut* is mainly for the ingroup social networking, *Facebook*, for its popularity among American students, is used for intergroup communication gratification.

Similarly, four Korean students said they use *Facebook*, but only for contacting American acquaintances sometimes. The students introduced to the moderator *Cyworld*, the most popular web community site in Korea, which is used by every participant to keep in touch with the friends in Korea. While *Cyworld* offers several international versions in different languages (e.g., the Chinese version, the Japanese version, and the U.S. version), members on different versions cannot communicate with each other. Also, Korea's real name registration policy prohibits foreigners from entering the Korean popular Web communities.

The current users said most contacts on their *Facebook* are Americans. Therefore, if other students would eventually adopt the service, it could be helpful for them to be more involved into the American social life.

C11: *MitBBS* – my first choice. It's Chinese. Of course, there are a lot of information on that network.

C5: Chinese [online community] in America.

C7: *Facebook* can meet your friend, your old friend, and you can communicate with them. Like send some gifts, or . . . different ways. There's also attachment – buying things and selling things . . . so different ways to communicate . . . most of them (the contacts) [on *Facebook*] are English.

C3: I tried to apply an account [for *Facebook*], but I'm rejected, because my email was ended by *.cn*. I wished to use *Facebook* just to get information like rent cars and other things. In China, I used BBS for that purpose. *Facebook* seems the most popular, because most American use that. And we can post photos and videos online, and share the information with a lot of friends. I know *Facebook* is not only popular here, but even in China. It's called *xiaonei* or something else . . . This network has exactly the same interface as *Facebook*, and the only difference is the language – it's in Chinese. [translation from Chinese] I hated the applications in *Facebook* . . .

I5: [Americans like to use] *Facebook*.

I3: Yeah, [we use *Facebook*.] We do have an account.

I4: Yeah, we have.

I5: But not that much. We have another software – *Orkut*

I4: It's another version of *Facebook*, I think. It's O-r-k-u-t.

I3: *Orkut.com*. You can login through your *Gmail* ID into that. Most of my friends on *Facebook* are from my department who I have friendship here in U.S. There are Indian people [on *Facebook*]. But I use some others. I use mostly *Orkut* to contact the Indian friends. There are some other people who I want to contact, then I use *Facebook* – other than the Indian people.

I1: From my point of view, we have a lot of friends who are on *Orkut*, who are registered with *Orkut*, more from India, our friends who are now at India. But here, it seems to me that *Facebook* is more popular. So keeping in touch with friends or lab-mates or, you know, people are beside with you, *Facebook* would be my choice. These people we keep in touch with on *Facebook*. So these are two different features.

I3: [*Orkut* is for contacting Indian people] primarily.

I1: Maybe. I mean, I think I have a few [American friends]. Some of them use *Facebook*, so I use *Facebook* to talk to them.

I3: This form they are using is the most community-like.

I7: Here, [we maintain our community] mainly through *Orkut*. It's an similar community site like *Facebook*. There you can find a lot of my past posts. That's the place for community keeping, contacting, but otherwise, not that much.

K9: We share pictures [on *Cyworld*], very similar to *Facebook*.

K2: I use the American *Facebook*, but not very often. I use it because of American friends.

K9: *Cyworld* is very convenient for contacting people living in Korea. I have so many friends in Korea. For example, those Koreans who are 25 or 30 years old, so their relationships are strongly related to their career. So how can I contact them? Send them email? You know it's busy, because it's not your time, so I talk to them using *Cyworld*.

K6: *Cyworld*, like *Facebook*. It's not Korean *Facebook*, I mean, there are different style.

K2: [On *Cyworld*], we download some pictures, and leave message. It's international.

K5: Yes, we have *Cyworld*. I send text messages.

K4: But it's hard to get registration if you are not Korean, because you need something like social security number in Korea. I tried to get registration for my roommate, she cannot.

K1: But if you are foreigner, you can have several different versions: American version, Chinese version, Japanese version. You can register there.

K4: (But people registered on different versions are impossible to talk with one another. The Korean version is just for Koreans, and is in Korean language.) No, you can't. It's impossible.

***RQ5: Intended Duration of Stay Does not Make Difference***

Different intentions on the length of stay between focus group participants in the United States did not differ evidently in terms of their media consumption patterns and acculturation gratifications. Of the 27 participants, three Chinese and five Koreans indicated that they would return to their home country immediately after they complete the present academic program. One Chinese, four Indians, and one Korean said they would stay for a brief time, while the rest said they would continue their studies or work full time in the United States. Nine Participants reported that they would consider applying for the U.S. permanent residency. The different goals and plans, however, do not seem to intervene into the participants' use of computer-mediated communication to satisfy their acculturative needs.

In the Chinese group, there were two married women who have planned to go back to China directly. Their husbands are currently in China, and one woman is apart from her child. Both have stayed in the United States for less than six months, and were scheduled to complete their post-doc project fairly quickly. Besides, these two women are the oldest among all participants, and both thought that their English was poor. While one of them expressed clearly that she had little interest in American culture, the other appeared to be quiet and inactive while discussions about American culture and cultural adaptation were carried on. However, no strong evidence exists to show that their planned short stay is a major cause for their indifference to American culture. A number of other factors, such as age, marital status, and supervisor's country of origin, may influence solely or jointly. Similar to others, they make big effort to adapt behaviorally. They agreed that forms of computer-mediated communication satisfy most of their general and acculturation gratifications, and could still live satisfactorily if the older media would be totally inaccessible:

C5: If it's just the media, I think the Internet is enough. I use the Internet for contact with my families, and e-journals and emails, and e-books – both in English and Chinese, and news.

C6: I'm little interested in American culture. My professor here is a Chinese, so there's many Chinese students. When I came here, I'm connected to many people in Chinese. So I connect very little with Americans.

Another Chinese participant who said he would return to China on completion of the current study did not show even the slightest difference in terms of his media use, language preference, behavioral adjustment, or understanding of cultural adaptation. This participant

reported seeking actively direct contact with Americans. He felt somehow difficult to make direct contact with Americans, but such feelings were shared by many others. During the discussion, he said he would consult with both the Chinese and American friends for suggestions and solutions when he met some real-life problems and uncertainties. He also showed no sign of resisting the American culture:

C2: it depends. Suppose you have an American friend and he prefer to use email and I always contact him with email. If he prefers to use cell phone, I call him.

C2: I agree with her. I will ask my friends – both [Chinese and American].

Compared to him, there was a Chinese female participant who, despite her long-term plan to stay, expressed clearly her resolution to preserve Chinese cultural heritage. She uses most forms of communication – computer, the Internet, cell phone, portable music player, online forums and videos, blogs, and real-time communication services – in Chinese. On the other hand, she was one of the two *Facebook* users in the group, and she has no fear or unwillingness to make direct contact with the English-speaking people:

*Q: But it's just for learning, for knowledge, it will not change your culture identity?*

C3: No...I am Chinese.

In the Indian group, students who would stay less than a year and those who would study or work for a longer period of time demonstrated no difference. Five Korean participants plan to leave America on completion of their present program, but again, their intention did not seem to relate to their media uses and gratifications.

### **Interpersonal Communication is Influential**

Ruben (1975, p. 171) proposed that every individual's social communication activity consists of two closely interrelated processes: interpersonal communication and mass communication. Since the two systems are inseparable and mutually influential, any exploration into the communication between people and culture should consider both. Results from this study seem to indicate that it is the people – rather than the media – that exercise the strongest and most profound influence on all aspects of acculturation at the individual level.

First, almost all focus group participants regarded interpersonal communication as their principal means for behavior adaptation. The participants believed that in many cases, friends – both people from their own and other countries – are the richest and most reliable source for practical information and knowledge about the American society. Though many students would

search the Internet to obtain general ideas of unfamiliar things, such as buying car insurance for the first time or preparing for attending American social events, they trust people more and would always go to a friend for verification of the online content. Particularly, the Indian students underlined the importance of friends when they first entered America. Friends were also identified by many participants as a major source of pre-acculturation:

C4: you always get too much information from the Internet. It's confusing and it comes from every angle. It's just not practical to your case. But U.S. friends, you can explain better and get better advice. It's more specific.

C2: I agree with her (C4). I will ask my friends – both [Chinese and American].

I7: I have friends – the Indian guys who came along when I came.

I3: Mostly you take care of your friends.

I1: Before you actually come here, you make sure that you know somebody being here, I mean, in most cases, that's what you do. And then your primary problem was your housing and the food that you eat. It takes a little while to get adjusted. Yes, so basically your friends here . . .

I3: Friends are helpful.

I1: If without them, that could be very very difficult.

I1: [If I would buy a car insurance for the first time], actually, I would first go to the Internet, learn something about all the process and stuff, and then if I have questions, then I will consult with a friend who has already bought that insurance, you know, just to make sure that I'm not going on the wrong train . . .

K2: I called him (K1) when I buy insurance.

K5: I bought the car from someone else. No I didn't do any online search about it.

Second, the group members agreed that frequent and direct interpersonal communication is the most effective way of learning American culture. Several participants mentioned that living with Americans could be the most helpful. An American spouse, for example, could have overwhelming influence on acculturation. One of the Korean group members shared her experience of living with two American roommates. She agreed that she has witnessed and directly experienced some of their culture and traditions, and developed intimacy with them. Since they live under the same roof, they exchanged *MSN* addresses and chat online every day. She also made friends with her roommates' friends. Most of the other participants who currently live with roommates from their own country do not have such opportunities. To them, the real American lifestyle is always a mystery, which they have so far found no means to discover or take an active part in:

C4: I like the cultures of different countries, different peoples, understanding their lives, their thinking. It's fun. [I learn these things] mostly from people, from direct contact with these people.

C10: I have two cousins who came here 20 years ago. They were all married to American guys, and their friends are almost all Americans. When they first came here, there were almost no Chinese people . . . at that time, they had no Internet, and they were quite "American."

I7: I think [we learn culture] more through friends. If we have some American friends, like if you have a sport in common that you want to learn. You should have some common ground – maybe you share department or maybe share activity – then you start like, because . . . See he's come from a different part of the country as I am. If I would want to learn more about his culture, the same thing I would do like, let's say we know each other through badminton, so if we met there, and things could be that we could be friends, and then we started exploring each other's culture. If not, I don't know him and he doesn't know me, so it's the same . . . The concept is people. It's not about . . . because now we are related by knowing what is interesting us rather than just trying to imitate him because he is White.

I1: I'm thinking of a good question: like how sure of you that you've watched that being shown on TV is the real, like the life here. I mean you don't know for sure unless you actually go and meet people, and try to learn something from them.

C11: I never live with an American, so I don't know their real lifestyle.

I1: I'm not sure what exactly is American culture.

K4: I live with American roommates, so I improve my English with them, talk to them, and we also use *MSN* we still in the apartment, so like "hey, do you want to have some ice-cream?" I say "okay, see you in five minutes at the living room" like this . . . I contact the American friends on *MSN* every day. I have two American roommates and from this summer, I will have some others . . . I learn the American lifestyle from my American roommates. Sometimes, I go with them to the bar. I visited their hometown. I have some experience about American traditional culture – Thanksgiving big dinner, Christmas family – things like that.

Third, all Chinese and Korean participants thought that instead of the media, the American people – professors, classmates, colleagues, roommates, and friends – are the best teachers for improving English:

C1: I don't think that media have [the power in helping us improving English]. I think it's most important to contact directly with people. So media, older or new forms, doesn't help.

C8: the word and wording that people use on the Internet is so unofficial . . . So I would first go to the interpersonal communication, then the traditional media, then it's new media . . . For me, when I'm writing an email, I would be worried about my language – if it would be bad. . . sometimes have to look up a dictionary to improve my wording. But if I talk directly to a person, I can just use everyday English and gestures. So for me

direct [oral] communication is less nervous... You get different ways to let people understand you. A lot of grammar mistakes, it doesn't matter. But when writing, we want that as graduate students, our English is good enough.

K1: In my case I improve my English during conversation with my advisor, from my roommate . . .

K2: I do commentary English class at our school. The most helpful way of improving English is watching movie, do some conversation with American, or Chinese, and Indians.

Fourth, the participants believed that the strong community tie among their fellow Chinese, Indians, or Koreans is a major contributing factor to their native cultural maintenance. Though various forms of computer-mediated communication facilitate easy and frequent contact, it is with the effort of every member of the community that these students feel a sense of belonging:

I1: On campus we do events . . . two or three events every month. That's when most of the Indian students and communities get together for the events. That's when all are together. Otherwise there are small [events], you know, their own groups.

I3: Small groups. We are divided into small groups.

I4: We have a big community here. It's not really possible to keep contact with each one of them on a regular basis. The Indian Student Association – the big group – they have events to bring, so all of us meet at that time. We do maintain our community on small basis and big basis.

I2: We have our own circles.

I5: Community is our primary force.

I7: People learn a lot from their communities, sometimes. Like ISA (the Indian Students Association) here is a bit stronger . . . So if people are active, the community is active, then you will learn more about what's going on from them. But if the community is weak, let's say only four or five people are here, then of course, we will be more relying on other sources. Yeah, [Community and interpersonal communication has more influence on culture].

K2: I think most Koreans go church.

K1: Yeah, church life is the most important for some of us.

K5: We have Korean church, which is very close [to campus].

K8: And in church. When I came here, I contact with the Korean people in Korean church.

K9: I think the church is the center of the Korean community here. A lot of my friends in other cities, even though they are not Christian, they still go to church because they can get lots of help from church, also they to be in touch with the Korean people, and they



can have some Korean traditional food. You know, the food is not just food, if you can eat the Korean food, at least like once a week, it's very healthful.

Finally, many participants said that they always go to a friend when they feel sad or upset, though surfing the Internet, blogging, and watching online movies and shows are the common alternatives. Hence, interpersonal communication could be an effective soothing agent for the international students to reduce mental disturbance and enhance healthy psychological adaptation.

### **Factors Existing prior to Acculturation**

The acculturation theorists proposed that individuals begin the acculturation process with a number of pre-existing personal characteristics (Berry, 1997, p. 21). Some factors are of a demographic nature while others are related to social environment. Results generated from the focus group discussions appear to support these arguments. In particular, personality and characteristics of the society of origin were identified by the participants as influential in their undergoing acculturation process.

#### *Personality and Personal Choices*

Several Chinese participants suggested that individuals' personality would determine their selection of different acculturation strategies – whether to be more adapted to the host culture or to hold to their native culture:

C3: The most simplest example is the food. Even we communicate with most American people and we eat American food, but for myself I still prefer Chinese food than American food. So the lifestyle, for me, is difficult to change.

C11: That's because you have choice.

C3: It depends on the personality.

C4: You want to be more American, and you will.

C3: I think it's impossible for me.

C11: I can provide a question, so like what do you want your children, I mean, like you want him or her to be more American or more Chinese?

C1: I don't think you have any choice if your child is born in America.

C11: You can choose.

C10: I have a cousin, their children can speak Chinese but the other cousin their children speak very good Chinese. It depends on the family . . . . You are not necessary to do that [take the children back to China to learn Chinese]. All my cousins are in America, all my

family, belong to my father, they are in America. I can see the big difference between family and family. And I think depends on what you want the children to be. It really depends.

C11: I think it depend on your way of education.

Personality – introvert or extrovert – may also interfere into the non-English-speaking students' interpersonal communication with the Americans. While one Korean participant felt she has improved her English ability and learnt about American culture by actively talking and playing with her American roommates, another Korean student, who appeared to be very shy during the discussion, found even the basic communication with his American roommate hard and unrewarding:

K2: English causes trouble during presentations.

K1: I don't feel any inconvenience. Yeah, of course my English ability is not good, but communication is not difficult. But most of the Korean people feel like, they think 'my English is poor,' I think this might be formed by the Korean English education system – only reading and writing.

K4: I live with American roommates, so I improve my English with them, talk to them, and we also use *MSN* we still in the apartment . . .

K7: [I live with] American – African-American, so it's difficult . . . just say "morning" or "goodnight." Yeah, for most time, I'm with my Korean friends.

### ***The Society of Origin***

Berry (1997, p. 16) argued that a study of acculturation would not be complete without examining both the societal contexts of origin and settlement. The cultural characteristics in the society of origin need description because these elements accompany individuals into their acculturation process and influence the outcomes. While this study was not able to explore all the mediating factors of the international students' native society, two of them – the cultural distance and cultural environment for pre-acculturation – were discussed during the group interviews. Comparison among the three Asian cultures indicates that second language proficiency, which is one of the major elements determining how a culture is dissimilar from the host culture, does affect acculturation variables such as acculturative stress and direct contact with the outgroup, and therefore affect individual's media use for related acculturation gratifications.

In terms of cultural environment of the society of origin, it was proposed that the combination of political, economic, and demographic conditions of the society where people come from should be studied as a basis for understanding their motivations for following

different acculturation strategies (Berry, 1997, p. 21). This study did not probe that depth, but it examined specifically media's role in the Asian students' pre-acculturation. All focus group participants reported that they are interested in the American culture. For the Korean students, they claimed that they have been very familiar with and accustomed to the American life because it is virtually the same as the life back in Korea. Their Chinese and Indian counterparts were less confident in truly understanding the host culture, but they are willing to learn more and be more involved into it. The participants admitted that they were pre-acculturated through consuming varieties of western products, brands, programs, and services introduced to their home countries. In addition, their native mass media, which provided extensive coverage and abundant information and knowledge concerning all aspects of the American society, also contributed. Only two Indian students had not tried to gain information or knowledge about the United States before they came. They were not ignorant, however, but had learnt a lot about the host culture through watching movies and sitcoms in India. For the rest of the participants, 17 had used the Internet as their primary source for learning things about the United States. Friends and television programs were also identified as helpful. The pre-gained information and knowledge should have reduced strangeness toward the new environment and helped solve real-life problems during behavior adjustment. Nevertheless, in what ways and to which degree that pre-acculturation would facilitate cultural adaptation is still unclear and thus needs more detailed study:

For most participants, they have largely retained their former media use patterns as long as the current conditions permit. For example, many Chinese participants do not listen to any radio, and they did not use radio even in China. The only Chinese students who buy magazines regularly explained that she bought many more magazines of the same type in China:

C8: In China, I took about 10 or 12 magazines a month, but here I only get about two or three . . . . So I think pre-acculturation is not this bad. When we were in China our generation, late 60s and early 80s. I think our generation were grown up with those western culture actually. Like jeans, everybody wear jeans, T-shirts. For me, I grow up with those music, all these western music, Mariah Carey and Jackson. So I think as I grow up I think I prefer the American or western music, movies and shows, more and more. So when I have been here I didn't find the things are so strange. When I were in China so we already change by that situation . . .

I5: Mostly [learning American culture through] movies at that time.

I2: But that's different.

I5: Yeah, it's different.

I6: Yeah, now, actually, Indian media covers a lot about America, like the democratic and republican presidential elections going on now.

I3: [The television and newspaper media] is more common, more popular in India [for learning about American].

I1: Yeah, friends, mostly asking friends [before I came here].

I7: Coming back to your question of food, we have a lot of McDonald's and Pizza Huts in India now. So people are different . . .

K2: No, the life here and that in Korea are not different. That's why I think it's [the American culture] nothing interesting. American culture is Korean culture.

K4: Except that everything is much bigger (the size).

K2: The American fast food and popular culture – movies, television shows – are everywhere in Korea.

### **Understanding Cultures and Acculturation**

Several issues relating to culture were brought up for lengthy discussion during the focus groups. Many participants, though aware that they are experiencing adaptation toward the host society, were uncertain about what exactly the American culture and values are. Such uncertainty is no wonder, as most participants' social networking – both in real life and online – is largely confined to people from their own country. Their alien cultural backgrounds cause shortage of common topics with the Americans, so that developing friendship of true sense becomes very hard:

C10: I think both of us have a lot of American colleagues, but not friends.

K9: I've been here three years, and I think I've been Americanized a little bit. But you know, I still feel the difference between the American and the Korean people. The cultures are different, so it's not easy to mix up with the American people. But I still have many nice friends. But it's like just *friend*. But I cannot make very . . . very difficult. Some questions . . . I can't explain deeply with the American people, because we have some different background. Like the school life, I cannot catch their school life because I had different education, and they say something in their school, but I couldn't understand. So I feel something differ. But with Korean people I can have some common areas – some that happened in the school – so at the beginning, I can easily talk to the Korean people even though I don't know them, like in the high school, we studied so hard – we studied from 7am to 11pm – people understand that and then I can easily talk to people about that topic, but I have very narrow common topic for my American friends.

I1: I'm not sure what exactly is American culture.

### *Cultures are Merging*

Despite the uncertainty and weariness from being outsiders, all participants believe the American society is inclusive rather than resistive, and the American culture is hard to define because it is international. On the other hand, the students felt that their native societies and cultures are becoming more open and diversified. While both the eastern and western cultures largely retain their distinctive inherited characteristics, they are evolving rapidly by exchanges, inclusion, and mutual imitation:

C2: I think it's hard to define the American culture. I think American culture is the international culture – all kinds of cultures from different countries.

K2: No, the life here and that in Korea are not different . . . . American culture is Korean culture . . . . The American fast food and popular culture – movies, television shows – are everywhere in Korea.

K9: iPod recently in Korea becomes popular. By the end of last year, more Korean people buy the iPod and iPhone. I think people think they are cool.

While no Chinese or Korean participants reported that they experienced culture shock, many Indian participants said they were shocked by many unknown things at the beginning. However, they were confident that India has been undergoing big changes in recent years and is very different today. Not only have the communication technologies and facilities been upgraded in India, its cultural environment as a whole have become increasingly acceptant and responsive to western cultures, and the Indian people are much more knowledgeable about the western world. Particularly, the Indian student who first came to the United States seven years ago talked about his personal experience of these changes:

I6: So basically in big cities you have the option of high speed [Internet connection]. It depends on what you want . . . . Yeah, now, actually, Indian media covers a lot about America, like the democratic and republican presidential elections going on now.

I3: In India it's (iPod) not that common.

I4: It's not that popular but it's gaining momentum.

I7: I had culture shock when I first came here. I was in California on my first year. First of all, when I first got a car, the speed was so fast . . . . Then it was so clean, first of all. Then everything is so far afar . . . you wouldn't find any grocery nearby it (the housing community) – you have to drive about two miles, and I was just like “oh! Oh!” in India, we always have groceries at street corners. You just go there and get whatever you can get.

I1: Yeah, supermarket is one thing [of culture shock].

I7: There is also huge difference from five years ago and right now. That time there were so many people who came here on H1 and other visas and then go back, like some saw there and that's what they saw in movies. So during those days they bring all the information back. They keep asking me when I go home: "oh, it seems everybody does this does that," and I'm like – not half of that is much true. But right now it's much more equivalent. People know quite a bit lot. If something happens here, they will know something about what's going on. But when I came here, it's somehow difficult. I didn't know much about America when I was in India. I learnt pretty much about America after I came here . . . . Coming back to your question of food, we have a lot of McDonald's and Pizza Huts in India now. So people are different . . . . Different people will follow different ways, no matter so much interaction, do you know, understand? . . . . Okay. This is American culture, and this is not. It's very difficult especially with this background here – with so many international students with their own [cultures], so many things are so, you know, common, it's very difficult to say "this is this, this is that. This is Indian culture, that is American culture." Indian culture is getting more westernized.

### ***Culture is a Process***

One Chinese participant referred to culture as a *process*, indicating that the learning is slow, gradual, long-term, and its outcomes are always imperceptible and indefinite. It is possible that individuals select from the native and host cultures only one as their primary cultural identity. But the other culture is still there and would never stop its process of evolvement.

### ***Host Cultural Learning is Inevitable***

All participants still highly valued their native cultures and values. Such persistence was not only precisely enounced, but could be illustrated with their pride in and cherishing of native foods. The Indian student who has been in America for seven years – the longest among all participants – came to the meeting in a golden *Sherwani*, which is a long coat-like garment worn for formal occasions by those of North Indian descent. He just came from an Indian New Year celebration typical of his culture, and was proud to display his traditions:

C3: The most simplest example is the food. Even we communicate with most American people and we eat American food, but for myself I still prefer Chinese food than American food. So the lifestyle, for me, is difficult to change.

I7: Because mostly our food is "exam," I don't like either eastern or western.

I3: If I have time, I will prefer cooking myself. If you have time, sufficient enough, then we make our own food. If you don't have time, then there is no other option.

I5: I think it's just, it talks a little while to get adjusted to the food, you know.

I4: We don't have time.

I6: Another problem with the Indian food is that it takes a long time to cook.

I2: And a lot of spices.

I3: And you need some expertise to cook, not everyone can cook good food.

K3: [I cook] Korean food every day.

K1: Every day.

K8: Not every day. I miss Korean food.

K1: No, I don't like American foods.

K2: I like it. But I like it does not mean that I'm more "American." Just I'm lazy. Korean food is very complicated to make, but American food is easy – just heat it, so . . . I like that way.

K1: Yes, food is the most important part of culture.

Nevertheless, some participants said they are gradually getting used to – or even beginning to like – the American food. Some said they experienced kind of *reversed* culture shock when they traveled back home. Though shifts in diet preference or a strange feeling toward the native society were not prevalent among them, many participants admitted that they have been changing somewhere somehow, and would inevitably continue to change over time. They have accepted such inevitability willingly, believing that active adaptation is the best way – because they are now *within* the culture, and therefore they must learn to cope:

C10: I think we are all pushed by our situation . . .

C1: I don't think it's because we are interested, but we are forced to understand their culture.

C3: I think culture is a difficult thing. I am interested in many cultures in different countries. But I cannot study one of these cultures like American culture because since I am already here, I am in American country, right? So like in China, when we went to the restaurant, we don't pay any tips; but here, not internet tell us we need to pay the tips. But when we go to the restaurant, we have to pay the tips, right? I mean, this is just the culture and what American live. Since we have already here so we have to learn that, we have to do that in a kind of American way. That's the problem, that's what I mean. We have to know, not forced to. But as I said, I am interested in other cultures like Egypt, or Japan, or other things. If I have chance to go that cultures, I will happy to learn that culture.

C4: You have the society.

C8: Yeah. I mean, when I was in China I am not so hard working but half hard working, OK? But when I was in America, I was just like easy, lazy, crazy, beautiful cover girl. I think so. I am either have so choice for many years and if you have no choice everyone around you is American you got to learn something. That's human, I mean, you have the nature to learn from others. And maybe you still want to eat your Chinese foods, you still want to meet the ones you are familiar with, you still want the lifestyles in China, but we

are here, we have no choice. And the American programs, the media, is back on you. You should be changed.

I6: I think we've changed if we travel back to India.

I7: It's called reversed culture shock. When you first come here, it's culture shock, because, when you come here, and then you'll . . . this culture is an alien culture of you. And then you try to adjust, and after five or six years and then you go back, then you will have to adjust to their pace because they have changed all past five or six years, and you have changed all past five or six years, and you haven't seen them changing and they haven't seen you changing, so you go back, it's just like – you used to think on the same frequency, like maybe you used to like see movies or same things before, but now it could be different because they are in different life situation and I'm in different life situation.

I6: Yeah, like I will be changed when I've been here over 20 years.

I7: Coming back to your question of food . . . first when I came here, I couldn't eat French fries. Then I'm used to get sick, I'm used to eat bread . . . and sour cream and onion chips, first I wouldn't have even one or two of them, but now it's like "yeah, chips! Chip!" Now I don't eat that much, I eat Indian food once or twice a week.

K1: Sometimes I follow some Korean traditions, like August 15<sup>th</sup> (the Mid-Autumn Festival). But we can't follow all of the culture because it's very complicated to follow all of them.

K9: I think I've become familiar with the American food. At the beginning I didn't like American food, but now it doesn't matter.

K8: I'm the same.

### ***Native Cultural Maintenance among the First and Second Generations***

Some participants noted that culture begins the first day that a person is born to it. Culture could change and evolve, but would never be obliterated. That is the real reason why all of them were so confident that no matter how long they would stay in America, they would always retain their native cultural identity:

C11: I can accept some culture, but in fact, culture is difficult for us, because we are foreigner. Culture was passed . . . when you were children, so little little little culture was passed from your parents . . . most culture is underwater. So what we are learning is just appearance. It's the surface. So I can only accept some part of them . . . I'm thinking of an example, like culture in building of your lifestyle, and the way we talk, and the way we think . . . And their food – I don't like it.

C10: we are not even learning their everyday ways of living. We have our own character, community. Do you think that all of us are *Chinese*? I think all our communicating [with Americans] involves only working and studying, not cooking – sometimes parties – but not truly the living part . . . I probably think no [I will not change my cultural identity] . . . For example I visited my cousin in Ohio when I fold the bedding they said



no, you fold the bedding in a wrong way, you should fold like that...So I think we can't change.

I7: I think culture is something that you don't throw out of your blood . You are just physically away from it, I mean, even though you use English as your family language, those stuff. Culture is something different, and even not working through language.

I5: Value for culture is always there. It's infinite property.

However, the participants were unsure if they would be successful in passing on their cultural heritage to the second generation. The reason for their diffidence is virtually the same as the reason for their confidence. While these international students recognize the Chinese, Indian, or Korean culture as their native one, their children – provided that they would be born and grow up in the United States – would naturally embrace the American culture as their native one. Still, many participants expressed their good wishes and plans to have a try:

C1: I don't think you have any choice if your child is born in America.

C10: I will ask my children, not now. My children speak Chinese and know how to write Chinese. It's very sad if someday you are very old. I think one day maybe we are very old and old enough to become an idiot. At that time maybe I can only speak Chinese, and I think it's sad if my children can't understand me. There are a lot of beautiful poem in Chinese. I think how sad it is if you cannot understand the poem I like. So I want my children to speak Chinese and maybe live in a Chinese style.

C3: Sometime it's nature to speak English if the children live in America. There are many many examples that the children live in America and the parents want them to learn Chinese and live in a Chinese style but it's very hard you know. Take him or her to China, that's the best way.

C10: You are not necessary to do that. All my cousins are in America, all my family, belong to my father, they are in America. I can see the big difference between family and family. And I think depends on what you want the children to be. It really depends.

I2: Maybe if you are here from childhood, maybe your culture then, maybe is more . . .

I6: if I would have a child born here, for me, I would like him to learn about India or my language or something, but because he is born here, I can't be sure if that's possible.

K9: I hope my kids could learn Korean language and culture if they would be born here. Oh, it's very difficult, because I teach the Korean language to the second generation, because they have no interest in learning Korean, because they just go to school, and their friends are English. Their parents want to do that. I mean, I have my parents, but they cannot speak English very well, so like the grandparents and my son – if they cannot speak [Korean] – they cannot communicate with each other. So for my parents, I want them to learn English, and know Korean. But for me, it's okay . . . I have some examples: they are the second generation. They grow up here, and their parents send them to some Korean church or some school, and then they can learn the Korean. So even though in the childhood they don't like it, but you have to keep teaching them the Korean culture. After they grow up, some of them meet the Koreans and they want to contact the

Korean people because they cannot suit in the American culture and they feel lonely here – because you know they are not exactly American and maybe they feel some difference between American and Korean. Sometimes they want to come back to the Korean culture or Korean community, but if they cannot speak the Korean, it would be hard. And it's very helpful to keep in touch with the Korean people. So my plan maybe I can teach my kids about the Korean or I can send them to the Korean school, but I will not push too much, I mean, just a little bit, at least they can communicate with the Korean people, even though they cannot write, that's okay, because they can communicate.

## **CHAPTER 5 - Discussion**

This study examined the relationship between computer-mediated communication and the acculturation process among international students from China, India, and the Republic of Korea. Results of the focus group interviews suggest that various forms of computer-mediated communication facilitate different aspects of acculturation, and these forms combined may help promote healthy and successful acculturative experience and eventually help produce positive acculturation outcomes. Findings of the three particular focus groups indicate that computer, the Internet, and cellular phone, as well as other computer-facilitated devices and services satisfy a wide range of gratifications of the students from these three countries. They suggest that to these international students, the computerized mediums have served as functional alternatives to the older mediums. While computer-mediated communication has become an indispensable part of their daily life, participants still considered interpersonal communication the primary source for gratifying their acculturation needs.

### **Answers to the Research Questions**

RQ1: Do forms of computer-mediated communication combined become functional alternatives to the older mediums for international students from China, India, and the Republic of Korea?

This study found that computer-mediated communication has become functional alternative to older forms of mediated communication among the interviewed Chinese, Indian, and Korean students. Different forms of computerized mediums serve a variety of students' gratifications, which can be categorized into seven types – information, learning, news, facilitating daily life, diversion, social network, and acculturation.

RQ2: What uses does each specific computer-mediated communication technology serve in the Chinese, Indian, and Korean Students' acculturation process?

The results indicate that most of the computer-facilitated communication forms serve the students' needs of acculturation type, and each form has its specialized functions. While the Internet, search engines, and online forums contribute to the behavior acculturation, the instant

messaging and online chatting services, cellular phone and emails, and multimedia technologies promote healthy psychological adaptation by reducing acculturative stress and providing entertainment. Furthermore, emails, cellular phone, and Web community services facilitate the students' establishment and maintenance of real-life social networks with both the intragroup and intergroup members.

RQ3: What role does the combination of different forms of computer-mediated communication play in the process of acculturation of international students from China, India, and the Republic of Korea?

This study suggests a positive relationship between forms of computer-mediated communication combined and the acculturation process of students from these three countries, despite that the effects of computer-mediated communication in value adaptation is still unclear. Findings indicate that computerized mediums are beneficial to the students' behavior and psychological adjustment, their social involvement and participation, as well as their preservation of native cultures and traditions.

RQ4: What are the similarities and dissimilarities of computer-mediated communication uses for acculturative gratifications among students from China, India, and the Republic of Korea? Is second language proficiency a salient factor in causing differences? Are there any other causes?

The Chinese, Indian, and Korean students displayed general similarities and only minor dissimilarities in terms of their media uses for acculturative gratifications. All three groups agreed that the computerized mediums have largely displaced older mediums in their life in the United States, and they used intensively various computer-facilitated technologies to satisfy those needs within the acculturation category.

Second language proficiency, as expected, was found to be a major cause for differences among cultures. While Chinese and Korean students appeared to use more often their native languages, the Indian students consume all kinds of media primarily in English. Besides, diffidence in spoken English was found to affect some Chinese and Korean students' choices of using emails or phone calls when contacting the English-speaking people, and may even cause decreases in frequency and their interests in seeking outgroup conversation and participation. The Indian students obviously have no such concerns.

In addition, this study discovered a new variable – the communication software preferences – that could be used in future quantitative survey questionnaires and experiments. Participants from different countries reported different preferences with regard to their former and current uses of networking and online chatting programs: *MSN* and *Tencent QQ* for the Chinese students, *Yahoo Messenger* and *Orkut* for the Indian students, and *Nate-on* and *Cyworld* for the Korean students. No participants switched to *AIM* or used *Facebook* on a regular basis, though both services are the most popular among American people. This disparity of software preferences among cultures seems to have discouraged frequent and active outgroup contacts. More research is required to verify the implication of such a negative correlation.

RQ5: Regardless of cultural backgrounds, does the intended duration of stay cause differences in individual's computer-mediated communication uses for acculturation gratifications?

This study does not suggest a relationship between students' intended duration of stay and their media uses for acculturation gratifications. There were no evident differences among students who want to stay briefly and longer, and those who would return to their home country on completion of their present study. These findings do not mean, however, that the length of sojourn definitely has no influence. The answer to this research question is still inconclusive. More studies are required to explore whether differences in goals and plans affect solely – or jointly with other demographic, economic, and social factors – in individuals' process and outcomes of acculturation and their use of mediated communications for acculturation gratifications.

### **Computerized Mediums versus Older Mediums**

Wright (1974, p. 209) proposed that although functions are not equal to motivations or needs, gratifications obtained can be viewed as functional. Participants reported that they use forms of computer-mediated communication for a variety of gratifications. Many of these gratifications – including information-seeking, obtaining news, academic study, and host cultural learning – would probably have been sought by consuming the older mediums if participants would have come to the United States in a pre-Internet age. However, with computerized and older mediums competing against each other, participants have chosen to use the computerized forms voluntarily, because they considered that older media of the host country are incompetent

in serving certain types of their gratifications – especially, those needs related to their ongoing acculturation process. Users' feedbacks indicate that all gratifications sought have been largely obtained, and the functions of multiple computer-facilitated communication technologies are generally satisfactory. It was clear that to these participants, forms of computer-mediated communication have become functional alternatives and virtually displacement to the older mediums. While they could endure a life without any forms of the older mediums, they claimed that being deprived of computer and Internet usage would be absolutely unacceptable.

Once again, as the uses and gratifications paradigm assumes, media functions and audience selection of the media are affected by social and psychological elements, as well as restricted by conditions and characteristics of the audience (Rubin, 2002, p. 528). That is to say, these international students' heavy dependence on computer-mediated communication for all sorts of gratifications is not universal or unchangeable, but can rather be a conditional choice made to cope with their present identity as "international student." For example, one Chinese participant explained that she prefers using the real-time communication services to contact her family in China because the Internet connection charges per month, whereas the long-distance phone call charges per minute and is thus much more expensive. She did not buy a television set because her stay would be short. Also, since the majority of these participants are graduate students who serve as research or teaching assistant at university, they are so busy that they have little time to spend on television or print books or newspapers. Some participants mentioned that they had a broken television set. They did not repair it or buy a new set, not only because they had rarely used the machines, but because they live in a rented apartment and moving would always be possible and difficult. The status as sojourners, the heavy workload, and their financial instability have exerted some impact on these international students' selection of mediated communication forms to serve their needs.

Nevertheless, it is possible that the enormous capability and excellent performance of computerized mediums would secure their superiority over the older media even among ordinary users. Seventeen of the 27 participants reported using the Internet as their primary source for information and knowledge about the United States before they came as international students. There was a tendency that participants have maintained their former media use patterns. For example, most participants did not use radio in their home countries, and they rarely use it now, except when driving. Some said they were not regular television viewers or newspaper readers at

home, and they are still not. While results of this study only demonstrate participants' current dependency on computer-mediated communication, the formation of this pattern could not be achieved in a short period. In 1998 Stipp (p. 16) observed that people used personal computer as a source of information and for commerce and service, whereas television at that time was still unparalleled with regard to providing relaxation and entertainment. In recent years, however, the Web media technologies have been highly developed, and the interaction of televisions and computers is closing with network stations placing their shows online. Web sites such as *Youtube* provide common users chances to share their views and display their talent. The computer mediums have won over viewers, readers, and listeners from older mediums, as these people find the computerized mediums have more spontaneity and instantaneity of content delivery, interactivity, and versatility. While each older medium can only satisfy certain types of audience's needs, different computer-facilitated devices and services are compatible, complementary, and readily linked together to serve various user gratifications at one time. Further, while computer mediums are becoming more multifunctional, the price for using them is decreasing significantly. Some participants said they would not go back to television or print even if their social and economic situations would change in future. Their intentions can not be generalized to representing other users, but may still provide some implication worth further examination. It is also interesting to note that content i.e. television programs, e-journal for example, has not changed. It is the delivery system that is being altered.

### **Mediated Communication versus Interpersonal Communication**

One outstanding finding of this study is that participants believed in both the prime functions and overwhelming influence of interpersonal communication in their present life. But their attitudes toward mediated communication were ambivalent. On the one hand, all participants expressed their dependency on computer-mediated communication facilities. On the other hand, they were skeptical about the excellence and accuracy of some of its performance – such as the authenticity of online information – and they tended to disbelieve that today's mass media could impact their personal values.

First, while participants agreed that the Internet is their primary source for all sorts of practical and academic information and knowledge, they thought solely relying on the media would be insufficient and problematic. Especially when dealing with uncertainty about the host

society or making important financial decisions, many participants would first search the Internet for basic understanding about the question, and then, go to friends for verification. Some participants said they would simply ask help from people without bothering to check the online database. The superiority of interpersonal communication over mediated communication was demonstrated as participants always deem people more knowledgeable and trustworthy than the media.

Second, participants still value people as their best *friend*, despite the fact that they frequently use the computerized and traditional mediums – online shows, movies, video games, and music players – for entertainment and relaxation. They admitted the central importance of forms of computer-mediated communication – such as cellular phone, emails, real-time communication services, and Web networking programs – in reducing their negative feelings and emotions, not because technologies themselves have the power of consoling, but because via technologies, they are connected to other people – families, friends, neighbors, and schoolmates, particularly those who are physically afar and would have been unreachable in a pre-Internet-mediated time.

### ***Media and Cultivation***

Participants firmly believed that it is through interpersonal communication that they learn cultures and values, while many of them denied the effect of mass media in cultural learning. Some took a second thought, and agreed that the media could play a part, but definitely not the leading role. These answers appear to contradict existing research on media effect. Particularly researchers use the concept of cultivation to describe the independent contribution of the media – television, in particular – to viewers' conceptions of social reality (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, and Shanahan, 2002, p. 47). The most general hypothesis of cultivation analysis is that people would see the real world in terms of what they watch on television. Those who spend more time on television viewing would be more likely to relate and mix up the images, portrayals, values, and ideologies displayed on screen to those truly exist in reality. Former studies have found that no matter positively or negatively, the media do cultivate. Weimann (1984, p. 185), for example, studied high school and college students in Israel and found that heavy viewers of U.S. programs had an idealized, "rosier" image of the standard of living in the United States. In South Korea, Kang and Morgan (1988, p. 431) observed that exposure to U.S.



programs was correlated to more liberal concepts of gender roles and family values among Korean female students. The researchers also detected a relationship between U.S. television viewing and Korean male students' more protectiveness toward native culture.

A probable reason for disagreement of these participants about the effect of media on their perceptions and attitudes toward the host society is that television or other older media is no longer a prominent presence in their current life. Cultivation analysis has underlined comparison between light and heavy viewers (Gerbner, et al., 2002, p. 47). The current television owners mentioned that they still marveled at the glamorous and exciting depictions of American social and cultural life during their few viewing occasions. Some participants suggested that they could have felt more strongly the impact if they would spend longer time on television or movie watching. No participants, however, thought that computer-mediated communication is able to affect conception. One possible explanation is that while older mediums mostly provide U.S. programs, content delivered on computerized mediums are internationally-made, and thus presents diversified ideas and viewpoints with multicultural dynamics. Even viewing U.S. programs online should be different from viewing the same things on television, because on the Internet, deliberate programming aimed at gaining more control over the audience is largely absent. In short, the effect of media on cultivation may be directly linked to a lack of choice, i.e. no alternative views allowed. As the Internet brings extraordinary diversity in content, media's ability to cultivate will lessen and may even vanish.

Nevertheless, participants tended to consider that the media had some effect in their pre-acculturation. When preparing their journey to the United States, the majority of participants used the Internet to gain practical information and knowledge about the new environment. Some participants mentioned that Hollywood movies and U.S. television shows had been their elementary teachers for the American life and culture. But media's influence drastically diminished after their arrival. Since they are now within the society and the culture, they have experienced by themselves and heard from other people about a real America. They began to realize that much of the media stuff is false and exaggerated, and then stop to trust.

### ***Computer-mediated Interpersonal Communication***

Ruben's (1975, p. 164) general human system consists of intrapersonal communication process at the individual level, as well as interpersonal and mass communication processes at the

social level. Interpersonal communication, which is the most basic unit of social communication, involves two or more individuals organizing with one another “in an effort to adapt to or adapt their environment” (p. 171). Individuals through this “information metabolism process” share and validate their knowledge, and define and redefine the world they know. It is through accumulation of a plethora of this same process that multi-person systems – or mass communications – are achieved. Ruben’s theory helps explain why participants attached cardinal importance to communication with other people.

Active participation of individuals in the creation, construction, and maintenance of numerous social organizations – both interpersonal and multi-person – is necessary to the achievement of social adaptation or adapting society (Ruben, 1975, p. 171). This emphasis accorded to the fundamental assumption of uses and gratifications that individuals are variably active communicators who seek various mediums and media content to satisfy their needs (Greenberg, 1974, p. 89). Uses and gratifications also underscores the existence of functional alternatives to mediated communication for certain gratifications. Resourceful communicators, as Rubin (2002, p. 528) noted, would therefore examine the availability and effectiveness of both mediated and unmediated ways and use them in wise combinations.

The emergence of computer and the Internet brings media users more choices and freedom to choose. While there was much fear that computer and the Internet would cause a loosening of social ties and fragment social relations by producing isolated “mouse-potatoes,” recent research has suggested another tendency: a thickening of preexisting relations with friends, family, and neighbors, both physically reachable or unreachable (Benkler, 2006, p. 357). Findings of this study support the view that the Internet has some beneficial effects on human community and intimate social relations. Though participants did not recognize computerized media a legitimate source for cultural influence, they admitted that these devices and services are capable of facilitating and promoting interpersonal communication, and have brought this function into full play. One participant, for example, mentioned that she chatted with her American roommates every day on *MSN*, sometimes at night when they were all in the apartment. They favor online chatting because it is casual (daily spoken language is used) and intimate (usually friends and relatives add each other on the contact list), yet gives room for privacy and cultural differences. More often, the participants make phone calls, send emails, or post messages on the networking communities, looking for new ideas. Hence, it can be argued that at

least computer-mediated communication has an indirect effect on participants' cultural learning and adaptation.

Interactivity and increased individual autonomy have always been remarkable features of the Internet. In a computer-mediated communication environment, individuals become increasingly active and autonomous in receiving, as well as producing and delivering, messages. They interact with not only the machines, but individuals at countless other ends of the connections. These types of connectivity might be called computer-mediated interpersonal communication, which, as the participants suggested, is highly valuable in cultural and social learning.

## **Computer-mediated Communication and a Pluralist America**

### ***Ideologies of Immigration***

The most prevalent ideology of assimilation in the early stage of American historical experience was the Anglo-conformity theory phrased by Coles (Cole & Cole, 1954, p. 135), under which there was a variety of viewpoints about assimilation and immigration. All variations embraced a central assumption that everyone in America recognize and desire to maintain English institutions, the English language, and English-oriented cultural patterns as dominant and standard in American life. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century onward, a competing viewpoint – the melting pot – began to gain popularity. The melting pot view hypothesized America as one huge melting pot which admits all ethnic stocks to be fused (Zangwill, 1909, p. 37). With regard to cultural behavior, the melting pot proposed that cultures of the various groups will mix and boil together to form a blend somehow different from any of the original cultures separately. One extreme interpretation was that the cultures of the immigrants would eventually “melt” completely into the culture of the host society, which, in its essence, was hardly distinguishable from the Anglo-conformity concepts (Gordon, 1964, p. 125). Both theories envisaged that immigrants as a cultural group will lose its communal identity and individual newcomers and their children will be absorbed into the existing American social and cultural structure, which, under the melting pot view, will adapt to have some of the features of the immigrant cultures.

While views of the disappearance of ethnic cultures prevailed, a new philosophy of group adjustment emerged to challenge them. It was argued that “being melted” was not a goal shared universally by all immigrants themselves (Gordon, 1964, p. 132). With the establishment of sub-

communities and ethnic church by eastern and western European immigrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Gordon suggested that cultural pluralism had existed in American society before it became a theory. Some researchers began to appreciate the immigrants' cultural heritage, proposing that ethnic cultures are useful to both the immigrants and their adopted country. Horace Kallen first used the term cultural pluralism in his classic collection of essays, *Culture and Democracy in the United States*, which was published in 1924 (*introductory note*). The major themes of Kallen's position for pluralism included: (1) the ancestry and family connections of individuals within the ethnic group are involuntary and indissoluble (p. 122); (2) cultural pluralism accords to the traditional ideals whereupon the American political and social life was constructed, whereas the Anglo-conformity and melting pot theories posit a violation of those ideals; and (3) America as a democratic society should benefit from the existence of various ethnic cultures and their interaction (p. 68). Kallen and other cultural pluralists presumed a goal of maintaining enough sub-societal differentiation to guarantee the continuance of ethnic cultural heritage and groups' distinctive cultural identity, while at the same time carrying out standard responsibilities to the general American civic life. This separation of sub-societies was understood by Gordon (1964, p. 158) as structural pluralism, meaning that different ethnic groups and individuals cooperate with one another in political, economic, and civic life without crossing the primary ethnic lines. Meanwhile, all the subgroups – particularly those born-to-American individuals – are driven by a massive trend of acculturation toward the American cultural patterns.

Findings of this study are consistent with the ideology of pluralism. Participants accentuated their cherishment for native cultures and still follow some part of ethnic traditions – cooking their own foods and celebrating traditional festivals. They noted that culture is something flowing within their blood, an idea echoing one of Kallen's major themes (1924, p. 122). Participants' demonstration of striving for both behavior adaptation and cultural maintenance can be interpreted as the vigorous pursuit of structure and cultural pluralism (Gordon, 1964, p. 159). Their conceptions of cultures and acculturation as well as their cultural behavior and practices indicate that these participants have employed the strategy of integration, which is the best of all acculturation patterns and would probably produce desirable acculturation outcomes (Berry, 1997, p.10).

### *Computer-mediated Communication Promotes Pluralism*

Mass media as an important source of social influence has been presumed to impact acculturation. The importance of mass media grew particularly with the appearance of television (Jeffres, 2000, p. 505). While some researchers examined the cultivation effects of the host media, others tried to substantiate that the immigrants developed dependence on ethnic media to exclude or offset the overwhelming influence from the host media. These studies were based on the observation that content of the host media was primarily about the host society, culture, values, and traditions and in the host language, whereas that of the ethnic media was exactly the opposite.

The computerized mediums, however, stand across the line as they deliver both the host and native content without discrimination in amount, quality, and time slot, and they retain for the users maximum freedom of choice. Instead of receiving pre-organized and -formatted media messages, users of the computerized mediums select either the host content for behavior or cultural learning, or they use the native content for cultural preservation, or both. Findings of this study exhibited these use patterns. Participants search the Internet for information and knowledge about the American society, use various computer-related technologies – cellular phone, emails, instant messaging and Web networking services – to build and maintain their real-life social relations in America. They are able to keep their ties and contacts with the native society and culture at the same time – by consuming online news about the home country, chatting with families and friends there, and watching online shows of indigenous production.

Many participants acknowledged that their contacts with the Americans are mostly of work and social types but not truly for emotional attachment. They work, study, and interact with the outgroup members, but still live with the ingroup members. They know little about the mainstream lifestyle of the host society, and they are not anxious or forced to know, accept, or adopt it. This ideological and behavioral pattern of the participants is similar to the idea of pluralistic integration proposed by Melkote and Liu (2000, p. 499). It illustrates some elements of a cultural pluralist society in its ideal model – individuals and subgroups are permitted alternatives without being imposed upon the society's own collective will as standards of enforced behavior (Gordon, 1964, p. 158).

It is possible that computer-mediated communication become a major key to the formation and perfection of such a pluralist American society, and findings of this study suggest

two reasons. First, the computerized mediums serve as both the host and native media. They are the media for multi-cultures. Second, forms of computer-mediated communication supply with convenience and efficiency in cooperating with other groups and individuals in different social arenas in American life.

### **Future Directions**

This study looked into the relationship between the individual system of social communication and the process of acculturation. Particularly, it explored the fast-evolving computer-mediated communication and its possible impacts on the acculturation process experienced by a group of international students. The study is deemed necessary because computer-mediated communication has become a principal and crucial component of communications at all levels, yet this subfield is so ever-changing that it is still inadequately understood. International students from China, India, and South Korea were selected as the research subjects. While these academic sojourners are rising rapidly in number and importance – especially to the U.S. academia and high-tech industries, they are little known to the rest of American society.

This study helps exemplify the validity and effectiveness of qualitative methodology in mass communications research. The study has produced abundant preliminary data that help clarify and classify certain affecting and mediating factors in international students' uses of computer-mediated communication, their process of acculturation, and the relationship between their media usage and cultural formation. Using focus group interviews, the qualitative findings serve well the exploratory goal of the study. Several directions for future research are suggested:

First, this study reveals that computerized mediums have largely displaced older mediums for some Asian international students' media uses and gratifications. Different from the past approaches that examined only one or two core technologies, this study observed many forms of computer-mediated communication and categorized them in terms of their functional similarity and dissimilarity. The conclusions were made based on the combined effects of various computer-related technologies, rather than only the Internet and WWW. But the findings do not tell whether computer-mediated forms have been functional alternatives and displacement to older media for international students from other regions and cultures, or other groups of Asian sojourners or immigrants, or the general users. Future research could explore these topics.

Though the case of the Asian international students –due to their cultural, economic, and political status – is special, some reasons for their preference for computerized mediums are rather universally applicable: the abundance of the online database, the convenience of cellular phone, emails, and instant messaging services in connecting people, the audience autonomy when being entertained, and time-saving because of their versatility. These reasons can be used as quantitative variables for measuring efficiency and effectiveness of computerized mediums in comparison to other mediums, as well as users' comfort level and gratifications obtained.

Second, this study found that the international students attach the most importance to interpersonal communication in their integrations with the new environment. Participants acknowledged that it is mainly through communicating with other people that they manage to define, label, and standardize the host setting, and also develop, maintain, and alter their existing understandings and explanations. These findings suggest that future research in individual or group social communication should examine mass communication process and consequences within the context of the synchronous process of interpersonal communications. As debates over the Internet's effect on community continues, studies can be built upon these findings to see how and to what extent computer-mediated communication facilitate interpersonal communication. While there are two diametrically opposed views that have typified the Internet's impact on social relations, this study appears to support the optimistic view: the addition of computerized mediums to the mass media environment represents an improvement over the world of television and telephone with regard to social communication in all dimensions – family ties, peer relations, and cross-cultural exchanges. However, there is also a middle-ground view. Researchers have argued that the increase of contacts may occur alongside a decrease of the depths of these relationships (Benkler, 2006, p. 357). That is to say, individuals are obsessed with participating in virtual communities and therefore neglect social networking in real life. Also, the Internet creates greater scope for brief, loose, and easily dissolvable relationships. Participants of this study did mention that they use cellular phone, emails, and services such as *Facebook* to contact the American friends, but these friends are just – “friends” – and technologies do not help thicken the relationship. Future research could be conducted to address the issue further.

Third, this study concludes that computer-mediated communication promotes participants' behavior adaptation and psychological adjustment. However, while former studies (e.g., Hwang & He, 1999, p. 5; Jeffres, 2000, p. 505) suggested a negative correlation between

ethnic media consumption and the impact of English media use, this study does not support those arguments. Some participants offered a reason: it is because they have choice. Rather than the resourceless passive receivers of edited and programmed host media messages, they can now choose from an abundance of multicultural content and consume them in ways they want. They do not feel the impacts of either the host or the ethnic media because computerized mediums have clearly overstepped the boundary. Today's audiences are no longer the *audience* but the mediated content users and communicators in the real sense – this is a strong implication of this study. Though participants largely denied media's effects in cultural and value formations, the multiple computerized mediums – as the principal mediated channels that facilitate unmediated social communication – should function indirectly in this regard. While participants all felt that a certain amount of acculturation is inevitable, they now have the ability given by computer-mediated communication to remain in their own culture – rather than being forced cold-turkey into the host culture – such implication for acculturation still require more elucidation. Do international students really adapt as fast as they used to? Do they reach out less to the host culture? Does decrease in perceived conflicts, frustration, and anxiety actually help international students to be acculturated more healthily and successfully? These are some questions left opening for research.

Finally, while this study examined and compared international students from three Asian countries, research can be extended to students from other regions and cultures. The focus group interviews displayed remarkable similarities among the Chinese, Indian, and South Korean students with regard to their media consumption and understandings of cultures and acculturation, students from other cultures, however, may display different patterns and tendencies. It is important that research in pluralism explores numerous distinct ethnic, religious, and cultural groups coexist within one society. With the rapid and continuous increases of the number of international students, other types of sojourners, and immigrants from all over the world, further exploration into all aspects of assimilation experienced by different subgroups would be highly necessary so as to better project the future evolvement of American society and American culture. In terms of the media, research among other cultural groups would help assess the implication of this study that computer-mediated communication would facilitate and accelerate America as a nation to move toward pluralism.



### *Limitations and Justifications*

This study has several limitations, both methodological and instrumental. A qualitative focus group study probes both the patterns and reasons that a specific group of people use the media. However, due to its relatively small number of participants, the results are not valid for generalization, but can only serve as a way to develop questionnaire items for possible survey design. Furthermore, snowball sampling was used for recruitment, with results that the participants were not diversified enough in terms of demographic indicators such as age, gender, marital status, and having children or not. Though members of each group reached major consensus, these answers are illustrative rather than definitive, and cannot be used to make generalized statements about the Chinese, Indian, or Korean international students as a whole. The unevenness of the number of participants among groups – 11 Chinese participants, nine Korean participants, and seven Indian participants – might also be problematic. Despite the disparity, each group still met the optimal size of six to 12 persons codified in the basic protocol for focus group interviews (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 180). Answers from the participants display substantial proportion of agreement across the cultures. Though having the least members, the Indian group generated content no less than the other groups, and the discussion was kept lively all the while. In addition, as the discussions were held in English, some Chinese and Korean participants did feel difficulty in expressing themselves clearly. They were encouraged to say simple sentences and words, or simply spoken in their native tongue. Results showed that though there were grammatical mistakes, their ideas were understood fully.

The fact that the researcher herself acted as the focus group moderator could be a source of weakness. It was argued that focus groups would become less naturalistic and their results less accurate as the researcher tended to direct and drive the groups by his or her interests (Morgan, 1997, p. 14). However, in reality, there is no hard evidence that the presence of the researcher as a moderator in a focused discussion of a pre-selected topic exerts greater impact on the data than the researcher's impact in studies adopting other qualitative techniques, such as participant observation and individual interviewing. While conducting focus groups for this study, the researcher did not attempt to interrupt or influence the group's interactions in the name of maintaining the interview's focus. She allowed and encouraged group members to discuss freely about a variety of topics that interested them – hit shows, foods, Internet connection facilities in their native countries, and ideas of child raising and education. Results showed that these

peripheral dialogues opened new dimensions to the study. Findings beyond the researcher's initial design and expectation were produced.

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## Appendix A - Participant Questionnaire

1. How long have you been in the United States? \_\_\_\_\_
2. On completion of your present program you plan to:
  - a. Return to your own country immediately.
  - b. Stay in the United States for a brief time (less than a year)
  - c. Continue your studies or work full time in the United States.
3. Do you have any intentions to apply for permanent residency in the United States?
  - a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No \_\_\_\_\_
4. Marital status:
  - a. Married \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Single \_\_\_\_\_
5. If married, are you living with your spouse currently? a. Yes \_\_\_\_ b. No \_\_\_\_  
(If not married skip to question 8)
6. Do you have any children
  - a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No \_\_\_\_\_
7. If you have children, are they living with you now? a. Yes \_\_\_\_ b. No \_\_\_\_
8. You live:
  - a. With family
  - b. Alone
  - c. With roommates(s) from your own country.
  - d. With American roommate(s).
  - e. With roommate(s) from (country) \_\_\_\_\_
9. Do you seek direct/real contact with Americans out side of class (at least every week)?
  - a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No \_\_\_\_\_
10. Do you often feel it is difficult to make direct/real contact with Americans?
  - a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. No \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE CIRCLE THE COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION  
TECHNOLOGIES YOU USE AND THE PRIMARY LANGUAGE OF THE CONTENT**

- |                       |            |                    |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------------|
| a) Computers          | a. English | b. Native language |
| b) The Internet (WWW) | a. English | b. Native language |
| c) Cellular phone     | a. English | b. Native language |

- |                                  |            |                    |
|----------------------------------|------------|--------------------|
| d) VCR (video) or Digital player | a. English | b. Native language |
| e) Video games                   | a. English | b. Native language |
| f) iPod and/or MP3               | a. English | b. Native language |
| g) PDA                           | a. English | b. Native language |
| h) Other _____                   | a. English | b. Native language |

**PLEASE CIRCLE ANY TRADITIONAL MEDIUMS YOU USE REGULARLY  
SERVICES THAT HELP WITH COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION**

- |  |            |                    |
|--|------------|--------------------|
| a) Search engines  | a. English | b. Native language |
| b) Email   | a. English | b. Native language |
| c) Chat rooms (BBS, Online Forums)                       | a. English | b. Native language |
| d) E-book  | a. English | b. Native language |
| e) Blogs   | a. English | b. Native language |
| f) Streaming media (TV shows, Podcasting, Youtube, ect.) | a. English | b. Native language |
| g) Real-time communications services ( <i>MSN</i> )      | a. English | b. Native language |
| h) Online networking ( <i>Facebook</i> )                 | a. English | b. Native language |
| i) Others _____  | a. English | b. Native language |
| a) Printed books for school or research                  | a. English | b. Native language |
| b) Printed books or magazines for pleasure               | a. English | b. Native language |
| c) Newspapers (printed versions)                         | a. English | b. Native language |
| d) Radio (broadcast or satellite)                        | a. English | b. Native language |
| e) CD or cassette players                                | a. English | b. Native language |
| f) Television:   |            |                    |
| Broadcast (ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX)                           | a. English | b. Native language |
| Cable  | a. English | b. Native language |
| Satellite  | a. English | b. Native language |
| g) Movies or Theater                                     | a. English | b. Native language |
| h) Other Traditional media _____                         | a. English | b. Native language |

Before you came to the United States, did you try to gain information or knowledge about the culture?      a. Yes \_\_\_\_\_      b. No \_\_\_\_\_

If so, what was your primary source for learning things about the United States?

---

Were there other ways you tried to learn about the United states?

---

Your Age \_\_\_\_\_

Your Gender:            Male                            Female

Your Academic Program:    Undergraduate            Graduate                    Post-Doc

Your country of origin: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B - Answers for Participant Questionnaire

**Table B. 1 Basic Information**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Age	Gender	Program
C1	2Y	Long	Yes	Single				Mate/Same	Yes	No	23	F	G
C2	1.5Y	Return	No	Single				Mate/Same	Yes	Yes	28	M	G
C3	1.5Y	Long	No	Single				Mate/Same	No	No	29	F	G
C4	4Y	Long	No	Single				Alone	Yes	No	27	F	G
C5	4M	Return	No	Married	No	No	No	Mate/Same	Yes	Yes	32	F	PD
C6	2M	Return	No	Married	No	Yes	No	Mate/Same	No	No	45	F	PD
C7	2Y	Brief		Single				Mate/Same	No	No	20	M	UG
C8	8M	Long	Yes	Single				Alone	Yes	No	25	F	G
C9	1.5Y		Yes	Married	Yes	No	No	Family	Yes	No	28	M	G
C10	2Y	Long	Yes	Married	Yes	No	No	Family	Yes	No	26	F	G
C11	2Y	Long	Yes	Married	Yes	No	No	Family	Yes	Yes	28	M	G
<hr/>													
I1	4Y	Brief	No	Single				Mate/Same	No	No	28	M	G
I2	8M	Brief	No	Single				Mate/Same	Yes	Yes		M	
I3	8M	Long	Yes	Single				Mate/Same	No	Yes	24	M	G
I4	2Y	Brief	No	Single				Mate/Oth	Yes	No	25	F	G
I5	2Y	Long	No	Single				Mate/Same	Yes	No	26	M	G
I6	3Y	Long	No	Married	Yes	No		Family	No	No	29	M	G
I7	7Y	Brief	No	Single				mate/Am	Yes	No	26	M	G
<hr/>													
K1	4Y	Return	Yes	Married	Yes	Yes	Yes	Family	No	No	33	M	G
K2	2.5Y	Return	No	Single				Alone	No	Yes	28	F	G
K3	2Y	Return	No	Single				Alone	Yes	Yes		M	G
K4	8M	Long	Yes	Single				mate/Am	Yes	Yes	27	F	G
K5	9M	Long		Single				Alone	No	Yes	28	F	G
K6	2.5Y	Brief		Married	Yes	Yes	No	Family	Yes	Yes	35	M	G
K7	9M	Return	No	Single					Yes	Yes	25	M	UG
K8	4M	Return	No	Single				Alone	Yes	No	30	M	UG
K9	3.5Y	Long	Yes	Single				Alone	Yes	No	31	M	G



**Table B. 2 Computerized Media Usage**

	Computer	Internet	Cell	VCR/DVD	Games	Music	PDA	Search	Email	Forum	E-book	Blogs	Video	Realtime	Network
C1	N	Both	Both		Both	Both		Both	Both	N	N	N	Both	Both	E
C2	E	Both	Both		Both	Both		E	E	N	Both	N	Both	N	N
C3	N	N	N		N	N		Both	Both	N	N	N	N	N	Both
C4	Both	Both	Both	Both		Both		Both	Both	N		N	Both	N	E
C5	Both	Both	E				E	Both	Both	Both	Both	N	Both	N	Both
C6	Both	Both	N					Both	Both	N	Both		Both	N	Both
C7	N	Both	E	Both	E	N	E	Both	Both	Both	Both	Both	Both	Both	E
C8	Both	Both	Both	E	Both	Both		Both	Both	Both	Both	N	Both	Both	Both
C9	Both	Both	E					E	E	N	N	N	E	Both	E
C10	E	E	N	E		E		E	E	N	Both	Both	Both	N	N
C11	Both	Both	Both	Both		Both		Both	Both	Both		Both		Both	Both
I1	E	E	E	E		E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
I2	E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	Both	Both	E	E
I3		Both	Both					E	E	N	E	N	Both	E	E
I4	E	E	E	E		E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
I5	E	E	E	E	E	E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
I6	E	E	E	E		E		E	E	E	E	E	Both	E	E
I7	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
K1	E	E	E	E	E	N		Both	Both	Both		N	Both	Both	
K2	E	E	E	E		E		E	E			N	E	N	E
K3	N	N	E					E	E	N			Both	N	N
K4	N	N	E	E	E	N		E	E	E	E	N	E	E	N
K5	N	E	E	E	E	N		E	N	N	E	N	E	N	N
K6	N	N	E	E	E	E		Both	Both			Both	Both	N	Both
K7	N	N	E	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	E	N	E	N	Both
K8	N	E	N	E	E	N	E	N	E	E	N	N	E	N	E
K9	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	N	E	N	E	E	E

**Table B. 3 Older Media Usage and Pre-acculturation**

	Print (Study)	Print (Entain)	Newspaper	Radio	CD/Cass	TV	Movie	Pre-info	1st so	Other so
C1	E	E	E		Both		E	Yes	Internet	People
C2	Both	E	E	E	E		E	Yes	TV	Internet
C3	Both	E	E	Both	Both		Both	Yes	All Ways	
C4	Both	Both				B/E	Both	Yes	Internet	Old Media
C5	E	Both	E	E	E	B/E		Yes	Internet	People
C6	Both	Both	E	E	E			Yes	Internet	People/TV
C7	N	Both	E				Both	Yes	Internet	People
C8	Both	Both	E	Both	E	C/S/E	E	Yes	Internet	People
C9	E	E	E	E	E	C/S/B	E	Yes	Internet	TV/Paper
C10	E	Both	E	E	E	B/E	E	Yes	Internet	People
C11	Both	Both	E	E	E	B/E	Both	Yes	Internet	People
<hr/>										
I1	E	E	E	E	E		E	Yes	Internet	Peo/Movie
I2	E	E	Both	N	N	C/S/E	Both	Yes		
I3	E	N	E	N	N	C/S/E	N	No		People
I4	E	E	E	E	E		E	Yes	Library	USfriend
I5	E	E	E	E	E	C/S/E	Both	Yes	internet	USfriend
I6	E	E	E	E	E	C/E	Both	Yes	Internet	USfriend
I7	E	E	Both	E	Both	C/S/E	Both	No		
<hr/>										
K1	E	E	E	E	Both		Both	Yes	Internet	People
K2	E	E	E	E	E	C/E	E	Yes	ELP Class	
K3	E		E	E	E			Yes	Internet	
K4	Both	Both	Both	E	Both			Yes	Internet	Books
K5	E	N	E	E	N	C/S/E	E	Yes	Internet	
K6	Both	Both	Both		Both	C/S/B	E	Yes		
K7	E	E	E	E	N	C/S/E	E	No		
K8	E	E	E	E	E	C/S/E	E	No		
K9	E	E	E	E	E	C/S/E	E	Yes		

## Appendix C - An Introduction to the Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen, my fellow K-State students:

Thank you very much for coming!

I am Meijing Fan, a master's student at the Journalism & Mass Communication Department of Kansas State University. This is my friend, ×××, who come to help me. Both of us came from China. We are gathered here for a focus group study for my master's thesis: *The Computer-mediated Communication and the Process of Acculturation among International Students from China, India, and the Republic of Korea*. The purpose of this group discussion is to explore the relationships between various media technologies we use today and our adjustments toward the American life and culture. This study is expected to provide some insight to the American academia and society as a whole about the life of international students, so that more and better aiding facilities and services would be provided to us for our healthy and successful adaptation to the new environment.

The focal topic is: What role does different forms computer-mediated communication play in your life as international students in the United States and in your acculturation process?

The term *acculturation* may mean people having different cultures make behavioral and psychological changes in their original culture patterns through continuous direct or indirect communications. To international students in the United States, "acculturation" may mean the process of learning and adopting anything related to the American culture and its social norms and values, as well as the process of preserving their native cultural identity. But you are highly encouraged to form and present your own understanding about this term.

The discussion will be held in English. Again, you are highly encouraged to raise your own questions related to the focal topic, and we can discuss them also. Please feel free to talk and discuss with your fellow participants, to share views and help each other generate great ideas.

The whole session will be audiotaped and transcribed only for research purpose of my thesis study – no other use will be made. The recording and transcripts will be kept in a safe place for three years as required by the university. Your name will not appear in the thesis report

(You will only be identified as the number plus your country code assigned to you). No risk exists that you would be linked to the data or information collected here.

Before we start, do you have any questions? Please feel free to ask.

## Appendix D - Focus Group Transcripts

### Chinese Group

*Q: Could any of you talk something about your use of computer and the Internet? What functions they serve?*

C11: Search tools [for information]

C10: [Search tools] for service, something, that offer a product, and maybe promoting provider of some company to offer some devices – marketing – something like that.

C1: Email.

C11: [I send email] to friends, classmates, family.

C3: E-business. Yeah, you find things from the Internet, especially in America. Because we are in a small town. So we have no big shopping center. So we have to buy many things on the Internet.

C9: Communication via [the university] networks, and I watch free movies [online].

*C7: Facebook.*

Most participants: I think all [of us] watch online movies or download some clips. And we watch them both in English and Chinese.

C11: Watch online news

C1: I think most of time English news if we are watch online

All the participants: E-journal for study

C1: And real-time communication like *MSN* messenger . . . mostly talk to my family . . . Most Chinese participants (laugh): friends . . . also American friends.

*Q: Have you used MSN to talk to an American friend?*

Some participants: No, Never.

C10: I don't have American friends in my *MSN* list.

C4: I don't think Americans use quite often *MSN*. They use *AOL* or something different.

*Q (to C7): You mentioned Facebook, could you describe it?*

*C7: Facebook* can meet your friend, your old friend, and you can communicate with them. Like send some gifts, or . . . different ways. There's also attachment – buying things and selling things . . . so different ways to communicate . . . most of them [on *Facebook*] are English.

C9: [*Facebook* is for] online communicate.

C3: I tried to apply an account [for *Facebook*], but I'm rejected, because my email was ended by .cn. I wished to use *Facebook* just to get information like rent cars and other things. Sometimes...and I can contact some personnel to propose that. In China, I used BBS for that purpose, *Facebook* seems the most popular, because most American use that. And we can post photos and videos online, and share the information with a lot of friends. I know *Facebook* is not only popular here, but even in China. It's called *Xiaonei* or something else ([www.xiaonei.com](http://www.xiaonei.com)) . . . this network has exactly the same interface as *Facebook*, and the only difference is the language – it's in Chinese. [translation from Chinese] I hated the applications in *Facebook* . . .

*Q: Email or cell phone, how do you use each of them?*

C10: [When I feel upset or angry] I sent email, but they didn't reply. I use cell phone call my husband.

*Q: Do you frequently call your professors or your (interrupted). . .*

All the Chinese participants: no, no, no! When I contact English-speaking people, I prefer email.

C8: I call my professor a lot, because I can't finish my homework.

C10: Most of the case when I need to talk to some foreign friends is not an urgent case, is just "do you want to attend a party" or "do you want to go somewhere to dinner"? So it's not very urgent. When I really have some emergency, I will call my husband or call some Chinese friends, I think. Sometimes if some problems I'm not familiar with, for example, our car is hitted by another one, and we don't know exactly the rule here, we have to call American friends. I think because most of the things we can deal with our Chinese friends . . .

*Q: Do you think email or services like email helps or hinders you to contact with American people?*

C10: For me the reason I like to use email is because I think my English is not good enough. And sometimes I need to design a device, I can't explain very clearly by call. So I have to write an email and maybe draw a picture and send to several companies at the same time, but if I call them I have to call one by one. It's not high-efficient . . . I don't think . . . I don't have a lot of opportunity to talk with some American friends. I think one reason is I'm married. I don't have lots of interest to make friends here. I mean . . . not a lot of chance – I have to do some housework . . . I think this is one reason. Nearly all of our American friends are couples. They are also married and have family. Last year our friends don't have a baby, we met each other very frequently . . . every week. But this year, his wife pregnant, and their life is much busier, so nearly never meet each other this semester.

C11: For me I often call companies to order something because it's quick. So I prefer call some free toll. I don't call when it charges me.

C3: I don't think it's the point that whether email or cell phone helps us communicate with American friends, because email has its own effect on many communication and cell phone has another one. Like email, we can send the attachments, and maybe the friends have no time when we call, so we need to email them, then, when they have time, they can track it. Not very urgent things, we need to use that. But phone call it's different. Sometimes you don't know which person you need to contact with – like if you receive a medical bill and you need someone to get information – I think it's the best way to call them because there's phone number on the bill...if

you but something online, you can call the customer service. But email, sometimes even you called them, and they would ask you to email them to explain the problem more clearly because usually on the phone maybe it's not very useful way to do that. So it's different. I don't think it's the point that email will help us more to communicate with others. I think it's the same in China.

*Q: What about English proficiency? Does any of you have such experience, like it's not urgent and you have the choice, email or cell phone?*

C11: I think [English proficiency] is an important reason for us to prefer email.

C2: It depends. Suppose you have an American friend and he prefer to use email and I always contact him with email. If he prefers to use cell phone, I call him.

C10: But for me, English is a big deal . . . I'm very nervous when I call . . . A company . . . maybe I never contacted them before. I remember once I called to a company, the person on the phone . . . also has strong accent, so I can't understand him, and both of us feel, I can feel that he also feel upset, and me too, so I like to write.

C11: It depend on what you are talking about, because something you can describe, you just use cell phone. Sometimes something is difficult to describe, then . . .

C6: For many people, if they don't speak [English] very well, they fear of calling by cell phone. Maybe writing give him or her enough time for checking.

*Q: Are you satisfied with the functions of these forms of computer-mediated communication?*

C10: But do we have better choice?

*Q: Okay, now let's move to older media. Let's talk about book, magazine, newspaper, radio, and Yeah, television. How many of you use some forms of these media?*

C10: Book. Textbook.

C9: I read *Collegian* everyday for campus news.

C10: I never read it.

C8: Magazines. I buy them . . . fashion maganizes – *Elle, Vogue* . . . In China, I took about 10 or 12 magazines a month, but here I only get about two or three.

C1: Never heard radio.

Several Chinese participants: I only heard radio in shuttle.

Most of them didn't use radio even in China.

C8: I only listened to *Bible*.

C10: I used it every day to wake me up.

C6: But some people want to listen to radio. Like in the morning, he is doing something else, the same time he can listen to radio. But I never listen to it here.

Several participants: I only have a broken television sets.

C10: I watched television every day until this basketball season came. I only have basic channels but I think it's enough. Every day I watched news and shows . . . *CSI*.

*Q: Do you like American television shows?*

All the participants said yes, or nodded their heads.

*Q: What about you can't use the computer-mediated communication?*

C1: I would die if I can't use any forms of computer-mediated communication. I mean all my entertainment, studies and research are related to the Internet. Without Internet . . . it's not about computer, I think it's most about the Internet. I can live without computer, but not without Internet.

C11: It gives me trouble.

C9: Our methods of research are heavily connected with the Internet. I think if the computer is down, everything is down.

*Q: Then what about if you can't use any forms of the older media?*

C3: As long as I have the Internet, [I'm quite satisfied].

C11 and C10: Can I print the materials? If so, that's fine. Because we can almost find everything on the Internet.

C5: If it's just the media, I think the Internet is enough. I use the Internet for contact with my families, and e-journals and emails, and e-books (both in English and Chinese), and news

C8: No. I would dissatisfied if I would just have the Internet. I go to Union to watch television sometimes. Internet is a way of searching information, but for me, that kind of social life, TV, magazine, newspaper – other kinds of communication – they offer me the social life.

*Q: In what ways do these computer-related media help you with your daily life, help you solve some real-life troubles, problems, or uncertainties, such as buying car insurance for the first time or learning the American social codes?*

C11: I think it can help me find what I need quicker than before. Because in older media, you have to follow all the organizations . . . like book, you have to read it chapter by chapter . . . but for Internet, I can search by word. So it provides better efficiency.

Several participants: I would first go to friends.

C1: I prefer *Google* or other computer-related tools for such information, but if you are talking about the formal dinner manner, I may not be very sure about what I get from the Internet, so maybe I will first go to the Internet and next go to my friends to make sure that it's right.

C9: I will go to search engine.

C11: *MitBBS* – my first choice. It's Chinese. Of course, there are a lot of information on that network.

C5: Chinese [online community] in America.

C3: The Chinese BBS and forums are not the only resources. There are a lot of English ones. Sometimes I went to buy products or items, I usually just go to the *Google* search engine, and search for the information, and I will find a lot of American people discuss about the product. Then I can have an idea about that.

C4: You always get too much information from the Internet. It's confusing and it comes from every angle. It's just not practical to your case. But U.S. friends, you can explain better and get better advice. It's more specific.



C2: I agree with her (S). I will ask my friends – both [Chinese and American].

C10: I think both of us have a lot of American colleagues, but not friends.

C3: It depends on personality. Some people don't like ask people for help. So . . .

*Q: Does any of you will choose to go to newspapers to find some ads or Yellowbook?*

C4: [Use the *Yellowbook*] [when] you need the phone number.

C10: All that [older] media, is that the information comes to you . . . you are inactive. It's not like search engine, you search something.

C11: The only case I use the older media is when the Internet is unavailable. When I go out or driving, maybe I need a *Yellowbook*, print the map, but I also got it from the Internet.

*Q (to C10 & C11): You have television sets. Do you frequently watch television? Do you think you learn a lot about American culture through watching television?*

C11: I mainly watch morning [TV] news and shows – for the weather. No, I don't think I learn a lot about the American way of life by watching TV. But we only get four or five channels for free. I spend less than two hours a day on TV.

C10: But I like to watch news – not about those important one, but those entertainment news. I watch about two hours a day.

*Q: How many hours do you spend on your computer?*

C11: Many many hours.

Others agreed.

C3: I have a question: if we can't download any movies or shows from the Internet. (Interrupted by C1: I will die.) so I don't think Internet is the most important way for me I think if there's no older media, there would be no source of the TV or movie to the Internet . . . so the older media is also important. So we can't live without the older media, but we can live without the accessibility of them.

C11: in my opinion, if the Internet is available, the computer can do what the TV and radio do, I can't displace the TV, the radio. If the Internet is available when I'm driving, I can displace the radio on car.

C8: I don't think the Internet can benefit the social life . . . a real good piece of newspaper and magazine is a kind of art . . . human work. The Internet always seems to me is just a quick and very convenient way for my use of information but it's not a way for human development in art or something alike . . . The Internet is never a way of life for me.

*Q: Let's talk about the relationship between the computer-mediated communication forms and your English learning and proficiency? If you came here in a pre-Internet-mediated time, just imagine and make a comparison, do you think these new media help you learn English?*

C1: I don't think that media have [the power in helping us improving English]. I think it's most important to contact directly with people. So media, older or new forms, doesn't help.

C11: I think [the media] helped [in our English learning], but before.

C9: If you spend 10 hours a day on TV, I think you will improve a lot.

C10: I think we are all pushed by our situation, we have to have class in English and write homework in English, that helps a lot. Not the media.

C8: The word and wording that people use on the Internet is so unofficial. If you read newspaper, you will learn the real way – the official way of speaking and wording of English. But you go to the Internet, everything is just like “yeah” or something alike. So I would first go to the interpersonal communication, then the traditional media, then it’s new media.

*Q: What about the new media and acculturative stress – maybe perceived discrimination, nervousness, and homesickness?*

C11: I agree that the computer media help me reduce the acculturative stress. At the beginning, when my English was too bad, I can’t talk with my advisor, so I preferred use email to contact.

C8: But for me, when I’m writing an email, I would be worried about my language – if it would be bad . . . sometimes have to look up a dictionary to improve my wording. But if I talk directly to a person, I can just use everyday English and gestures. So for me direct [oral] communication is less nervous . . . You get different ways to let people understand you. A lot of grammar mistakes, it doesn’t matter. But when writing, we want that as graduate students, our English is good enough.

C6: I think I always feel nervous [when speaking in English]. Maybe my English is very poor. I think sometimes I can’t say or express myself. I use *MSN* to talk to my family [in China] everyday about one hour.

C9: Talk [online] with my family.

C5: Without the Internet, I will feel homesick. I could call my family, but the Internet is free – I mean you just pay one fee. But calling is time-limited. I prefer to use email to contact English-speaking people as long as it’s not very urgent.

C1: I think I prefer email too when I talk to English-speaking people, because sometimes it’s less embarrassing, and it’s more convenient

*Q: Are you interested in American culture?*

All the participants: Yeah.

C1: I don’t think it’s because we are interested, but we are forced to understand their culture.

C4: I like the cultures of different countries, different peoples, understanding their lives, Their thinking. It’s fun. [I learn these things] mostly from people, from direct contact with these people.

C2: I think it’s hard to define the American culture. I think American culture is the international culture – all kinds of cultures from different countries.

*Q: I think most of you may think that media has little to do with your learning, liking, or understanding of American culture or western culture?*

C10: No, I think media help a lot in our learning of American or western culture.

C1: You can gain some opinions from the TV shows, and news about how we have a different opinion about the international events.

C3: The English formal or informal talking on the mass forum. They use a lot of official language, so we can find how they do in their daily time.

C11: I can accept some culture, but in fact, culture is difficult for us, because we are foreigner. Culture was passed . . . when you were children, so little little little culture was passed from your parents . . . most culture is underwater. So what we are learning is just appearance. It's the surface. So I can only accept some part of them.

C6: I'm little interested in American culture. My professor here is a Chinese, so there's many Chinese students. When I came here, I'm connected to many people in Chinese. So I connect very little with Americans.

C11: I'm thinking of an example, like culture in building of your lifestyle, and the way we talk, and the way we think. I never live with an American, so I don't know their real lifestyle. Maybe it's different from different people, but I don't know what exact. I have no that opportunity to do that. And their food – I don't like it.

C10: We are not even learning their everyday ways of living. We have our own character, community. Do you think that all of us are Chinese? I think all our communicating [with Americans] involves only working and studying, not cooking – sometimes parties – but not truly the living part.

*Q: Okay, let me ask you this: if without the computer, before the Internet came, you have little access to the Chinese material, I mean it is very difficult for you to know what is happening in China, would you be more forced to learn the American value?*

C10: Yes, I think so. [If without the computer and Internet, I think we would be more forced to contact with Americans and learn their ways.] I have two cousins who came here 20 years ago. They were all married to American guys, and their friends are almost all Americans. When they first came here, there were almost no Chinese people . . . at that time, they had no Internet, and they were quite “American.”

C3: I think culture is a difficult thing. I am interested in many cultures in different countries. But I cannot study one of these cultures like American culture because since I am already here, I am in American country, right? So like in China, when we went to the restaurant, we don't pay ant tips; but here, not internet tell us we need to pay the tips. But when we go to the restaurant, we have to pay the tips, right? I mean, this is just the culture and what American live. Since we have already here so we have to learn that, we have to do that in a kind of American way. That's the problem, that's what I mean. We have to know, not forced to. But as I said, I am interested in other cultures like Egypt, or Japan, or other things. If I have chance to go that cultures, I will happy to learn that culture.

*Q: But it's just for learn, for knowledge, it will not change your culture identity?*

C3: No...I am Chinese.

C11: I think it's a process. Since we have been here, we have to learn, we have to study. Otherwise we will have a lot of trouble. Once you have learn some, you will accept that and maybe you find something you can't accept and you learn more and you accept more. So at the finally, you accept them and you are among them.

C8: So I think acculturation is not this bad. When we were in China our generation, late 60s and early 80s. I think our generation were grown up with those western culture actually. Like jeans,

everybody wear jeans, T-shirts. For me, I grow up with those music, all these western music, Mariah Carey and Jackson. So I think as I grow up I think I prefer the American or western music, movies and shows, more and more. So when I have been here I didn't find it's so strange. When I were in China so we already change by that situation. So when we got here, I think whether you want to get into the culture or to contribute culture barrier, actually it depends on how you define them.

C11: English programs just improve your English. It can't change the . . .

C3: The most simplest example is the food. Even we communicate with most American people and we eat American food, but for myself I still prefer Chinese food than American food. So the lifestyle, for me, is difficult to change.

C11: That's because you have choice.

*Q: Then if you can only get access to the English American media, do you think the American media would play an important role in your being more American?*

C10: I probably think no. I mentioned my two cousins and I visited them last year. And the married American guy lead an American life and the other guy who married Vietnam or a Chinese is still live in a Chinese style. For example I visited my cousin in Ohio when I fold the bedding they said no, you fold the bedding in a wrong way, you should fold like that . . . So I think we can't change.

C11: It depends on who is playing a leading role in the family.

*Q (to C8): Only you think media play a role?*

C8: Yeah. Media really plays a very important role.

*Q: I mean [media] play an important role in your learning American value and becoming more American?*

C8: Yeah. I mean, when I was in China I am not so hard working but half hard working, OK? But when I was in America, I was just like easy, lazy, crazy, beautiful cover girl. I think so. I am either have so choice for many years and if you have no choice everyone around you is American you got to learn something. That's human, I mean, you have the nature to learn from others. And maybe you still want to eat your Chinese foods, you still want to meet the ones you are familiar with, you still want the lifestyles in China, but we are here, we have no choice. And the American programs, the media, is back on you. You should be changed.

C3: It depends on the personality.

C4: You want to be more American, and you will.

C3: I think it's impossible for me.

C11: I can provide a question, so like what do you want your children, I mean, like you want him or her to be more American or more Chinese?

C1: I don't think you have any choice if your child is born in America.

C11: You can choose.

C10: I have a cousin, their children can speak Chinese but the other cousin their children speak very good Chinese. It depends on the family.

C4: You have the society.

C8: The judgment of value is so different. But for me, no matter of the lifestyle, I just want to make sure that my child will be a good personality. I'm Christian and I want him or her to be a good Christian.

C10: I will ask my children, not now. My children speak Chinese and know how to write Chinese. It's very sad if someday you are very old. I think one day maybe we are very old and old enough to become an idiot. At that time maybe I can only speak Chinese, and I think it's sad if my children can't understand me. There are a lot of beautiful poem in Chinese. I think how sad it is if you cannot understand the poem I like. So I want my children to speak Chinese and maybe live in a Chinese style.

C3: Sometime it's nature to speak English if the children live in America. There are many many examples that the children live in America and the parents want them to learn Chinese and live in a Chinese style but it's very hard you know. Take him or her to China, that's the best way.

C10: You are not necessary to do that. All my cousins are in America, all my family, belong to my father, they are in America. I can see the big difference between family and family. And I think depends on what you want the children to be. It really depends.

*Q: Since now the internet have all the Chinese content, will it help your children to learn Chinese?*

C10: I have no idea now.

C11: I think it depend on your way of education.

C10: I remember I watched a TV program . . . they interview the children of Liu Yong, I think their education is very successful.

## Indian Group

*Q: The topic is about the media, how you use media here in the United States, and for what. So could you tell me how you use computer and the Internet (because you've already filled in that questionnaire), why you use them, and how many hours you spend on them every day?*

I1: I talk on the forums one to two hours every day. I will give like 10 minutes, or 15 to 20 minutes a day every place, talking about one to two hours a day on average. Mostly but . . . I think emails, googling, finding all the information, catching the news.

I2: Watching movies.

I3: I read news.

I5: Indian News. [Clips].

*Q: Do you use software like MSN?*

I3: We use *Yahoo Messenger*, we use *Gmail*, *Google Talk*. *Yahoo Messenger* [is the most popular real-time communication software in India,] I guess.

I5: But for now, *Yahoo Messenger* is still in, but *Google mail* . . .

I3: *Google*. [I still use *Yahoo Messenger* here].

*Q: Do you have any American contacts on your Yahoo Messenger list, because I think Americans use different software?*

I3: No.

I1: I have one.

I4: [For Americans,] I call them.

I5: [Americans like to use] *Facebook*.

I3: Yeah, [we use *Facebook*.] We do have an account.

I4: Yeah, we have.

I5: But not that much. We have another software – *Orkut*

I4: It's another version of *Facebook*, I think. It's O-r-k-u-t.

I3: *Orkut.com*. You can login through your *Gmail* ID into that. Most of my friends on *Facebook* are from my department who I have friendship here in U.S. There are Indian people [on *Facebook*]. But I use some others. I use mostly *Orkut* to contact the Indian friends. There are some other people who I want to contact, then I use *Facebook* – other than the Indian people.

I1: From my point of view, we have a lot of friends who are on *Orkut*, who are registered with *Orkut*, more from India, our friends who are now at India. But here, it seems to me that *Facebook* is more popular. So keeping in touch with friends or lab-mates or, you know, people are beside with you, *Facebook* would be my choice. These people we keep in touch with on *Facebook*. So these are two different features.

I3: [*Orkut* is for contacting Indian people] primarily.

*Q: How do you contact the American people here? Do you have some very close American friends here?*

Most participants were uncertain about the answers, and they smiled.

I1: Maybe. I mean, I think I have a few. Some of them use *Facebook*, so I use *Facebook* to talk to them. Other than that, direct contact cell phone, or the email, yeah.

I3: This form they are using is the most community-like.

*Q: How do you contact your family in India?*

I2: Cell phone [to contact our family].

I5: Yeah, we use it (cell phone) most of the time.

I3: We use online chatting, but not that popular – to those who are in India. Two of my family – my brother and my sister – they are in other countries like U.K. or some other country, then we do chatting through *Yahoo Messenger*. But to contact my parents in India, then I use cell phone. Because Internet is not that popular, that common, in India.

I6: No, Internet is common, but our parents are not as used to it as we are. . . . Friends [in India], messenger . . .

I3: Yeah, we use *Yahoo Messenger* to contact friends.

I1: Indian families are limited to their speed, so it's not a very high-speed Internet connection by phone without segment. Like if the connection can be faster, then you can call an on-line conference, video. But cell phone is the basic.

I6: I mean when we came here, like I've come for four years, the original rate [for long-distance phone call] is going down.

I3: [The rate is] falling each year. But if you want to talk to your girlfriend, it's expensive, because she will take obviously more time, right? Time then is supposed to be money, right?

I1: So for girlfriend, [online] chatting is good.

I3: *Yahoo Messenger* is good for a girlfriend. If you want to talk to a friend, then phone, so you can talk directly. It depends on how much longer you want to talk. You can call her (girlfriend) for two minutes and say "come online," right?

*Q: Do you have MP3 or iPod?*

I3: I don't use them, but my friends use them.

I6: Indian people use some MP3 player, but iPod is more popular than any other kind.

I3: In India it's (iPod) not that common.

I4: It's not that popular but it's gaining momentum.

*Q: Are you blogging? For what?*

I4 & I6: Yeah.

I6: I blog for cricket.

I5: Me too.

I6: Cricket – it's online . . .

I3: It's a game, much popular in India.

I1: It's like they call football, and we have cricket. It's a fashion.

I3: We have a game called cricket, which is more popular in India.

I4: A match happens, a match is over, once it's about to happen, and then you could decide whether you like something about how your teams play . . .

I5: Like these other two players comment on each other how he played, how his performance in that game.

I2: About the game, basically.

I4: Just like writing a blog article after something has happened. Mostly, it's after it has happened.

I1: And before.

*Q: So you form an online community for the game? They are here or in India?*

I3: Yeah. Some [bloggers] are here, some – who are watching online – are in India.

*Q: Okay, let's talk about some traditional media. Does any of you watch TV regularly or read newspapers?*

I6: I watch TV regularly.

I3: I watch online TV channels, sometimes.

I4: I read newspapers, I don't watch TV, not even online.

Most Indian students said they did not frequently watch TV, even online. But most of them read newspapers at least a few times every week.

I1: Not regularly. I mean, *Collegian*, yes, but not as much as every day, but then I try to attach to *The New York Times* when it is possible. You know, sometimes it's twice a week, sometimes it's just once a week. I'm not really regularly. That's because the *CNN* is obviously online . . . It has become part of my routine every day: emails, and then, *CNN.com*. I would say I'm related more on the Internet for the news than papers. If it's more for the opinions or stuff like that – newspapers.

I5: We do [read books], for the exam.

I3: I don't even do that. Before the exams, I do something on the Internet, whatever I find. Mostly, whatever lectures I have been given, whatever I have returned the lecture – that's more than enough. I don't find more time to use anything else. Yeah, [The Internet has become my primary source for study].

All other group members: Yeah.

*Q: So actually Internet has become your primary source for study?*

I3: Yeah.

I6: For everything. All the other members: For everything.



I1: Seriously, if I didn't have Internet connection, it would drive me crazy.

I3: It's very difficult to stay without Internet.

*Q: So all of you can't live without computer and the Internet?*

All the Indian participants: Yeah.

I1: We need access to it at sometime in a day.

I3: 24 hours.

*Q: What about television and newspaper and book? If you can't use them anymore, I mean, any forms of the traditional media, would you still live quite . . .*

I6: Yes, if the Internet is available, then you can find everything else, so it's not quite a matter.

I3: I think television, nowadays, I would use it more for watching DVD or something. Watching any channels, I don't think I prefer that.

*Q: You have television set at home, what do you watch? Do you watch it every day?*

I6: I watch *CNN*, *ABC News*, and I watch all those sit-coms, *CBS*. I have taken the cable – the basic package. There is one Indian channel. The reason for not watching it: the problem (that Indian channel) is that they squeeze in that channel programs like . . . that we have already watched. But sometimes they offer some old movies that I can watch.

*Q: Do you think that computer and the Internet make your life here much easier and happier?*

I6: Easier, but I don't know if it's happier.

I1: Happiness is something different. I think the word high-speed Internet would be more appropriate.

I6: Because if you are in India, you are not happier.

I3: You know in India, if you are checking your emails, if you click on some . . . if you got some emails and you click on it, you have to wait sometime, like five minutes. It depends, but it's still delayed. It's not like you just click and you can see that.

I6: No. if you go to the big city or some others, you can open it immediately. It depends on where you are.

I1: Yeah, it's there, but it's not that even common in India. You have to wait.

I3: It depends on speed, what speed you have chosen.

I6: So basically in big cities you have the option of high speed. It depends on what you want to click on it.

I3: But in most part of India, Internet is not that fast as we have here.

I2 and I5: Yeah.

I5: In India, real-time communication is not that popular. That's sort of. You have a low speed Internet, then you will have to limit yourself to type-in chatting.

I6: You cannot do voice chatting.

I6: And another thing what is different in India – you can't do over the Internet in India, it's very popular here -- that you can buy stuff. I mean you hardly need to use the cellular phone.

I3: Yeah, you can order anything online here, but it's not that in India.

*Q: Do you frequently do online purchase and banking?*

All participants agreed.

I3: Yeah, [for banking], everything is online.

I5: Mostly [pay bills online].

I1: Direct transfer has made it very easily, right?

*One Indian student joined the gathering in golden Sherwani, a long coat-like garment worn for formal occasions by those of North Indian descent. He just came from an Indian New Year celebration. Some questions that had been asked were repeated:*

I7: [Traditional media]. It's all for cricket, I mean, that's the only thing I watch – streams.

I7: I blog online, but not for cricket. He is a cricket guy. He blogs online because of it. I think the purpose of blogging is like sense of family. Like my intimate, he is sharing ideas what he thinks, and we just, as a community, we're just contributing with idea – agreeing or disagreeing or what differences. I blog all of my thoughts . . . . I have some experience which I learnt abroad – popular culture – I wrote all about those.

*Q: You blog in English ?*

All participants agreed.

I1: In our language there is no Indian language as such.

I3: There are more than 20 languages.

I2: We have twenty two or three (I4: Official languages.)

I3: [Even in India we use English], most of them. There are a few colleges which are in their regional languages . . . not most of them.

I6: It depends on different regions.

I7: I agree that we can't live without the Internet, probably because most of my documents of research are on . . . It's like a little sharing community. So it's easier to get online than be going to library, searching through everything, getting distracted by everything. If I go to [the Internet], I know I'm going to be in that particular field and I can search those things. But if I go to library, I may find some interesting books.

*Q: What about the authenticity and authority of the online information?*

I7: It depends on the source of the information, like what source are they going to. If you are going to a field you've been there a lot of years –let's say *PTW* search engines. If you go to *Site Finder* – it's a search engine of use. It's a place where you can find other sites' information, so I would be more comfortable searching those things. I just don't want to go to *Google*, and take some kind of page, read somebody like me help with.

Several other participants: Yeah, like *Wikipedia*.

I7: *Wikipedia* is also not that expert provided. Let's say if I search through *Google* and I find my advisor's homepage, and if I saw what he has done, and if I know that he is a nice researcher, I will probably cite him. But if not . . .

I1: Definitely, I mean, if you are sure the kind of information you are looking for, it's very enough to just see it and stop it. But if you are just going to searching, just to get a simple idea of whatever you are looking for, then *Wikipedia* is almost as good.

*Q (to I6): You said just now you are not necessarily happy with the Internet. Could you explain?*

I6: I'm not saying that I'm not happier with the Internet. It depends.

I3: If we watch a nice movie, then we are happy. If the movie is not good, then I can be angry.

I4: That's not the Internet to blame, right? You'd better live with whatever you watch.

I6: No, Internet is to blame, because without the Internet, you couldn't access to that movie.

I3: He calls laptop as time machine. It eats all your time.

I2: It's a time-eating machine. Whenever I open it . . .

I3: You can spend any number of hours, I mean sitting on laptop and blogging, doing whatever you want.

I6: Yes, actually, as you said, there is too much information on the Internet. It depends on how you use them, and how specifically you can define what you are looking for.

*Q: Do you still value the Indian cultures?*

Everyone said yes.

I7: I think culture is something that you don't throw out of your blood. You are just physically away from it, I mean, even though you use English as your family language, those stuff. Culture is something different, and even not working through language.

I5: Value for culture is always there. It's infinite property.

I2: Maybe if you are here from childhood, maybe your culture then, maybe is more . . .

I3: Sure, [I will let my child learn Indian language].

I6: if I would have a child born here, for me, I would like him to learn about India or my language or something, but because he is born here, I can't be sure if that's possible.

*Q: Do you think that media have some effect on culture?*

I6: Yes, we've learnt a lot about American culture through movies, media.

I7: So media do you mean just the Internet or any forms of the media?

I1: Movies are . . . movies have big effect.

I3: Yeah, if you think critically, you are right. [Media would have had bigger effect if I came at a pre-Internet time].

I7: People learn a lot from their communities, sometimes. Like ISA (the Indian Students Association) here is a bit stronger . . . . So if people are active, the community is active, then you will learn more about what's going on from them. But if the community is weak, let's say only

four or five people are here, then of course, we will be more relying on other sources. Yeah, [Community and interpersonal communication has more influence on culture].

*Q: How do you maintain your Indian community here? Do you actually hold some events?*

I7: Here, [we maintain our community] mainly through *Orkut*. It's a similar community site like *Facebook*. There you can find a lot of my past posts. That's the place for community keeping, contacting, but otherwise, not that much.

I1: On campus we do events . . . two or three events every month. That's when most of the Indian students and communities get together for the events. That's when all are together. Otherwise there are small [events], you know, their own groups.

I3: Small groups. We are divided into small groups.

I4: We have a big community here. It's not really possible to keep contact with each one of them on a regular basis. The Indian Student Association – the big group – they have events to bring, so all of us meet at that time. We do maintain our community on small basis and big basis.

I2: We have our own circles.

I4: We call them (our Indian friends), and we meet them

I3: Search for them through the Internet.

I5: Community is our primary force.

*Q: Did you already quite a lot about the American culture and American way of life before you came here?*

I5: Mostly movies at that time.

I2: But that's different.

I5: Yeah, it's different.

I7: That's entirely different. Well, all the movies that I see is that they are always drinking, a lot of party, a lot of lures, and all those . . .

I6: The thing is before everyone came here, everyone thought real American students were sorts of this, but . . . when you came to a place like (this university town) . . .

I7: And there is also huge difference from five years ago and right now. That time there were so many people who came here on H1 and other visas and then go back, like some saw there and that's what they saw in movies. So during those days they bring all the information back. They keep asking me when I go home: "oh, it seems everybody does this does that," and I'm like – not half of that is much true. But right now it's much more equivalent. People know quite a bit lot. If something happens here, they will know something about what's going on. But when I came here, it's somehow difficult. I didn't know much about America when I was in India. I learnt pretty much about America after I came here.

I6: Yeah, now, actually, Indian media covers a lot about America, like the democratic and republican presidential elections going on now.

I3: [The television and newspaper media] is more common, more popular in India [for learning about American].

I1: Yeah, friends, mostly asking friends [before I came here].

Other participants agreed.

*Q: Do you think you've somehow changed, like, if you travel back to India?*

I6: I think we've changed if we travel back to India.

I7: It's called reversed culture shock. When you first come here, it's culture shock, because, when you come here, and then you'll . . . this culture is an alien culture of you. And then you try to adjust, and after five or six years and then you go back, then you will have to adjust to their pace because they have changed all past five or six years, and you have changed all past five or six years, and you haven't seen them changing and they haven't seen you changing, so you go back, it's just like – you used to think on the same frequency, like maybe you used to like see movies or same things before, but now it could be different because they are in different life situation and I'm in different life situation.

I6: Yeah, like I will be changed when I've been here over 20 years.

I7: I had culture shock when I first came here. I was in California on my first year. First of all, when I first got a car, the speed was so fast . . . Then it was so clean, first of all. Then everything is so far afar . . . you wouldn't find any grocery nearby it (the housing community) – you have to drive about two miles, and I was just like “oh! Oh!” in India, we always have groceries at street corners. You just go there and get whatever you can get.

I1: Yeah, supermarket is one thing [of culture shock].

*Q: At that time, how did you solve the life difficulties?*

I7: I have friends – the Indian guys who came along when I came.

I3: Mostly you take care of your friends.

I1: Before you actually come here, you make sure that you know somebody being here, I mean, in most cases, that's what you do. And then your primary problem was your housing and the food that you eat. It takes a little while to get adjusted. Yes, so basically your friends here . . .

I3: Friends are helpful.

I1: If without them, that could be very very difficult.

I1: [If I would buy a car insurance for the first time], actually, I would first go to the Internet, learn something about all the process and stuff, and then if I have questions, then I will consult with a friend who has already bought that insurance, you know, just to make sure that I'm not going on the wrong train. But I will do the learning part first by myself using the Internet.

I7: Because mostly our food is “exam,” I don't like either eastern or western.

I3: If I have time, I will prefer cooking myself. If you have time, sufficient enough, then we make our own food. If you don't have time, then there is no other option.

I5: I think it's just, it takes a little while to get adjusted to the food, you know.

I4: We don't have time.

Most students said they didn't have time cooking Indian foods themselves, because it cost time. And there is no Indian restaurant in the town.

All Indian participants said they would like to work a couple of years after graduation.

I7: Coming back to your question of food, we have a lot of McDonald's and Pizza Huts in India now. So people are different, I mean, first when I came here, I couldn't eat French fries. Then I'm used to get sick, I'm used to eat bread . . . and sour cream and onion chips, first I wouldn't have even one or two of them, but now it's like "yeah, chips! Chip!" Now I don't eat that much, I eat Indian food once or twice a week.

I6: Another problem with the Indian food is that it takes a long time to cook.

I2: And a lot of spices.

I3: And you need some expertise to cook, not everyone can cook good food.

*Q: Do you want to learn more about the American culture?*

I1: At least I would want to.

I5: Yeah, I would want to [learn more].

I7: I think [we learn culture] more through friends. If we have some American friends, like if you have a sport in common that you want to learn. You should have some common ground – maybe you share department or maybe share activity – then you start like, because . . . . See he's come from a different part of the country as I am. If I would want to learn more about his culture, the same thing I would do like, let's say we know each other through badminton, so if we met there, and things could be that we could be friends, and then we started exploring each other's culture. If not, I don't know him and he doesn't know me, so it's the same . . . . The concept is people. It's not about . . . because now we are related by knowing what is interesting us rather than just trying to imitate him because he is White.

I3: Movie is more entertaining rather than learning. You have to take movie as an entertainment.

I1: I'm thinking of a good question: like how sure of you that you've watched that being shown on TV is the real, like the life here. I mean you don't know for sure unless you actually go and meet people, and try to learn something from them.

I3: Yeah. Most of the time things are exaggerated.

I6: I think more than movies, if you watch sitcoms like *Friends* or *Everybody loves Raymond*. I think I learnt more about the American culture through them than others.

I7: Huh, sitcoms. Other participants agreed.

I1: I'm not sure what exactly is American culture.

I7: Different people will follow different ways, no matter so much interaction, do you know, understand?

I1: Yes.

I7: Okay. This is American culture, and this is not. It's very difficult especially with this background here – with so many international students with their own [cultures], so many things are so, you know, common, it's very difficult to say "this is this, this is that. This is Indian culture, that is American culture." Indian culture is getting more westernized.

I4: In India I think it's more contradictive than just eastern and western cultures.

I6: I don't watch sitcoms online. I watch them on DVD. I own a DVD.

I7: I think sitcom is the best. I probably started watching some satires, some popular sitcoms. You know those languages that they use, because sometimes coming from India, your slang will be different. I mean thank you in every sense doesn't mean "thank you," it might be . . . . Let's say you can play with somebody, and if I run against him or her and I would say "thank you," they would not take it like a polite thank you, they might be thinking: why are you being so sarcastic? So you didn't know slang.

## Korean Group

*Q: So my first question is: could you live without computer and the Internet?*

K1 & K2: Maybe not.

K9: If I cannot access the Internet, for one day that's okay, but for few days, I would be crazy. One time I just used my neighbor's Internet, and then somehow they blocked the Internet connection, then I can't use it. Even though in the night, 11 or 12pm, I went to the library, and then I checked my email or I chatted with my friend or I studied, because I wanted to connect to my friend. So I had to go to some place to connect to the Internet. Yeah, it's very very surprising for me. People are addicted.

*Q: How do you use the Internet?*

K2: Check email, search the papers, communicate with people, and what else . . . have fun.

K1: Read the newspaper, Internet newspaper – both Korean and American.

K6: I read through [books in library], and just download the pdf files from the database.

K3: [Online] weather cast.

K2: We don't need to come here to library. We can search everything in the . . .

K6: I know that my wife makes automatic transfer through online banking. In Pennsylvania, just the school, the university supports the Internet. We didn't spend for it.

K6: I read the paper *Collegian* just three or four times every week. I don't read news online.

K1: I'm not familiar with writing checks, because I cannot remember [how to write] those numbers, like five hundred, one thousand, so usually I use online transfer.

K2: Too much [online purchase].

K9: Yeah, I do online purchase both in U.S. and in Korea. But you know there are something which is not real, even though something looks like in the right size, actually the stuff there is not so good, because they use some light, and they look like very great, but sometimes it's not.

K1: It depends on what type of the stuff you want.

*Q: How do you improve your English? Do you think English is a big deal?*

K1: [English is a] huge issue.

K2: Huge.

K1: In my case I improve my English during conversation with my advisor, from my roommate . . .

K2: English causes trouble during presentations.

K1: I don't feel any inconvenience. Yeah, of course my English ability is not good, but communication is not difficult. But most of the Korean people feel like, they think 'my English is poor,' I think this might be formed by the Korean English education system – only reading and writing.



K4: I live with American roommates, so I improve my English with them, talk to them, and we also use *MSN* we still in the apartment, so like 'hey, do you want to have some ice-cream?' I say 'okay, see you in five minutes at the living room' like this.

All Korean participants believed that talking to people is the best way to improve English.

*Q: What is the most popular real-time online chatting software in Korea?*

K2: *MSN*.

K3: *Daum*.

K1: *Nateon*.

*Q: Do you have any American contacts on your MSN or Nateon?*

K1: No, in my case.

K6: No.

K4: I have some. My roommates. I contact the American friends on *MSN* every day. I have two American roommates and from this summer, I will have some others.

*Q: Do you have MP3 or iPod?*

Most students don't have iPod or MP3.

K4: I have one. I bought it in Korea.

K9: iPod recently in Korea becomes popular. By the end of last year, more Korean people buy the iPod and iPhone. I think people think they are cool.

*Q: Do you blog?*

K6: *Cyworld*, like *Facebook*. It's not Korean *Facebook*, I mean, there are different style.

*Q: Cyworld? Could you introduce it, because I've found that everyone country has different software for the same function?*

K2: [On *Cyworld*], we download some pictures, and leave message. It's international.

K5: Yes, we have *Cyworld*. I send text messages.

K9: We share pictures [on *Cyworld*], very similar to *Facebook*.

K2: I use the American *Facebook*, but not very often. I use it because of American friends.

K9: *Cyworld* is very convenient for contacting people living in Korea. I have so many friends in Korea. For example, those Koreans who are 25 or 30 years old, so their relationships are strongly related to their career. So how can I contact them? Send them email? You know it's busy, because it's not your time, so I talk to them using *Cyworld*.

K4: But it's hard to get registration if you are not Korean, because you need something like social security number in Korea. I tried to get registration for my roommate, she cannot.

K1: But if you are foreigner, you can have several different versions: American version, Chinese version, Japanese version. You can register there.

K4: (But people registered on different versions are impossible to talk with one another. The Korean version is just for Koreans, and is in Korean language.) No, you can't. It's impossible.

*Q: How do you contact your family in Korea?*

Participants said that phone and cell phone is the primary channel that the Korean students talk to their family in Korea.

K9: For family, I call them once a week. I don't use online chatting, because of the time difference, also my father is not well known about the Internet.

*Q: But the Internet speed in Korea is very fast, why you don't use Web camera more, I mean, you can see your families and friends there?*

K2: Our service, let's say, have the text message, so we can send text message to their cell phones. Mostly we just call them, or email.

K2: The problem is that my friends are all in the company at the time, so they cannot use web camera during their work time.

K4: We have time difference, so it's convenience to just pick up the phone and compared to the camera and computer.

*Q: How many of you have television here? Do you watch frequently?*

K2: [Watch] movie, just movie channel.

K4: No we don't have [cable], we just have DVD player.

K9: I have television, but I spend more time on the Internet, because I do not have much time watching TV.

Seven Korean participants have cable and satellite services

*Q: Could you live without any kinds of traditional media? You can watch television, just imagine, you don't have newspaper, I mean, the print version, but you can still go to the Internet?*

K4: We can live [without any traditional media]. Why not? We can have any kind of the information form the Internet. So we can make the printout. Why not? When it comes to the convenience, we can't always without that [traditional media]. But just live, we can. Our life won't go wrong just without this.

K9: I can live. Maybe not happy, because I like the paper form feeling it – contacting feeling like that. I've used to watch the paper in the paper. So I still like to do that. People around 30 or 50 years ago thought maybe the paper will disappear when the other medium come up, but still, people like reading a newspaper as a paper. Actually it's decreasing, but I think there's a limit. So people keep living with a paper.

*Q: How do you contact the Americans? You use email or you use cell phone?*

K2: I use both email and cell phone to contact Americans, and I prefer email. Because of English, it's difficult to talk on the phone.

K4: Yeah. If I have to describe detailed thing, I prefer email. But if I have some emergency, I have to do this (call them).

*Q: Are you interested in American culture?*

K1: It's interesting. We are interested.

K2: Oh, it's nothing interesting.

*Q: Do you think the life here is very different from your life in Korea?*

All participants: No, no.

K2: No, the life here and that in Korea are not different. That's why I think it's [the American culture] nothing interesting. American culture is Korean culture.

K4: Except that everything is much bigger (the size).

The American fast food and popular culture – movies, television shows – are everywhere in Korea.

*Q: If you want to learn, for example, the first you want to buy car insurance in America and you are not familiar with the procedures, would you go online searching or you just ask a friend?*

K2: I called him (K1) when I buy insurance.

K5: I bought the car from someone else. No I didn't do any online search about it.

K2: I do commentary English class at our school. The most helpful way of improving English is watching movie, do some conversation with American, or Chinese, and Indians.

*Q: Do you learn some American lifestyles from your friends?*

K4: I learn the American lifestyle from my American roommates. Sometimes, I go with them to the bar. I visited their hometown. I have some experience about American traditional culture – Thanksgiving big dinner, Christmas family – things like that.

*Q: Do you think media have some effects?*

K4: Yeah, I learnt something from soap opera.

K2: The media thing is, you know, it cannot be 100% perfectly same as real life. We can learn something at least. But we cannot believe it 100%. We can learn, but that is not true. Some like violence, American movies, mostly violence.

K4: That's little bit exaggerated.

K2: Like we feel: oh, all the Americans they have gun. But we came here, nobody has gun. So, we can learn something, but we can't believe 100%. So I also learn the other part from my experience.

K9: Yeah, of course the media has some effect in cultural learning. Nowadays I watch the CNN or I access the CNN on the Web site, and then I become interested in the American culture . . . . So when I watch the news or Internet news about the other culture, I become interested. So I've changed.

*Q: Do you still follow some Korean traditions, like eating Korean food?*

K1: Sometimes I follow some Korean traditions, like August 15th (the Mid-Autumn Festival). But we can't follow all of the culture because it's very complicated to follow all of them.

K3: [I cook] Korean food every day.

K1: Every day.

K8: Not every day. I miss Korean food.

*Q: Did you feel you've somehow changed when you traveled back to Korea?*

The Korean students: No, I don't feel I've changed.

(They talked about Korean night culture.)

*Q: How do you keep contacts with your Korean friends here? Do you frequently gather together?*

The participants: No. Only once or twice a week.

K1: Usually I call my [Korean] friends to make together.

K2: I think most Koreans go church.

K1: Yeah, church life is the most important for some of us.

K5: We have Korean church, which is very close [from campus].

K9: For the Korean people here, I just use phone.

K8: And in church. When I came here, I contact with the Korean people in Korean church.

K9: I think the church is the center of the Korean community here. A lot of my friends in other cities, even though they are not Christian, they still go to church because they can get lots of help from church, also they to be in touch with the Korean people, and they can have some Korean traditional food. You know, the food is not just food, if you can eat the Korean food, at least like once a week, it's very healthful.

*Q: Hi! (talking to K7, because he was almost wordless.) Could you say something? You live with American roommate or Korean?*

K7: [I live with] American – African-American, so it's difficult . . . just say "morning" or "goodnight." Yeah, for most time, I'm with my Korean friends.

*Q: How do you use the Internet? Like watching movies or . . .*

K7: Yeah, [I go to the Internet] to watch movies, Hollywood movie or American TV show. And I play video games.

K1: I play [video and online] games a lot, not addicted.

*Q: Do you like American foods?*

K1: No, I don't like American foods.

K2: I like it. But I like it does not mean that I'm more "American." Just I'm lazy. Korean food is very complicated to make, but American food is easy – just heat it, so . . . I like that way.

K1: Yes, food is the most important part of culture.

Others agreed.

K9: I think I've become familiar with the American food. At the beginning I didn't like American food, but now it doesn't matter.

K8: I'm the same.

*Q: If you have children in future, and they would be born in America, would you still want them to learn the Korean culture and language?*

K9: I hope my kids could learn Korean language and culture if they would be born here. Oh, it's very difficult, because I teach the Korean language to the second generation, because they have

no interest in learning Korean, because they just go to school, and their friends are English. Their parents want to do that. I mean, I have my parents, but they cannot speak English very well, so like the grandparents and my son – if they cannot speak [Korean] – they cannot communicate with each other. So for my parents, I want them to learn English, and know Korean. But for me, it's okay.

*Q: Do you think you've been kind of Americanized?*

K9: I've been here three years, and I think I've been Americanized a little bit. But you know, I still feel the difference between the American and the Korean people. The cultures are different, so it's not easy to mix up with the American people. But I still have many nice friends. But it's like just friend. But I cannot make very . . . very difficult. Some questions . . . I can't explain deeply with the American people, because we have some different background. Like the school life, I cannot catch their school life because I had different education, and they say something in their school, but I couldn't understand. So I feel something differ. But with Korean people I can have some common areas – some that happened in the school – so at the beginning, I can easily talk to the Korean people even though I don't know them, like in the high school, we studied so hard – we studied from 7am to 11pm – people understand that and then I can easily talk to people about that topic, but I have very narrow common topic for my American friends.

*Q: Do you think that culture is a kind of process, I mean, maybe you stay here for 20 year . . .*

K9: [If I stay here for 20 years], I will be more Americanized. But still I will be a Korean-American. I can't be a native or original American, because I've lived already in Korea for 29 years. I'm solid in the Korean culture, so maybe my Korean culture will be mixed with my American culture, but I cannot be the same as those born here, I would be totally different from that kind of people. So I'm kind of 1.5 generation, but I cannot be the second generation. My kids will be the second generation if they would grow up here.

K9: I have some examples: they are the second generation. They grow up here, and their parents send them to some Korean church or some school, and then they can learn the Korean. So even though in the childhood they don't like it, but you have to keep teaching them the Korean culture. After they grow up, some of them meet the Koreans and they want to contact the Korean people because they cannot suit in the American culture and they feel lonely here – because you know they are not exactly American and maybe they feel some difference between American and Korean. Sometimes they want to come back to the Korean culture or Korean community, but if they cannot speak the Korean, it would be hard. And it's very helpful to keep in touch with the Korean people. So my plan maybe I can teach my kids about the Korean or I can send them to the Korean school, but I will not push too much, I mean, just a little bit, at least they can communicate with the Korean people, even though they cannot write, that's okay, because they can communicate.