

Becoming American

Indira S. Somani

This study explored how a cohort of Asian Indians who migrated to the U.S. nearly 40 years ago have become acculturated to the U.S. by watching American television when they first arrived. The study used two concepts of the integrative communication theory: enculturation and acculturation. The study described how these Asian Indians did not grow up watching television in India. Hence, they became enculturated into American television. This cohort also watched television to learn how to act “American,” and thus became acculturated to the U.S. Furthermore, the study created linkage between the uses and gratifications theoretical perspective and the need for acculturation.

Keywords: Enculturation; Acculturation; Satellite Television; Asian Indian

Introduction

In the early stages of migrating to a new country, newcomers are often not proficient enough in the communication of that host country to function interpersonally (Yang, Wu, Zhu, & Southwell, 2004). Often times they watch television to learn how to improve general language skills and social interaction (Yang et al., 2004). Sometimes newcomers watch television just to learn how the host country operates (Reece & Palmgreen, 2000).

As Asian Indians migrated to the U.S. from 1960 to 1972, many saw television for the first time after arriving in the U.S. These Asian Indians did not grow up watching television in India, because television arrived in India in 1959 (Ray & Jacka, 1996). At that time, television in India was only in a few selected homes (Ray & Jacka, 1996). Therefore, this particular cohort hardly had any exposure to Indian television prior to watching television in the U.S. That's not to say these Asian Indians had not been exposed to the occasional American movie that screened in India at that time like *My Fair Lady* (Warner, 1964). Once these Asian Indians arrived in the U.S. many

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reported that they watched television programs, such as *I Love Lucy* (Oppenheimer, Carroll, & Davis, 1951–1960), *Gunsmoke* (MacDonnell & Meston, 1955–1975), *General Hospital* (Hursley & Hursley, 1963–), *The Price is Right* (Stewart, 1956–1965), *Father Knows Best* (James, 1954–1960), *60 Minutes* (Fager, 1968–), *The Young and the Restless* (Bell & Rauch, 1973–), and *The Guiding Light* (Phillips, 1952–2009) to learn about American culture.

This study is about a group of Asian Indians who migrated to the U.S. nearly 40 years ago. This cohort of Asian Indians learned to watch television after migrating to the U.S. and thus became enculturated into American television. However, they also used television to acculturate to the U.S. As a result, I explored how “television watching” was part of both their enculturation and acculturation process when they first arrived in the U.S.

Culture

Kluckhohn referred to culture as, “the distinctive way of life of a group of people, [and] their complete ‘design for living’” (1957, p. 49). This design for living included characteristics, such as explicit patterns of behavior, language, ideas, and a shared sense of values and beliefs, whether religion-based or custom-based. Kluckhohn also referred to culture as a point of departure, point of reference, or a point of central emphasis.

Various groups forming a pluralistic society include immigrants, sojourners, refugees, and indigenous peoples. Immigrants voluntarily moved to new countries and established a permanent residence in their new society. Sojourners had a short-term stay in their new society and arrived with a specific purpose of stay: for example, international students, diplomats, troops stationed in another country, and missionaries (Berry & Sam, 1997). Their transition to the new society was also voluntary.

Overall motivation to migrate to a new country was thought to include many factors, such as better “employment opportunities, education, health and housing facilities, climate, and social and community ties” (Berry & Sam, 1997, p. 303). For refugees and asylum seekers, transition was involuntary. Indigenous peoples and native peoples, however, were residents of a country prior to colonization (Berry & Sam, 1997). Regardless, ethno-cultural groups stayed distinct over time while living among one another to form a culturally pluralistic society.

Literature Review

The integrative communication theory was developed to understand the adaptive struggles and successes immigrants have. Kim (2005) developed the theory using a more interactive and integrative general systems perspective. Kim’s (2005) main question was not whether individuals adapt, but how and why they adapt when they relocate to a new and unfamiliar environment. Two concepts that relate to integrative communication theory and adaptation are enculturation and acculturation.

Enculturation

Herskovits defined enculturation as:

the aspects of the learning experience that mark off man from other creatures, and by means of which he achieves competence in his culture. . . . This is in essence a process of conscious or unconscious conditioning, exercised within the limits sanctioned by a given body of custom. From this process not only is all adjustment to social living achieved, but also all those satisfactions, themselves a part of social experience, that derive from individual expression rather than association with others in the group. (1955, p. 326)

As Herskovits (1955) explained, every human being goes through a process of enculturation to live as a member of society. The enculturation process started during an individual's childhood by conditioning to fundamental habits, such as eating, sleeping, speaking, and personal hygiene, "whose inculcation has been shown to have special significance in shaping the personality and forming the habit patterns of the adult in later life" (p. 327). But the enculturation process did not stop there, because as individuals became adults, they continued the process of learning (p. 327). By the time individuals were adults, the learning process has led them to social stability and cultural continuity within their culture. For example, the early years of enculturation allow the individual to establish daily routine behavior within a social group. But as an adult, the enculturation process functions at a conscious level where the individual learns and eventually knows the accepted behavior in a given situation in society. Furthermore, "the difference between the nature of the enculturative experience in the early years of life and later is that the range of conscious acceptance or rejection by an individual continuously increases as he grows older" (p. 327).

In 1963 Mead argued against Herskovits' distinction between socialization and enculturation. Mead discussed how the words socialization and enculturation were used interchangeably. Instead, Mead defined socialization as "learning as a universal process" and enculturation as "the process of learning a culture as it takes place in a specific culture" (1963, p. 185).

Kim (1988) defined enculturation as a socialization process, where children first learned how to live in the company of others. As adults, this internalized learning enabled them to interact easily with other members of their culture, who shared a similar image of reality and self. Thus, the enculturation process had become the process in which individuals adapt to the surrounding cultural forces through the years of socialization.

Kim (2005) further explained how the continuous enculturation process occurs through communication. For example, individuals learn to speak, listen, read, interpret, and understand verbal and nonverbal messages that are recognized and responded to by those with whom they regularly interact.

In the cultural adaptation process, enculturation occurred. In Figure 1, Kim (2001, p. 53) outlined the cultural adaptation process.

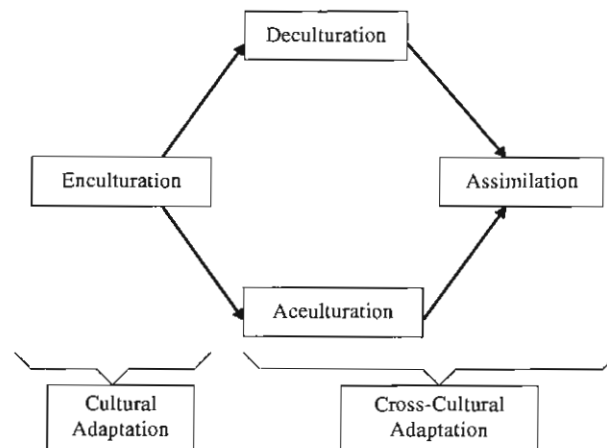


Figure 1. Relationships among the terms associated with cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001, p. 53).

Kim stated that “culture is imprinted on each individual as a pattern of perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors that is accepted and expected by others in a given society below the level of conscious thought” (2001, p. 48). Furthermore, Kim (2001) said that individuals were programmed by culture from the day they are born and largely unaware of the hidden cultural programming that shaped many of their mind-sets and behavioral patterns. In addition, Kim (2001) suggested that individuals hardly realize how culture influenced how they solved problems and how the economic and governmental systems functioned together. As a result, Kim (2005) described the enculturation process as cultural adaptation. For this study, enculturation is defined as a learned process that leads individuals to social stability and cultural continuity within their culture.

Acculturation

In the cross-cultural adaptation process, strangers were described as compelled to learn a new cultural system; this process of new learning was called acculturation (Kim, 2005). Furthermore, this process of “new learning” was not just adding new cultural elements to prior internal conditions, the process of deculturation or unlearning of the old cultural habits also had to occur (Kim, 2002). This unlearning was important so that new responses were adopted in situations that previously would have evoked responses from the old cultural habits (Kim, 2002). In Figure 1, Kim (2001) has also outlined the cross-cultural adaptation process.

Kim (2001) described assimilation as the process where strangers acquired elements of the new cultural system, but also lost some of their original cultural habits. For some individuals, complete assimilation would be a lifetime goal because to change the internalized core values and beliefs would be a slow and difficult process (Kim, 2001).

Four Acculturation Strategies

Berry (1991), one of the leading scholars in acculturation studies, identified four different acculturation strategies by asking two questions: “One, individuals had to decide if they wanted to preserve their own cultural identity and customs. Two, individuals had to decide if they wanted to form relations with other group members in society” (p. 27). Combining the answers to these questions, Berry (1991) identified the four modes of acculturation: If individuals answered “yes” to both questions, they reached “integration”; if individuals answered “yes” to the first question and “no” to the second, they reached “separation”; if individuals answered “no” to the first question and “yes” to the second question, they reached “assimilation”; and, if individuals answered “no” to both questions, they reached “marginalization” (p. 27; see Figure 2).

The integration mode implies that the stranger wanted to maintain his or her own cultural integrity as well as maintain relations with other group members. This course was possible when the dominant culture was open and accepting of the acculturating groups (Berry, 1990). The separation mode meant individuals wanted to maintain their cultural identity but did not want relations with other group members in the larger society. It should also be noted that if such cultural distinctiveness was required by the dominant society and the acculturating group was kept at a distance, then it became a situation of segregation (Berry, 1990). The assimilation mode meant the individual did not want to maintain the original cultural identity but wanted to form relations with other group members. When individuals chose assimilation freely, the culture became a “melting pot,” but when assimilation was forced by the dominant culture, the culture became a “pressure cooker” (Berry, 1990). The marginalization mode meant the individual did not want to maintain his or her cultural identity nor

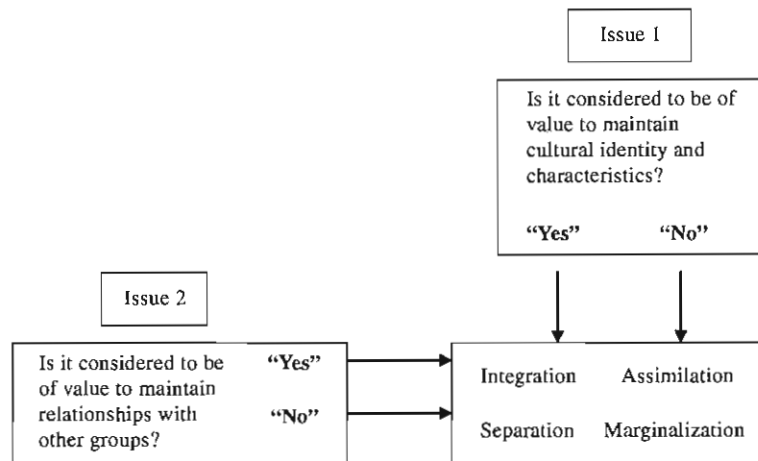


Figure 2. Four acculturation strategies based on orientation to two issues (Berry, 1991, p. 27).

form relations with other group members in society (Berry, 1991). Individuals felt marginalized as a result of actions by the dominant society through forced cultural loss and forced exclusion (Berry, 1990).

Acculturation Indicators

The extent to which the individual engaged in the acculturation process was thought to be determined by various indicators. For example, education suggested how far an individual had gone in formal schooling outside his or her home country, and it could be the leading indicator of how an individual engaged in the acculturation process (Berry, 1990). Berry (1990) stated other acculturation indicators: wage employment—individuals who entered the work force in the new environment; urbanization—individuals who migrated to urban areas in the new society; media—individuals who were listening to the radio, watching television, and reading newspapers and magazines to learn about their new culture; political participation—individuals who became involved in voting; religion—individuals who changed their religion to be accepted into their new culture; language—individuals' knowledge or use of the language in their new culture; daily practices—individuals' change in personal dress, food habits, and more; and social relations—individuals who related to those in their new culture as opposed to socializing in their own group.

Berry (1990) found that prior knowledge of the new culture by the acculturating individual—knowledge such as language and culture—led to more effective acculturation. In addition, prior contact with the new culture, whether positive or negative, would shape the attitude for the individual's acculturative experience. Furthermore, prior expectations and goals in the new culture would be major predictors of how individuals experienced acculturation (Berry, 1990).

Uses and Gratifications Approach

The uses and gratification theoretical perspective has also added insight into how acculturation needs can be addressed, but is not central to this study. Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974, p. 164) describe five elements of the theoretical model: (1) audiences are active and media is assumed to be goal-oriented; (2) need gratification is linked to a specific media choice, which lies with the audience member; (3) media compete with other sources of need satisfaction; (4) people are aware of their own media use to be able to provide an information of that use; and (5) value judgments should be suspended—that is, linking audience's specific needs to specific media.

Within this framework, the uses and gratifications approach includes the social and psychological origins of needs from media. Some acculturation studies describe the social and psychological needs of immigrants and acculturation as an active process (Berry, 1980; Kim, 1988). In this study the uses and gratifications approach sheds light on how American television may have helped these Asian Indians in their process to acculturate to the U.S.

With the uses and gratifications approach, Yang et al. discussed how acculturation motives were related to television watching, because it was a “good way to get information about American culture, to adjust to American society and to improve English” (2004, p. 92). During the initial stage of migrating to a new country, newcomers were often not sufficiently proficient in the new communication to function interpersonally with the host culture (Yang et al., 2004). Yang and his colleagues explained that media use was vital in shaping one’s acculturation experience because it offers a chance to improve general language skills and social interaction. These researchers suggested that some media use was goal-oriented and not just a diversion, and in fulfilling these goals, strangers were adjusting to life in the U.S. As a result, media use helped individuals to fulfill some of their acculturation goals.

Reece and Palmgreen (2000) found a strong, significant relationship between need for acculturation and Asian Indian students’ television viewing motivations in the U.S. These authors described how the students used television to gain information about their host culture. Reece and Palmgreen found that the need for acculturation and motivation for watching American television yielded four positive relationships: (1) the need to acculturate increased even more (which means the Indian students had a need to watch television to gain more information about their host culture); (2) students’ reflection on values (Indian students compared their own values to the values of their new host culture); (3) observation of the culture (the Indian students were motivated to observe the host culture); and (4) overall learning increased (the Indian students were motivated to learn about their new host society so they could acculturate). In summary, Reece and Palmgreen stated that the strength of a newcomer’s motivation to understand how their host country operates is an important mediating variable between the need for acculturation and media usage.

Johnson (1996) described how the uses and gratifications theory explores the relationship between television viewing and factors in acculturation. Johnson stated that viewers who actively select and identify with certain television genres like action dramas, talk shows, situation comedies, and soap operas, seem to enhance television’s usefulness in the acculturation process. Whereas most research on television outcomes is negative, Johnson’s research focused on the positive outcomes of television. He explained how viewers’ choice in specific media reinforces how they choose to socialize in their host country. According to Johnson, the “uses and gratifications theory provides solid concepts for exploring the relationship between television viewing and factors in acculturation” (p. 292).

In these studies, the uses and gratification approach provided insight into immigrants’ need for acculturation. This theory is particularly useful in understanding why the Asian Indians in this study watched American television after they first arrived in the U.S.

Asian Indians Migrating to the U.S.

In 1965, the Immigration and Nationality Act ended the quota system, making it much easier for Asian Indians to migrate to the U.S. But more importantly, a system

of selective preference categories was established, which included professional, skilled, and unskilled workers needed in the U.S. (Chandrasekhar, 1982). "By 1965 the United States was looking not just for scientists but also for medical personnel to fill an increased demand for doctors to staff the Medicare and Medicaid program recently legislated by Congress" (Prashad, 2000, p. 75).

"The influx of Indian immigrants to America occurred at a time when the opportunity structures existing within the American society could absorb immigrant skills and professional experiences" (Dasgupta, 1989, p. 189). As a result, Dasgupta points out, when Indian immigrants migrated to the U.S., they were able to attain middle-class status almost immediately in the U.S. because their skills afforded them professional jobs. This requirement from the 1965 Immigration Act also gave a chance for many upper middle-class Indian professionals to move to the U.S. and "achieve professional and intellectual growth, to enjoy better economic opportunities ... [and] to avoid job problems in India" (p. 189).

In 1965, 581 immigrants from India immigrated to the U.S. By 1966, that number increased to 2,459 and by 1969 to 5,963 (Helweg & Helweg, 1990). "The 1970 U.S. census recorded 51,000 foreign-born and 25,000 native-born Americans of East Indian descent" in the U.S. (p. 63). Of the Asian Indians who migrated to the U.S. between 1966 and 1977, 83% entered under the occupational category of professional and technical workers. This calculates to roughly 20,000 scientists with doctorate degrees, 40,000 engineers, and 25,000 doctors (Leonard-Spark & Saran, 1980; Liu, 1992). Today the population of the U.S. is approximately 300 million. More than 10 million people are considered Asian, and about 2.3 million classify themselves as Asian Indian (Joseph, 2006).

Education, Income, and Buying Power of Asian Indians

Seventy-five percent of Asian Indians living in the U.S. are in the workforce, and over 50% of Asian Indian women hold at least a master's degree (Jhamb, 2005). According to the U.S. Census (2007), Asian Indians are better educated and more affluent than average Americans. The average family income of an Asian Indian family in the U.S. was nearly \$70,000 in 2004, compared with nearly \$50,000 for all Americans. At least 68% of Asian Indians hold a bachelor's degree compared with 27% of all Americans (U.S. Census, 2007). In addition, "Indian American" women are the most educated group of women in the U.S. because they go to graduate school (Melwani, 2003). Furthermore, 69% of all Asian Indians are married in the U.S. (U.S. Census, 2007).

Given this average family income for Asian Indians, their buying power is notable and growing. The buying power for all Asians (Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indian, Filipino, and others) in the U.S. climbed to \$269 billion in 2000 and reached \$427 billion in 2006 (Humphreys, 2006). It is estimated that Asian Indians alone in the U.S. have a total estimated buying power of \$20 billion (Ameredia, 2007).

Asian Indians in the Washington, DC Metro Area

The Washington Metro area has always drawn immigrants of different ethnic backgrounds, but more so since the local economic boom of 2001. One out of every five people in the Washington Metro area is an immigrant, with a total immigrant population of one million. These immigrants include highly skilled workers from India and China (Kang, 2006b). The Asian Indian population in the area has increased by 50% since 2001.

There are about 107,000 Asian Indians in the Washington area, and 80% are immigrants, according to the 2005 Census Bureau figures (Kang, 2006a). Many members of the Indian community say there are more Asian Indians living here because the census figures do not reflect the illegal immigrants (Kang, 2006a). Since 1996, immigrants from India have been settling in the Washington Metro area faster than any other ethnic group, except Salvadorans (Kang, 2006a). Many Asian Indians came to work in the growing high-tech sector in Northern Virginia. There are also more than 8,300 Indian-owned businesses in the Washington Metro area (Kang, 2006a). About 8 in 10 Asian Indians have college degrees, and 7 in 10 are in professional and managerial jobs.

In the Washington Metro area, the Asian Indian population has the highest median income of any group at \$87,369 (Kang, 2006b). That includes whites, other Asians and Hispanics. This figure also includes both immigrants and native-born members of various ethnic groups. The median household income for the region was \$74,708 in 2005 (Kang, 2006b).

Participants and Methods

Oral history interviews test the memory of how events happened. "Such research is a test of other people, of the accuracy of their memories, of their ability to assess their own lives realistically, and of their ability to profit from experience" (Hoopes, 1979, p. 5). For example, the Asian Indian cohort functioned as primary sources, because they are the generation studied, and they helped establish how media use changed as technology changed over time.

Oral historians must deal with the fact that the human memory is not perfect. "All historical documents, including both oral and written, reflect the particular subjective minds of their creators" (Hoopes, 1979, p. 15). Although written documents are less distorted by memory and considered a better source of facts by some historians, oral history gives a "feel" for the facts provided by the interviewee (p. 15).

I conducted the oral histories as standardized open-ended interviews for the cohort of Asian Indians. All the interviewees were asked the same questions. At times I found it necessary to combine the standardized open-ended approach with a conversational strategy. The questions covered the early stages of their life in the U.S. followed by a series of media-related questions. For example, they were asked about their American television-viewing habits, movie-renting habits, images of India on U.S. television, and their connection to their culture.

For this study I conducted oral history interviews with Asian Indians from the Washington Metro area who migrated to the U.S. between 1960 and 1972. By using the same generation from the Washington Metro area, I gained access to a cohort of individuals who had the same experience in one area of the country. Ten couples were selected for this study through snowball sampling.

The highest educational degree within this cohort was a medical degree, eight people had their master's degree, and the remaining 11 all had their bachelor's degree. All of the participants are of the Hindu religion, and they speak a combination of Punjabi, Hindi, and English at home. However, some of the participants are originally from South India and, therefore, speak a combination of Telegu and English at home. None of the households speak only English at home. The average age of participants was 65.

Only four people arrived before 1965; the rest (16 participants) arrived in the U.S. after 1965. Three couples have a family income from \$100,000 to \$200,000 per year. The remaining seven couples earn well over \$200,000 per year. Eleven of the participants are still gainfully employed, four are retired, and five women are homemakers. Their occupations include real estate, medical physicist, esthetician, doctor, restaurant owner, and six are civil or mechanical engineers. Three couples have three adult children each; the remaining seven couples have two adult children each. The couples reside in McLean, VA, Potomac, MD, Rockville, MD, Glenn Dale, MD, Darnestown, MD, or Springfield, VA, some of the wealthiest suburbs in the Washington Metro region.

Data from 10 couples were used in this study because I discovered patterns in the participants' answers that appeared to be themes for analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Furthermore, by discovering similar findings in the answers, I reached a level of confidence for analysis in the sample size of the data collection (Babbie, 2007). The process of writing the results and discussion for this study was also part of the analysis. For me to discover findings in the data, I analyzed the quotes against the concepts of enculturation and acculturation and the literature review. This process is called *deductive analysis* (Patton, 2002, p. 453). For example, many of the participants talked about how watching American television helped them improve their American English, because their English reflected the British style that was taught to them in India. Learning to speak American English by watching American television is an example of acculturation. As the participants moved to the U.S. they were compelled to learn a new cultural system, that is, learn to speak American English. This process of new learning is acculturation (Kim, 2005). This process is also an example of cross-cultural adaptation, where individuals learn new cultural elements (Kim, 2002). Each participant was given a pseudonym to maintain anonymity.

Results and Discussion

This section is divided into two parts. The first part discusses acculturation, which means I discuss how the Asian Indians in this study used television to learn about the American culture. The second part discusses enculturation, which means I present

findings that show how these Asian Indians learned the act of watching television and became socialized into a certain standard of television programming.

Acculturation

Learning the American culture

This cohort was asked why they watched the programs they named, and the general response was that American programs helped them understand how Americans act and think. Some of the participants shared personal stories about their experiences as they watched American television. Vivek Bhatt, a 67-year-old mechanical engineer, talked about how watching certain American sports programs, such as football games, helped him establish a rapport with his colleagues in the workplace:

When you work in a company that has 30-40-50 people, everybody talks about sports. Coming from India, and not really knowing the American football, you seem to be left out of the conversations. I happen to have a color television and really didn't know anything about the American football. The guy who lived next door to us, who was American and loved football, he knew that I had a color television. He would come home to watch football with me, and teach me the American football. [This] was very important for me to go back to the office, because then I can say "OK, I did see the Redskin game yesterday, I see who the quarterback is," and then not only did I understand the football, but I became the biggest fan of the American football.

Vikas Dutta, a 70-year-old doctor, also talked about how sports programs have helped him feel like he belonged in the workplace:

It has worked. When you go to work, you know, you meet with people at all levels and the first thing is, you know, to create a rapport with somebody, your secretaries, your people at different levels, or even professionals. You just can't talk about work. People, who are helpers, the secretaries etc., if you talk to them and say hey, you know, did you like the game last night, this is what happened, this and that, you know even that creates more of confidence in each other and brings people closer. I think, you know, working in the environment you work with, you know, we cannot totally ignore the American norms and American culture.

Sports programs helped Bhatt and Dutta become acculturated to the U.S. In this study, Bhatt and Dutta, as well as other participants, wanted to learn how to fit in at work. They started watching sports programs so they would have something to talk about in the workplace. These individuals thought that if they could carry on a conversation with their work colleagues about something in the American culture, they would eventually become accepted in the workplace. Dutta, specifically, seems to want to be recognized as a peer within the workplace.

By watching American sports programs, these Asian Indians learned how to act in American culture. This process of watching television to learn how to act in American culture is an example of the need for acculturation. Reece and Palmgreen (2000) studied the same phenomenon among Asian Indian graduate students in the U.S. and saw their need for acculturation as one of the motives for media use. The authors found that Asian Indian students used television to learn about their host culture and

new host society, so they could acculturate to the U.S. According to Reece and Palmgreen, the uses and gratifications approach in their study suggested that media consumers were active and goal-oriented television users, meaning, the "audience actively selects media messages, seeking ways to satisfy particular needs and desires" (p. 810). In this study, these Asian Indians were actively watching sports programs to fulfill their goal—"fitting in" at the workplace.

This process of wanting to watch American television was also an example of one of Berry's acculturation indicators. Berry (1990) described individuals who were listening to the radio, watching television, or reading newspapers and magazines as those who wanted to learn about their new culture in their new host environment.

Some participants, who were not in the workplace, discussed how television taught them how to act in American culture. Uma Bhatt, a 60-year-old homemaker, said she learned through American television how to act when she visited an American's home:

I picked up a lot of ideas. You know how you go to somebody's house, [and] they say, you want a drink, if you say "no," it's "no." I picked up few things, simple things, from [television]. You know because in India, we do a lot of [insisting], we say "no, no, you have to take it and so on." But over here, [if] person need, they can ask for [it], but you do offer once. If they don't want, it's OK. So I picked up a few things.

Bhatt explained how when a guest visits a friend's home in India, it was understood that the guest will not be allowed to leave without having something to drink and eat. This process of cajoling is standard in Indian culture; when guests visit a home in India, they are treated with the highest regard. In fact, there is an expression, "guests are like gods," which translates to receiving a blessing when a visitor comes to the home. Hence, it is normal to offer food and drink to guests. But in return, guests usually respond by saying "no thank you," which really means "yes." This process of the guest saying "no," and the host not taking "no" for an answer, goes on for several minutes before the guest finally accepts the meal and/or drink. However, in American culture that type of exchange does not take place. When guests visit an American home, if they are offered a meal or drink, and they respond with "no, thank you," that is usually the final answer and offer.

Bhatt's description is an example of a stranger in the integration mode of the acculturation process. The integration mode implies that the stranger wants to maintain his or her own cultural integrity as well as maintain relations with other group members. This course is possible when the dominant culture is open and accepting of the acculturating groups (Berry, 1990).

Bhatt decided that she would offer a meal or drink once, but if the visitor did not want anything, she would not keep insisting. She learned through watching American television that in the U.S. it is not necessary to keep insisting on giving a visitor a meal or drink. As a result, Bhatt learned to maintain her own cultural integrity but also adopted the norms of her new host society. Watching American television gave Bhatt an example of how to act in an American's home.

Bhatt's example is also similar to Johnson's (1996) research on how Hispanic women chose to socialize in their host country. Johnson found that viewers who

actively select and identify with certain television genres such as action dramas, talk shows, comedies, and soap operas enhanced how television became a tool in the acculturation process. Therefore, Johnson suggested that the uses and gratifications theory provided greater understanding for the relationship between television viewing and the acculturation process.

Language

The participants in this study learned English in India, but they learned the British form of English with a different accent. Balraj Das, a 64-year-old civil engineer said that watching American television helped him improve his English: "I think it [television] helped me to learn to speak better English." Balraj's wife, Bandita, a 59-year-old homemaker with a master's degree from India, also found American television helpful in improving her English:

I enjoyed basically the shows. Like I say I thoroughly enjoyed watching *I Love Lucy*. You know, I must have watched that repeatedly you know 3, 2-3 times, you know in the beginning. I mean there was a little bit in the beginning, little bit difficulty understanding, because the dialogue, I mean their way of speaking was different than we grew up in India, you know. That's more British. And this accent is different, but once, I mean, you know [we adjusted]. Yeah, adjusted and then I guess watching television, I mean with that, you know, even it makes it easier to understand the language better, you know. Otherwise it would have taken much longer because, like I say, I haven't worked.

In this example, Das explained how she grew up speaking British English, which had a different accent. By watching American television, Das learned to understand American English. As a result, Das used television to help her learn how to speak American English as well. From a uses and gratifications theoretical perspective Das actively watched American television to help her improve her English, thus satisfying her need to acculturate.

This cohort already knew English before moving to the U.S. They studied English in India, but they did not have an opportunity to use it. At that time, English was rarely spoken in India because Hindi was still the language of daily life. Because they already had a base knowledge of the English language, these individuals demonstrated how they wanted to acculturate by watching television to improve their English and, thus, use it in their daily life. Berry (1990) described individuals' knowledge or use of the host language in their new culture as another example of an acculturation indicator. Berry (1990) described this process of acculturation as continuous first-hand contact between cultures. In this example, individuals had prior knowledge of English and tried to use English in their new culture.

Enculturation

Like the Bhattas, as Das and Dutta watched American television to become acculturated in the U.S., they were also becoming enculturated into U.S. television.

Hence, they all learned the act of watching television. Herskovits (1955) described how the enculturation process starts during an individual's childhood when he or she becomes conditioned to fundamental habits, such as eating, sleeping, speaking, and personal hygiene. Herskovits described how, with adults, the enculturation process functioned at a more conscious level, where individuals learned accepted behavior in society. This process of learning led individuals to social stability and cultural continuity within their culture. These Asian Indians learned how to watch television for the first time in the U.S. Essentially, they were learning the act of watching television as it is part of the American culture.

But it wasn't just the act of watching television that became part of their enculturation process. Television has been suggested as a medium of enculturation with far-reaching effects associated with its form, content, and use over time. Gerbner, Gross, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, and Signorielli (1978) suggested television's major cultural function was to stabilize social patterns and to cultivate resistance to change. They believed television's mass-produced messages cultivated a shared concept of reality. The mass-produced messages in which Gerbner and others refer to were produced through television news, drama, and advertising.

The Soap Opera

Some of the participants discussed how they watched soap operas after arriving from India. The women in particular did not work because, essentially, they were homemakers. Their daily menu of shows included *General Hospital* (Hursley & Hursley, 1963–), *The Young and the Restless* (Bell & Rauch, 1973–), and *The Guiding Light* (Phillips, 1952–2009), as stated above. As a result, not only were they becoming enculturated into watching American television, but they were also becoming cultivated into watching a certain genre of television with its customary story lines and values.

Vandana Dutta, a 62-year-old restaurant owner, explains how she used to watch soap operas when she first arrived in the U.S., "You know, they were very different from India, you know. They were very open and they were, they were falling in love very easily, which I never saw that. It was very interesting, very interesting, different, very different."

Dutta described how she had never seen two people fall in love so openly on screen before. The soap operas in the U.S. are much more explicitly sexual, and Dutta had never seen that. Nearly everyone of Dutta's generation had an arranged marriage, which meant they did not date or fall in love before marriage. For this cohort to see two people showing affection as it is shown on American soaps or to see affection displayed in public was not something they were used to. Usually their parents arranged their marriage. Therefore, they were not exposed to couples falling in love on screen and expressing their emotions so openly. As a result, when they started watching American soap operas, not only were they learning to watch American soap operas for the first time, they were being exposed to open sexual expression on screen for the first time. That's not to say these were normative behaviors of American

culture, but clearly a sharp contrast from anything they would have seen in Indian cinema.

Bandita Das described her television watching experience:

During daytime, I would watch my soaps you know. *The Young and the Restless* and then *The Guiding Light* I remember you know. Maybe one or two other shows you know which I don't remember, the names are not coming to me, you know. But now I basically I don't [watch them]. I just, I don't have any desire to [watch] either, you know.

Suneil Advani, a 67-year-old retired civil engineer, used to watch soap operas when he first came to the U.S.:

Before the Indian channel came, we used to watch all kind of [shows] you know, *As The World Turns*, *General Hospital*, *Three's Company*, and so on and so forth. When I was [a bachelor] for six to seven years, you know, I come home, and my hobby was to just watch TV, just sit. I never go outside and stuff like that. I was not very extroverted and I used to watch. . . . I started teaching in 1965 at Howard University and I [would] come home at noon time after classes and watch soap operas.

In these examples, Dutta, Das, and Advani not only became enculturated into the act of watching television, but they became enculturated into a certain genre of television—American soap operas. In their enculturation process, they learned how Americans are more open with their sexual expression on television. They also learned the act of watching television. It's also important to note that the women interviewed all came with their husbands to the U.S. Therefore, they were not working nor did most of them have their children when they arrived in the U.S. These women might have relied on television because of the social isolation they faced. Das also stated how she no longer had any desire to watch American soaps as she did when she first moved to the U.S., which suggests she no longer feels socially isolated. Advani discussed how he watched soaps because he never went out other than for teaching purposes, which suggests that soaps or American television helped him from feeling lonely when he was not working.

Watching soap operas is unique compared to watching other kinds of television. Soap operas have a certain quality; they function as serial narratives. "A serial narrative is a story told through a series of individual, narratively linked installments" (Allen, 1997, p. 1514). With serial television, the viewers' understanding of and pleasure in each show has to do with their knowledge of what happened in previous episodes. "Furthermore, each serial episode always leaves narrative loose ends for the next episode to take up" (p. 1514). With serial narratives, the viewer's relationship with the characters is also different from episodic television. In episodes, characters cannot undergo changes and seldom refer to events from previous episodes. However, serial characters do change across episodes; they age and even die. Some have both histories and memories (Allen, 1997).

Soap operas are of two basic narrative types: *open* soap operas and *closed* soap operas. The open soap opera has no end point in its narrative. The closed soap opera eventually does end. Examples of the open soap opera in the U.S. include *General*

Hospital (Hursley & Hursley, 1963–), *All My Children* (Carruthers, 1970–), and *The Guiding Light* (Phillips, 1952–2009). The closed soap opera is more common internationally, where it dominates primetime programming in Latin America, India, Great Britain, Australia, and other countries. The closed soap operas are broadcast nightly over three or four months. The design and reception of the closed soap opera make it fundamentally different from the open soap opera (Allen, 1997).

The soap opera is one of the most complex genres of television. Part of the enjoyment by the viewers is dependent upon their consistent knowledge about the characters and story line. As a result, some of the participants who spoke about watching American soap operas after moving to the U.S. became enculturated into this genre of television. Their process of enculturation stemmed from watching the characters evolve and change, and maintaining knowledge of what happened to the story line in previous episodes. This particular cohort also may have become interested in watching soap operas because of the distinct expression of romantic love on the screen.

By watching these American soap operas, Dutta, Das, and Advani also developed an understanding of serial programming on American television. While this cohort was not exposed to serial television programs in India, they may have been acquainted with listening to serials on Indian radio prior to coming to the U.S. These viewers began to understand how the characters and story lines change and develop across episodes. The viewers never watched television before coming to the U.S., let alone serial television. Therefore, they became enculturated into how American soap operas on television develop their story lines and characters.

Family Programming

Bandita Das and others described how they enjoyed watching family-oriented programs:

Price is Right. Yes, yes, yes, in the beginning [I watched] that. I just, again and again, I watched *I Love Lucy*. I really liked that show and this, you know, *Price is Right* and then *Father Knows Best*, you know. I mean at that time eventually I mean I just started watching more and more, you know.

Jagdish Jain, a 71-year-old real-estate agent, was asked what kind of U.S. television he currently watches, and he said he watches old episodes of the *Lucy* show and *Gunsmoke* (MacDonnell & Meston, 1955–1975; on *TV Land*) because he used to watch these programs when he first started watching television. “On U.S. television some old, old, you know, these episodes. Yeah like, for example, *Gunsmoke*, *I Love Lucy*, and this kind of old stuff, 30-year-old [programs].”

Nandita Nandi, a 59-year-old administrative professional, talked about why she enjoyed watching the *I Love Lucy* (Oppenheimer et al., 1951–1960) show:

We use to watch those days like what, like *Lucy*, *I Love Lucy*, those kind of things. Like [it was] a family thing, we use eat dinner . . . of course those days TV was also

good. These days it's kind up to [the parents]. You know in those days there were family shows.

Sandya Gopal, a 61-year-old esthetician, describes watching both *I Love Lucy* and the soaps: "I remember watching 'Lucy' and *I Love Lucy* and few shows and all, you know, all that, you know. And I started to watch soap operas to some extent."

By watching these family-oriented programs, these Asian Indians became enculturated into this genre of American television. These Asian Indians were drawn to this type of family-oriented programming because they came from a family-oriented background. Furthermore, they were learning how to live as a nuclear family. When they left India, most of them were part of an extended family living situation. When they came to the U.S., they started to build their nuclear family. By watching programs like *I Love Lucy* (Oppenheimer et al., 1951–1960) or *Father Knows Best* (James, 1954–1960), they were being exposed to the American concept of the nuclear family.

This cohort was also exposed to situation comedies. Situation comedies on mass-market television in the 1950s and 1960s characterized family life (Taylor, 1989). Situation comedies such as *Father Knows Best* (James, 1954–1960) and *Leave it to Beaver* (Connelly & Mosher, 1957–1963) portrayed a homogenous and idealized picture of American family life (Baran & Davis, 2006). Even the *I Love Lucy* show depicted the family life of Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz in the premise of a situation comedy (Anderson, 1997).

These comedies had qualities such as "warmth, familial relationships, moral growth, and audience inclusiveness" (Leibman, 1997, p. 404). Characters went through learning experiences in each episode. The humor stemmed from the audience's knowledge of the characters and their relationships with one another. Furthermore, audience members problem-solved along with the characters (Leibman, 1997).

The comedies were usually in a home setting with the stereotypical nuclear family. Programs like *Father Knows Best* had exaggerated acting styles and crises. They relied upon coincidence in problem-solving, as well as issues such as generational conflict in the themes of the shows (Leibman, 1997). With *Leave it to Beaver*, the show usually centered around the main character, "Beaver," and his dilemmas. With the advice of his elders, the child learned moral lessons (Leibman, 1997). In the *I Love Lucy* show, each episode tried to teach Lucy not to question the social order (Anderson, 1997).

Nevertheless, Asian Indians watched these television programs and became accustomed to this portrayal of American family life. Furthermore, Das, Jain, Nandi, and Gopal were attracted to these programs because they demonstrated a sense of family, which is a big part of the Indian culture (Leonard, 1997). These couples moved to the U.S. from large extended families in India. For them, being exposed to some sense of family reminded them of family in India. While the dynamics may not have been exactly the same, they appreciated being exposed to some of the themes, like generational conflicts or moral lessons. These shows might have also reinforced patriarchal familial formations within Asian Indian communities.

Sports

As stated earlier, some participants watched American sports programs to fit in at the workplace. As a result, watching sports helped them to become acculturated into the American culture. Sports programming on television also offered Asian Indians ways to become enculturated into another genre of television. Bhatt, a mechanical engineer, talked about how watching sports, such as football games, helped him build relations with his workplace colleagues. He used to watch Redskin football games and then talked about the highlights of the games at the office the next day. But, eventually, watching football was no longer a chore to adapt into their work environment. They eventually watched football because they enjoyed the game. Bhatt talked about how he started going to the home games for the Redskins as well. Bhatt's love for football is an example of how he became enculturated into sports in American culture.

Dutta, a doctor, also talked about how watching football helped him in his work environment. He described how watching sports helped him converse with members of his staff about something besides work. He said being able to talk about football or other nonwork-related items brought him closer to his staff. He also believed that it showed his staff that he was not ignoring one of the norms of American culture.

Both Bhatt and Dutta watched football as a way of learning about the American culture, but at the same time they became enculturated into American sports. Television functioned as the medium in this enculturation process, which helped Bhatt and Dutta appreciate an aspect of American culture—football.

Watching sports is different from watching other kinds of television. With sports, viewers identify with their team, their favorite players, their college, and other allegiances. This involved process has fans become familiar with players and their teams, so they start following them and learning about them. Baran, a media scholar, described the process:

Fans follow players as well as teams and the camera is well versed in the close-up. Roone Arledge of ABC called this "sports as soap opera." Baseball gives us the tight shot of the pitcher's anxiety as he holds the runners on first and third or zooms in on the concentration in the basketball player's eyes as he shoots two from the charity stripe with the game on the line. (1997, p. 1557)

Overall, television as a medium has allowed its fans to stay enculturated into sports. There are certain characteristics of various sports that make them better for television, which results in large viewing audiences. As Baran suggested, "Sports is the only programming that has successfully attracted large audiences on a weekend day. This creation of regularized audience behavior enables the medium [television] to maintain its role as a familiar aspect of 'everyday life'" (p. 1556). Furthermore, Baran reminds us that, unlike soap operas and comedies, sports were a part of American culture before television existed, and sports are still played for and in front of paying customers. Some sports, like major league baseball, were around long before radio was even invented and developed apart from television.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, these Asian Indians were asked why they watched American programs after they first moved to the U.S. Their general response was that some American programs helped them understand how Americans act and think. At least two participants talked about how they watched football games to help them establish a rapport with their work colleagues. By watching sports programs, participants were becoming acculturated to U.S. culture, because they wanted to learn how to fit in at work. These individuals thought that by talking to their work colleagues about something in the American culture, they would eventually become accepted in the workplace. Not only does the viewer learn about American culture, but discussing football was a way to enhance access to status and location within the workplace and other institutions, especially for this group which had class privilege, but not social privilege.

Watching sports is just one example. Some homemakers said they watched American television just to learn how to act in American culture. Some participants discussed how watching television helped them improve their English. By watching American television, some individuals learned how to speak American English, which is another form of acculturation.

While learning how to fit in at the workplace and improving their English helped this cohort of Asian Indians in their adaptation process, there were other elements of American culture they could have learned from American television. For this immigrant group sports programs and the proper use of American English stood out as part of their understanding of how Americans act and think. They also watched soap operas and were exposed to how Americans are more sexually expressive on television. In addition, watching American television helped with how to act when visiting an American's home. These are just some examples, but television at that time did not have many programs on India or Indian culture. By having some exposure to their homeland in the media would have helped this cohort with their adaptation process. Furthermore, some of the basic needs for adaptation to the U.S. are often not portrayed on television even today, such as how to buy a home, or how to open a checking account. As a result immigrants miss other aspects of adjusting to American culture by not being exposed to the "how to's" on American television.

Watching American television also helped these participants become enculturated to American television. These individuals learned how to watch television for the first time in the U.S., specifically, the act of watching television as it is part of the American culture. These Asian Indians developed the skill of watching television after moving to the U.S. For example, the discussion on the soap operas described how these Asian Indians were being exposed to affection displayed on television, while they were learning the act of watching television—becoming enculturated into American television.

In this study I also learned how the participants were also active media users when they first moved to the U.S. By applying the uses and gratifications theoretical perspective, I gained insight into how this cohort watched American television to

learn how to act more "American." Some members of this cohort actively watched American television to fulfill their need to acculturate. They watched sports programs so they could "fit in" at the workplace. They watched other programs to learn how to act in American culture, like an American home. Some participants discussed watching American television to improve their English, both in speaking and understanding.

Clearly, the study creates linkage between the uses and gratifications theoretical perspective and the need for acculturation. In this need for acculturation, media was used as an agent to learn about the host country. In this study, the audience (Asian Indians) actively selected American television to satisfy their particular need to understand the American culture. The need for acculturation is what motivated these Asian Indians to watch American television in the first place. For example, not offering food multiple times is a good example of culturally specific social communication and etiquette.

The contribution of this research to the integrative communication theory brings greater understanding to the process of adaptation. By preparing to adapt to a new society, these Asian Indians were making an effort to acculturate and reach "integration" mode (Berry, 1990). They wanted to maintain their own Indian cultural integrity, but also develop relations with other group members. However, this cohort also showed signs of the separation mode (Berry, 1990). They preferred to socialize among themselves rather than the dominant culture. In fact, they used media, that is, American television, to help them integrate in the workplace, which is why this study can be linked to the uses and gratifications theoretical perspective. This cohort was definitely not interested in assimilating, that is, losing their original cultural identity and only forming relations with members of the dominant culture (Berry, 1990). This cohort was also not interested in being marginalized, that is, neither maintaining their cultural identity nor forming relations with other group members in the society (Berry, 1991).

Also, when this group arrived in the U.S. they did not have the socioeconomic status that they have today, but they did have their education and their ties to their extended family. This strong sense of cultural identity suggested these Asian Indians wanted to be with other Asian Indians who came from the same cultural and educational upbringing. Therefore, there was a sense of longing to be with people who came from the same host country and were also going through the same adaptation process. Therefore, the responses in this study reflect a need to acculturate. These Asian Indians were interested in holding onto their Indian identity, but they wanted to learn about American culture.

These Asian Indians functioned at both the group level and individual level of acculturation (Berry, 1990). Forming Indian associations in their new host country so all members of the Asian Indian community could come together and participate in cultural activities was an example of the group level of acculturation. At the individual level of acculturation, these Asian Indians' behavior and attitude changed as they saw the value of getting to know their work colleagues on a nonwork-related level.

Another contribution this research brought toward understanding the process of adaptation was the role of media technology at the newcomer's stage of acculturation. For these Asian Indians, they left their homeland when television was not available and resorted to television in the U.S. to learn about the American culture. These newcomers were also accepting of any media available to them as long as it helped them and eased their adaptation into their new host country.

Today, newcomers have a wide variety of media to choose from like the internet and satellite television, and much more as they acculturate to the U.S. But more importantly, Asian Indians who migrate to the U.S. today grow up watching television in India. Future studies will uncover how today's Asian Indians use media to acculturate to the U.S.

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