

Exploring Communication Competence and Psychological Health: A Study of Cross-cultural Adaptation among Young Japanese Immigrants in the U.S.

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Abstract

Relocation to a new cultural environment poses a great challenge to immigrants. Immigrant children are particularly vulnerable and often experience a sense of not belonging to any culture (e.g., Fry, 2007), which leads to intercultural conflicts between their co-ethnic group and the dominant society. Particularly, studies on Asian immigrant youth have been limited because of the “model minority” stereotype, which leads to the perception that Asian immigrants have few or no emotional or adaptive problems (Chiu & Ring, 1998). Using Y. Y. Kim’s (1988, 2001) Cross-cultural Adaptation Theory, the present study examines the communication experiences of young Japanese immigrants and their psychological adjustment in the United States. Numerical data was collected by a self-reported structured survey questionnaire from 71 young Japanese immigrants. As predicted, findings show that host communication competence, host interpersonal communication, and host mass media consumption are significantly related to the psychological adjustment of young Japanese immigrants.

Keywords: Asian Americans, Communication competence, Psychological health, Cross-cultural adaptation

1. Introduction

In the U.S., it is reported that more than one million immigrants enter the country each year (Pew Research Center, 2019). To successfully resettle in the new host cultural environment, immigrants need a certain level of cross-cultural adaptation. Relocation to a new cultural environment poses substantial (acculturative) stress, such as feeling a loss of sense of belonging (Kwon, 2018), feeling helpless, having less self-confidence (Torbiorn, 1982) and social withdrawal (e.g., Seto & Woodford, 2007).

Young immigrants, along with their parents, may experience normative stresses in the new country, such as anxiety, stress, loneliness, low self-esteem, poor concentration, nervousness, loss of appetite, sleep disturbance, feelings of inadequacy, depression, anger, tension, identity crisis, and poor physical health (Baptiste, 1993; Evans & Lee, 1998). Young immigrants are particularly vulnerable and often experience a sense of not belonging to any culture (e.g., Fry, 2007), which leads to intercultural conflicts between their co-ethnic group and the dominant society.

Previous studies on cross-cultural adaptation have been mostly focused on adult immigrant samples (e.g., Sam, 2000), and limited attention has been given to young children or adolescents of immigrant families. Particularly, studies on Asian immigrant youth have been limited because of the “model minority” stereotype. The most common perceptions of Asian Americans are that they are educationally successful, overrepresented in higher education, and generally a “successful or model minority” (Kiang et al., 2016; Nozaki, 2000). Furthermore, coupled with typical stereotypes of Asian Americans as reserved, obedient, and not outspoken about problems or conflict, the Asian American issue gains less attention because it is often believed that there is no need to address their educational needs or issues (e.g., Ong, 2000) and that Asian immigrants have few or no emotional or adaptive problems (Chiu & Ring, 1998).

However, despite the limited nature of research on Asian American students, studies reveal that the young Asian immigrant population experiences serious developmental, social, and emotional difficulties (Lee, 1996; Sue, Sue, Sue, & Takeuchi, 1995).

In addition, Asian American students often face discrimination and unequal treatment in educational settings (Teranishi, 2002), which can lead to low self-esteem and depressive symptoms (Kiang et al., 2016). The shooting incident at Virginia Tech brought temporary attention to Asian American youth, but the shooter was seen by many as an exception in a normally “model” minority. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore communication competence and cross-cultural adaptation among young Japanese immigrants in the United States. The Japanese immigrants were chosen for the present study because the investigator shares the same Asian ethnic origin (i.e., Japanese) and is interested in examining the communication experiences and cultural adjustment processes among Japanese immigrant youth.

Specifically, the present study aims at investigating (1) the relationships between their host/ethnic communication patterns and their psychological adjustment, (2) the relationship between their host/ethnic interpersonal communication and their psychological adjustment, and (3) the relationship between their host/ethnic mass communication and their psychological adjustment.

2. Theory and Hypotheses

Grounded in an open systems perspective, Kim’s (2001) Integrative Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation brings together and consolidates several previously separate and divergent approaches into a comprehensive conceptual frame to explain cross-cultural adaptation phenomena. By placing adaptation at the intersection of the person and the environment, Kim defines cross-cultural adaptation as “the entirety of the phenomenon of individuals who, upon relocating to an unfamiliar sociocultural environment, strive to establish and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship with the environment” (Kim, 2001, p.31).

Kim’s theory offers a multidimensional structural model (See Figure 1) to address the question: ‘Why do some settlers adapt faster than others?’ or ‘Given the same length of time, why do some settlers attain a higher level of adaptation?’ The structural model identifies key factors that may facilitate or impede the adaptation process in a culturally different environment. Emphasizing the centrality of communication as the core of cross-cultural adaptation, the theory posits that the individual adapts to the host environment through various communication activities, ranging from intrapersonal (or personal) to social (interpersonal/mass communication), which are identified as the dimension of personal communication, or *host communication competence* (Dimension 1) and *host social communication* (Dimension 2).

Kim (2001) describes *host communication competence* as the overall capacity of the stranger to decode and encode information in accordance with the host communication system. It consists of the cognitive, affective, and operational (or behavioral) capabilities of an individual, which is deemed as the very engine that makes it possible for an individual to move forward along the adaptive path. *Host communication competence* is inseparably linked with *host social communication* (Dimension 2), which is the degree of engagement in the host social communication system through interpersonal and mass communication activities of the host environment. *Ethnic social communication* (Dimension 3) involves interpersonal and mass communication with coethnics in the host society. There are three key conditions to the *host environment* (Dimension 4): *host receptivity*, *host conformity pressure*, and *ethnic group strength*. The theory also identifies the individual’s *predisposition* (Dimension 5), comprised of three key characteristics prior to their resettlement in the host society: *preparedness* for the new environment, *ethnic proximity* (or distance), and *adaptive personality*.

The theory explains that these five dimensions of factors influence one another and, together, they facilitate or impede *intercultural transformation* (Dimension 6), the overall adaptive change taking place within individuals over time. The three key facets of the overall adaptive change taking place in individuals over time: increased *functional fitness*, *psychological health*, and *intercultural identity*.

In the structural model, the theoretical relationships among key constructs are presented in theorems. Particularly, as the core of the adaptation process, the predictive relationship among host communication competence, social communication (i.e., interpersonal/mass communication), and psychological health is formalized in three of Y. Y. Kim’s 21 theorems: “The greater the host communication competence, the greater the intercultural transformation” (functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity) (Theorem 3) (Y.Y. Kim, 2001, p.91); “The greater the host interpersonal and mass communication, the greater the intercultural transformation” (functional fitness, psychological health, and intercultural identity) (Theorem 5) (Y.Y. Kim, 2001, p. 91); “The greater the ethnic interpersonal and mass communication, the lesser the intercultural transformation (Theorem 6) (Y. Y. Kim, 2001, p. 91).

To test the theoretical linkages among the theorem constructs involving host communication competence, host/ethnic interpersonal and mass communication, and psychological health, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: The greater the degree of young immigrants' self-reported host communication competence, the less likely they will be to display psychological problems.

H2: The greater the degree of young immigrants' self-reported host interpersonal communication, the less likely they will be to display psychological problems.

H3: The greater the degree of young immigrants' self-reported ethnic interpersonal communication, the more likely they will be to display psychological problems.

H4: The greater the degree of young immigrants' self-reported host mass media consumption, the less likely they will be to display psychological problems.

H5: The greater the degree of young immigrants' self-reported ethnic mass media consumption, the more likely they will be to display psychological problems.

In addition, one research question was posed in this study to explore the relationship between identity orientation and psychological health:

RQ1: How is the self-described cultural identity of young Japanese immigrants related to their psychological problems?

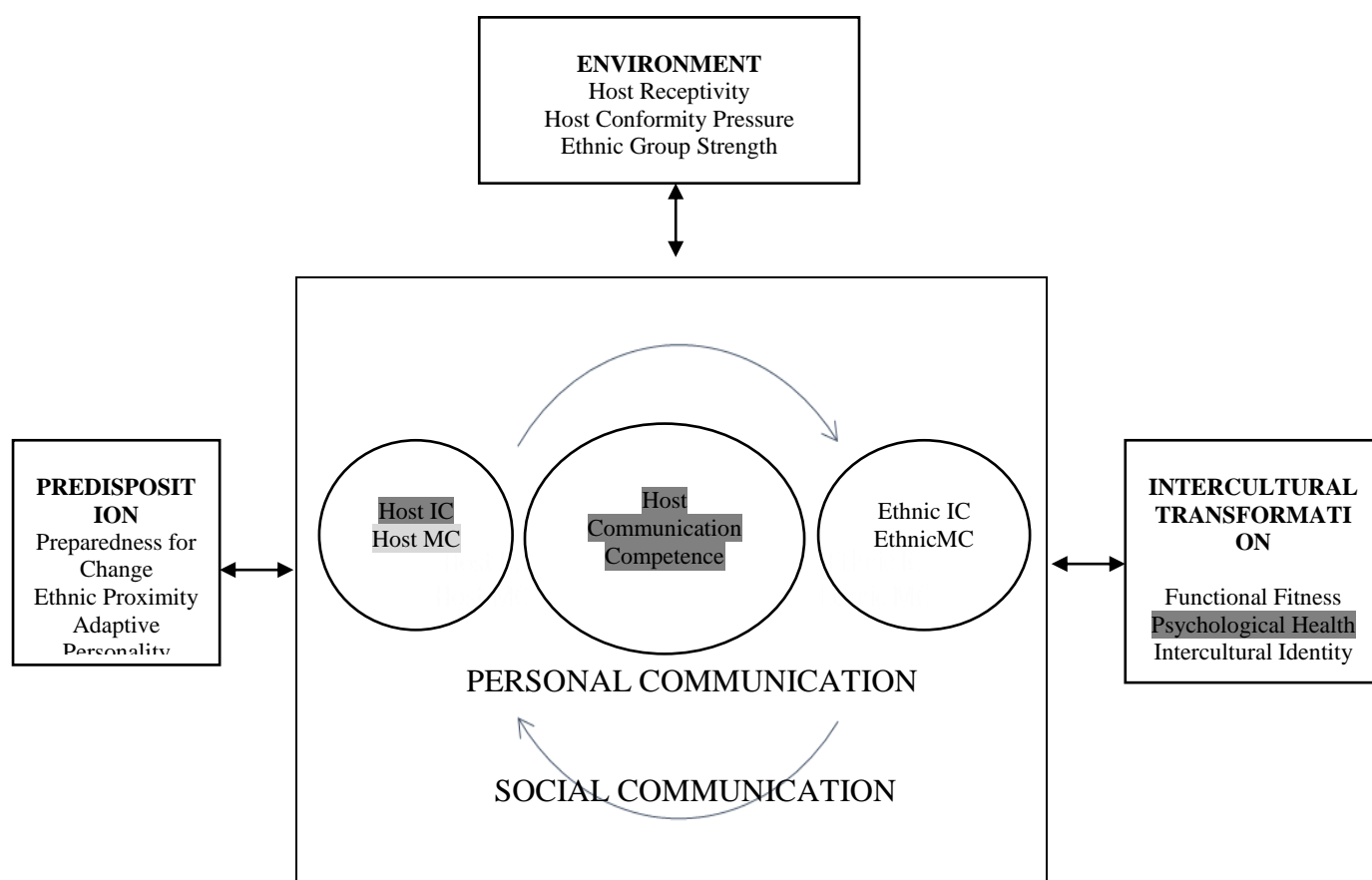


Figure 1. Y. Y. Kim's Structural Model: Factors Influencing Cross-Cultural Adaptation

(Source: Y. Y. Kim, 2001, p. 87).

3. Methods

To test the hypotheses, the present study employed a standardized and self-administered survey questionnaire to collect numeric data from young Japanese immigrants in the United States.

3.1 Participants

The participants were young Japanese American immigrants who were born in Japan and came to the United States at a relatively young age. Thus, second generation Japanese immigrants (who were born and raised in the U.S.) were not included in the present study. The minimum age of the participants was set at 12 years old, considering the level of maturity enough to respond to survey questions regarding their communication and

adaptation experiences. A total of 71 Japanese-American immigrants participated in the present study. Out of the 71 participants, 32.9 percent were male ($n = 23$) and 67.1 percent ($n = 47$) were female. At the time of the survey, thirteen respondents (19.4%) were attending middle school, eight (11.9%) were attending high school, forty-five (67.2%) were university students, and one (1.5%) were college graduates. The average age of the participants was 17.61 years, with a standard deviation of 3.14 years (range: 12-28 years). The average length of stay was 2.38 years, with a standard deviation of 3.27 years (range: 1 month- 13.3 years).

The average age when they first moved to the States was 15.60 years, with a standard deviation of 4.96 years (range: 1-20 years). Regarding the self-reported cultural identity, 82.9 percent of the respondents identified themselves as Japanese ($n = 58$), 10.0 percent as Japanese-American ($n = 7$), and 7.1 percent as other (not identified) ($n = 5$). Regarding the numbers of Asian students in their school population, the respondents reported: none ($n = 3$); 1-3 ($n = 23$); 4-6 ($n = 6$); 7-10 ($n = 38$). Regarding cultural diversity events in their school, forty-five respondents (65.2%) replied that their schools have cultural diversity events, while twenty-three (34.8%) replied there are no diversity events in their schools.

3.2 Data collection procedure

The survey questionnaire was originally written in English. This English questionnaire was translated into the Japanese language by a Japanese American bilingual interpreter. Then, following Brislin's (1980) suggestion, the Japanese language version of the questionnaire was *back-translated* into English again by the bilingual interpreter to ensure equivalence of meanings across the two language systems (i.e., English and Japanese). The questionnaire was pilot-tested by six Japanese Americans in the Japanese Supplementary School where the first author was a part-time teacher. Based on the pilot test results, the wording of the questionnaire was modified to make it more understandable to young immigrants.

Because of the difficulty of obtaining a reliable complete list of young Japanese immigrants in the area, this study employs convenience sampling combined with a snowball technique to recruit the participants. To recruit survey participants, the investigator contacted a Japanese school in the Middle Tennessee area where she was a teacher of Japanese language and history and asked for a list of young Japanese Americans. She also asked them to encourage students to participate in the study. In addition, the investigator contacted the language department of her university and asked for collaboration on this study. To collect the data, after getting consent from the participants, the investigator administered the questionnaire in person or emailed the survey links to the participants. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by the investigator in person or via the Qualtrics website. The respondents were then asked to suggest other potential participants for the survey. In all cases, the respondents were allowed to choose between an English version and a Japanese language version. Most of the respondents chose the Japanese version. It took 15-20 minutes to complete the survey. In total, 110 questionnaires were distributed and 72 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a 65.5% return rate. Out of 72 returned questionnaires, after bad data was excluded, 71 questionnaires were used for the present analysis.

3.3 The Measurements

The four theoretical constructs mentioned above were examined in the present analysis (i.e., host/ethnic communication competence, host/ethnic interpersonal communication, host/ethnic mass media usage, psychological adaptation) and were mostly operationalized into a five-point Likert-type scale. The reliability of the scale was determined using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Carmines & Zeller, 1979).

Host/Ethnic Communication Competence. The eight items measuring host and ethnic communication competence (four items for host communication competence and another four items for ethnic communication competence) were adapted from Lee & Chen's (2000) Host and Native Communication Competence (HNCC) scale. The answers were selected using a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = poor, 5 = excellent). The wording of the scales was slightly modified. The four items measuring host communication competence were: 1) "How well do you speak English?"; 2) "How well do you understand spoken English?"; 3) "How well do you read English?"; 4) "How well do you write in English?". The four items measuring ethnic communication competence concerned the same areas (i.e., speaking, understanding, reading, and writing) of Japanese language competence. A higher score suggests a greater level of host/ethnic communication competence. The reliability test yielded an alpha coefficient of .92 for host communication competence and .90 for ethnic communication competence, clearly indicating a high level of internal consistency.

Host/Ethnic Interpersonal Communication. Host and ethnic interpersonal communication was measured in terms of the young Japanese immigrants' interpersonal ties with host nationals and co-ethnics (i.e., other Japanese people). Adapted from the study of Lee and Chen (2000) and slightly modified, the respondents were requested to indicate the frequency of their contact and feelings about their relationships with host and co-ethnic groups. The answers used a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = never; 5 = always). A higher score indicates a higher level of

host/ethnic interpersonal communication, respectively. The three items measuring host interpersonal communication were: 1) “How often do you invite Caucasian friends to your house?”; 2) “How often are you invited to your Caucasian friends’ gatherings?”; 3) “How often do you actively join activities with your Caucasian friends?”. The three items measuring ethnic interpersonal communication were: 1) “How often do you invite Japanese friends to your house?”; 2) “How often are you invited to your Japanese friends’ houses?”; 3) “How often do you feel loneliness from others because of your race?”.

The composite scale yielded an alpha coefficient of .75 for host interpersonal communication, suggesting moderate but acceptable standards of internal consistency (cf. Nunnally, 1978). The reliability test for ethnic interpersonal communication yielded .45. Because of its low reliability, the investigator decided to treat following two items as independent ethnic interpersonal communication variable: 1) “How often do you invite Japanese friends to your house?” (EIC 1); 2) “How often are you invited to your Japanese friends’ houses?” (EIC2).

Host/Ethnic Mass Communication. Host and ethnic mass media consumption were assessed. The scale items were adapted from Kim’s immigration study (1977) and modified. The response categories mostly used four-point items scales (e.g., 1 = none; 4 = more than 3 hours). Items for host mass media consumption included: 1) “How much time do you usually spend using English-language websites daily?”; 2) “How much time do you spend listening to American music weekly?”; 3) “How much time do you usually spend reading English books/magazines/newspapers weekly?”; 4) “In a typical week, how much time do you spend watching American movies/TV/videos?”; 5) “In a typical week, how much time do you spend listening to American radio programs?”. Items for ethnic mass media consumption included: 1) “How much time do you usually spend using Japanese-language websites daily?”; 2) “How much time do you spend listening to Japanese music weekly?”; 3) “How much time do you usually spend reading Japanese books/magazines/newspapers weekly?”; 4) “In a typical week, how much time do you spend watching Japanese movies/TV programs/videos?”.

For host mass media consumption, after deleting item 3 (“How much time do you usually spend reading English books/magazines/newspapers weekly?”), the composite scale yielded an alpha coefficient of .63, indicating moderate but acceptable standards of internal consistency.

For ethnic mass media consumption, after deleting item3 (“How much time do you usually spend reading Japanese books/magazines/newspapers weekly?”), the composite scale yielded an alpha coefficient of .53, which is relatively low.

Psychological Health. Psychological health was assessed in terms of psychological problems in two ways, by measuring the degrees of reported “alienation” and “depression.” Alienation and depression were assessed using a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). To assess alienation, five items from the 10-item measure of Y.Y. Kim’s (1980) Indochinese refugees study were slightly modified: 1) “I feel stress in my life in the U.S.”; 2) “I feel uncomfortable and out of place because I could not adapt to American culture”; 3) “It is hard for me to understand the American life style”; 4) “I feel Americans do not like me”; 5) “I frequently have thoughts I want to leave America and go back to Japan.” A higher score implies a higher level of alienation, indicating a lower level of psychological health. After deleting item 4 (“I feel Americans do not like me”), the composite scale yielded an alpha of .82, indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency. Depression was assessed by five items adapted from the How-I-Feel questionnaire (Asher, Hymel, & Renshaw, 1984). Items were slightly modified: 1) “It is hard for me to make friends”; 2) “I have lots of friends”; 3) “It is hard to be liked by other kids”; 4) “I get along with my classmates”; 5) “I feel I am left out.” A higher score implies a higher level of depression, suggesting a lower level of psychological health. After deleting item 5 (“I feel I am left out.”), the composite scale yielded an alpha of .78, suggesting an acceptable level of internal consistency.

Background information. Information was collected like gender, age, length of stay in the U.S., age when they first moved to the U.S., education, percentage of Asian students in their school, cultural diversity events in the school (yes or no) and self-described cultural identity (“Select one of the following that best describes the way you feel about yourself”) with options of Japanese, Japanese-American, American, and Other. Finally, an open-ended question requested that respondents provide any comments about the survey.

4. Results

The results of the present analysis are presented based on statistical analysis of the structured questionnaire survey data testing the five research hypotheses.

4.1 Preliminary Analysis

This section reports the descriptions of the major research variables based on means and standard deviations. Host/ethnic communication competence shows a mean score higher than 3 M [*host communication competence*] = 3.24, SD = 1.02) (M [*ethnic communication competence*] = 4.7, SD = 0.53). For psychological problem, the mean score shows lower than 3 for alienation (M = 2.44, SD = 0.92) and for depression (M = 2.83, SD = 0.84).

The mean scores for mass media consumption (host/ethnic) and interpersonal communication (host/ethnic) show less than 3 (M [host mass media] = 2.30, SD = 0.62; M [ethnic mass media] = 2.31, SD = 0.55; M [host interpersonal communication] = 2.33, SD = 0.93; M [ethnic interpersonal communication-EIC1] = 2.60, SD = 1.21; M [ethnic interpersonal communication-EIC2] = 2.67, SD = 1.15) (Refer to the table 1).

Along with this general description, the effect of gender difference on the research variables was examined. A t -test analysis shows the statistically significant difference in the mean scores between male and female participants on host mass communication ($t(68) = -3.00$, $p = .028$) and ethnic communication competence ($t(68) = -1.970$, $p < .001$). This suggests that young female immigrants are more likely to use host mass media and have higher level of ethnic communication competence.

In addition, correlational analysis was conducted to examine relationships between the background variables and key research variables. Background variables include age, length of stay, the age when they moved to the U.S., education and number of Asian students in their school, and cultural diversity events in their school. Age was found to be negatively related to host communication competence ($r = -.24$, $p < .05$) while positively related to depression ($r = .28$, $p < .05$). It suggests that the older respondents were less likely to have host communication competence (e.g., English). It also shows that older respondents were more likely to have more depression because of acculturation stress. Length of stay was positively related to host mass communication ($r = .29$, $p < .05$) and host communication competence ($r = .70$, $p < .001$) while being negatively related to ethnic interpersonal communication (EIC 1: $r = -.29$, $p < .05$; EIC2: $r = -.35$, $p < .01$) and depression ($r = -.30$, $p < .05$). Clearly, the longer their stay in the U.S., the better their host communication competence and the more host mass media consumption they are likely to have. At the same time, the longer they stayed in the U.S., the more likely they were to broaden their friendship with host nationals as their ethnic networks became weaker. They were less likely to have psychological problems as they came to understand the host culture more. Age when they moved to the U.S. was positively related to ethnic interpersonal communication (EIC1: $r = .29$, $p < .05$; EIC2: $r = .28$, $p < .05$), while being negatively related to host communication competence ($r = -.50$, $p < .01$). Obviously, when they moved to the U.S. at an older age, they were less likely to be competent in the host language (although there might be individual differences) and were more likely to be willing to establish and maintain wide interpersonal ties with co-ethnics.

The number of Asian students in school was found to be positively related to ethnic interpersonal communication (EIC1: $r = .37$, $p < .01$; EIC2: $r = .39$, $p < .001$), while being negatively related to host communication competence ($r = -.45$, $p < .001$). Obviously, a more ethnically diverse school environment tends to give a greater interaction potential with co-ethnics or other minority students. In this environment, young immigrants are less likely to be motivated to enhance their host language. Cultural diversity events in school was negatively related to ethnic interpersonal communication (EIC1: $r = -.24$, $p < .05$; EIC2: $r = -.27$, $p < .05$), while being positively related to ethnic mass communication ($r = .26$, $p < .05$). It suggests that in the environment with less culturally diverse events, young immigrants tend to be less motivated to have encounters with co-ethnics. Instead of personal interaction, they are more prone to ethnic mass media.

4.2 Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1 posits that a greater level of young immigrants' host communication competence is related to fewer psychological problems. The results of the correlational analysis clearly support this hypothesis (Refer to the table 3). Host communication competence is negatively related to alienation, with $r = -.27$ ($p < .01$), and also negatively related to depression, with $r = -.37$ ($p < .01$). This suggests that the greater the level of host communication competence (i.e., host language competence), the fewer psychological problems are displayed among young immigrants.

Hypothesis 2 posits that a greater degree of young immigrants' host interpersonal communication is related to fewer psychological problems. The results of the correlational analysis also support this hypothesis. Host interpersonal communication is negatively related to alienation, with $r = -.24$ ($p < .01$), and also negatively related to depression, with $r = -.30$ ($p < .01$). This result suggests that with a higher level of interpersonal networks with host nationals (e.g., having and interacting with more American friends), young immigrants exhibit fewer psychological problems.

Hypothesis 3, predicting that a greater level of ethnic interpersonal communication is related to more psychological problems, was not supported. Correlations did not show a significant relationship between ethnic interpersonal ties and alienation (EIC 1: $r = -.18$, $p > .05$; EIC 2: $r = -.11$, $p > .05$). Additionally, there is no significant relationship with depression (EIC 1: $r = -.14$, $p > .05$; EIC 2: $r = .16$). This suggests that personal networks with co-ethnics (i.e., Japanese people) might not be an important factor leading to psychological problems among young Japanese immigrants.

Hypothesis 4 posits that a greater degree of young immigrants' host mass media consumption is related to fewer psychological problems. This hypothesis was supported. Correlational analysis shows that host mass media consumption is significantly related to alienation ($r = -.24, p < .05$). However, there is no significant relationship with depression ($r = -.12, p < .05$). This result suggests that the more young immigrants use host mass media, the less likely they are to feel alienated. However, the consumption of host mass media is not related to depression in young Japanese immigrants.

Hypothesis 5, predicting that a greater degree of ethnic mass media consumption is related to more psychological problems, was supported. According to correlational analysis, ethnic mass media use is positively related to psychological problem: alienation ($r = .33, p < .01$), while there is no relationship with depression ($r = .07, p > .05$). Clearly, those who are prone to using more ethnic mass media tend to show more psychological problems. However, the consumption of ethnic mass media is not related to depression among Japanese immigrants.

4.3 Research Question

One research question was posed regarding the respondents' self-described cultural identity (e.g., Japanese, Japanese-American) and its relationship to psychological problems. T-test was conducted to compare means between self-identified Japanese ($n = 58$) and self-identified Japanese-American ($n = 7$).

There was a statistically significant effect of cultural identity orientation on "alienation" (Japanese [$M = 2.48, SD = .88$]; Japanese-American [$M = 2.25, SD = 1.32$], $t(63) = .632, p = .031$), while this result needs to be interpreted with caution because of unequal sample size (Refer to the table 2). Overall, it suggests that the more the respondents identify themselves into the dominant society and culture, the fewer psychological problems they are likely to have.

5. Discussions

The purpose of the present study has been to explore the communication competence and psychological health of young Japanese immigrants in the United States. Five hypotheses have been derived from portions of Y.Y. Kim's (2001) integrative theory. As predicted, the hypothesized links between host communication competence, host interpersonal communication, and host mass media consumption and psychological health have been supported.

As proposed in hypothesis 1, the better host communication competence (i.e., a host language) young Japanese immigrants have achieved, the fewer psychological problems they might have, achieving better psychological health. Thus, the young Japanese immigrants who have greater host communication competence (i.e., English competence) tend to adjust to the host cultural environment better. Obviously, as Kim's theory indicates, host communication competence is the primary vehicle for proper functioning in a different host cultural environment among young Asian immigrants.

Consistent with hypothesis 2, predicting the relationship between host interpersonal communication and psychological health, the more interpersonal ties with host nationals young immigrants maintain, the fewer psychological problems they are likely to have. Thus, the young immigrants who maintain high degrees of interpersonal ties with host nationals (i.e., Americans) tend to have fewer psychological problems, and better psychological adjustment to the host cultural environment. In addition, hypothesis 3, predicting the relationship between ethnic interpersonal communication and more psychological problems was not supported. The ethnic interpersonal communication is not significantly related to "alienation" and depression (two indicators of psychological problems). This might suggest that ethnic interpersonal communication does not necessarily lead to psychological problems. This result might be due to the fact that each of two scale items of ethnic personal communication were used as an independent variable of ethnic interpersonal communication. The development of a highly reliable scale of ethnic interpersonal communication is needed for future studies.

As hypothesis 4 proposes, a greater level of host mass media consumption is related to fewer psychological problems among young Japanese immigrants. Obviously, the consumption of host mass media is an important channel through which young immigrants have indirect contact with the host society and acquire knowledge about it. Also, it might be assumed that the host media help them improve their host language (i.e., English), which in turn enhances their psychological adjustment. Hypothesis 5, which posits the relationship between greater ethnic mass media consumption and more psychological problems was supported. Thus, the more young immigrants were connected to ethnic media, the less likely they were to have opportunities access mainstream society, reducing the chance of understanding the dominant culture and resulting in adjustment problems.

The findings from the present analysis have significant theoretical implications. The present study was conducted according to a fully developed, integrative theory. This suggests that Y.Y. Kim's (2001) theoretical concepts (host communication competence, host interpersonal communication, and host mass media consumption) provide a useful foundation for examining young immigrants' cross-cultural adjustment experience. The present study clearly demonstrates reciprocal influence between host language competence, interpersonal contact and interaction

with host nationals, host mass media usage and a lower level of psychological experiences of stress and dissatisfaction in the host environment. These findings are consistent with the findings from previous studies of a variety of individuals undergoing cross-cultural adaptation, from long-term resettlers including immigrants and refugees (e.g., Cheah et al., 2011), to short-term sojourners such as international students (e.g., Maruyama, 1998; Zimmerman, 1995) and business expatriates (e.g., Kim, 2001; Johnson et al., 2003; Kim & Kim, 2007; Kim & Kim, 2022). As such, the study strengthens the central argument in Y.Y. Kim's culture-general theory, that is, that communication is at the heart of all successful adaptation experiences regardless of the specificities of time and place.

Without doubt, communication plays a primary role in the cross-cultural adaptation process of young Japanese immigrants. Thus, the better young immigrants acquire host language competence (i.e., English), the fewer psychological problems they are likely to have and the more likely they are to achieve a greater psychological adaptation. Also, the more actively they are engaged in interpersonal relationships with host nationals and the more they consume host mass media, the fewer psychological problems they might have, resulting in a better psychological adaptation.

In addition, the result of the research question regarding the relationship between the self-described cultural identity and its relationship with psychological problems, shows the effect of cultural identity orientation on psychological problems. Clearly, those who tend to connect themselves to dominant American culture (e.g., Japanese-American) are less likely to have psychological problems, enhancing their psychological adjustment in the U.S.

The present study has also practical implications. As Asian community leaders and professionals are in need of empirical data on the lives of these young immigrants in order to develop interventions and support programs, findings from this study could help community leaders, teachers, and parents have a better understanding of how young immigrants adapt to their new environment. As illustrated in the research findings, to help young immigrants psychologically adjust to their host environment, adults can help them establish host language competence (i.e., mastering English), educate them to broaden interpersonal networks with host nationals, and guide them to good quality host mass media. The findings will also help professionals to develop culture-specific knowledge and competency in providing services when working with clients from other cultural contexts.

5.1 Limitations and Suggestions

With the small sample size (i.e., 71 participants) and non-probability sampling method (convenience sampling combined with snow ball sampling), the results of the present study should be generalized with caution for all young Asian immigrants in the U.S. The cultural identity has been simply operationalized into self-identification of the respondent. Given that cultural identity is one of the important research agendas for young immigrant groups, in the future, to examine the cultural identity in more detail, scale items including multiple questions need to be used. The lower scale reliability of host/ethnic mass communication and ethnic interpersonal communication should be addressed. In future studies, revision of scales and testing reliability in larger samples could improve the reliabilities of these scales.

The present study is based on the quantitative data collected by a structured survey. In the future, interviews could provide more qualitative insight to the study, which would help researchers understand the reality that young Asian immigrants face in different host cultural environments and their individual adaptation experiences.

The present study included communication competence variables to test theoretical linkages predicted in Y.Y. Kim's cross-cultural adaptation theory. The future study could be beneficial if we incorporate other variables like host environment (i.e., host receptivity, host conformity pressure) and predispositional factors (e.g., personality). In addition, this exploratory study could be expanded into a similar study with different ethnic groups (e.g., Vietnamese adolescents, Hispanic adolescents, etc.), the results of which would provide culture-universal principles on how to promote communication competence and enhance young immigrants' effective adaptation to mainstream American society.

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Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of Key Research Variables (N =71)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Host/Ethnic Mass Communication		
-Host Mass Media Consumption	2.30	.62
-Ethnic (Japanese) Mass Media Consumption	2.31	.55
Host/Ethnic Interpersonal Communication		
-Host Interpersonal Communication	2.33	.93
-Ethnic Interpersonal Communication EIC 1 EIC 2	2.60	1.21
	2.67	1.15
Host/ethnic Communication Competence		
-Host Communication Competence	3.24	1.02
-Ethnic Communication Competence	4.7	.53
Psychological Health		
-Alienation	2.44	.92
-Depression	2.83	.84

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Key Research Variables By Self-identified young Japanese and Japanese-American immigrants

Variable	Japanese (n =58)		Japanese-American (n =7)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Host/Ethnic Mass Communication				
-Host Mass Media Consumption	2.23	.61	2.71	.42
-Ethnic Mass Media Consumption	2.33	.55	2.21	.65
Host/Ethnic Interpersonal Communication				
-Host Interpersonal Communication	2.26	.88	3.14	1.26
-Ethnic Interpersonal Communication EIC1 EIC2	2.57	1.22	2.33	1.03
	2.72	1.18	2.17	.98
Host/ethnic Communication Competence				
-Host Communication Competence	3.09	.96	4.50	.69
-Ethnic Communication Competence	4.72	.49	4.61	.45
Psychological Health				
-Alienation*	2.48	.87	2.25	1.32
-Depression	2.92	.79	2.46	1.29

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ indicating significant differences

Table 3. Correlations among Key Research Variables

Variable	HMC	EMC	HIC	EIC1	EIC2	HCC	ECC	Alienation	Depression
Host/Ethnic Mass Communication									
-HMC									
-EMC	-.08								
Host/Ethnic Interpersonal Communication									
-HIC	.13	-.42**							
-EIC1	-.11	-.10	.26*						
-EIC2	-.03	-.20	.12	.46**					
Host/Ethnic Communication competence									
-HCC	.39**	-.09	.28*	-.07	-.17				
-ECC	-.04	.11	-.18	.09	-.33**	.05			
Psychological Health									
-Alienation	-.24*	.33**	-.24*	-.18	-.11	-.27*	-.11		
-Depression	-.12	.07	-.30*	-.14	.16	-.37**	-.06	.43**	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ **Note:**

HMC=Host mass communication

EMC =Ethnic mass communication

HIC=Host interpersonal communication

EIC=Ethnic interpersonal communication

HCC=Host communication competence

ECC=Ethnic communication competence