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The Role of Information and Communication Technology in the Acculturation of Vietnamese Refugees

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The Role of Information and Communication Technology in the Acculturation of Vietnamese Refugees

by
Khanh Tran

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences
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ABSTRACT

One of the most significant refugee populations in the United States is the Vietnamese. This group initially fled their native country to escape political oppression at the conclusion of the Vietnam War in 1975 and continued to flee in a series of separate waves that continued for more than three decades. As a relatively new immigrant group in the U.S., the Vietnamese still face a variety of challenges as they try to reestablish their lives and adapt in a new cultural environment. Acculturation is a complex process that is influenced by a number of factors. Throughout history, U.S. immigration policy has significantly affected the admission and adaptation of refugees. As shifts in the ideological frameworks, economic demands, and attitudes towards the rest of the world occurred in the twentieth century, which eventually brought the liberalization of immigration policy, this influence slowly decreased. This allowed for factors in the domestic political, economic, and social environments to become more powerful in affecting how refugees adapt in the U.S. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become integral aspects in both assisting and complicating the acculturation process for refugees. These technologies are helping Vietnamese refugees culturally adjust in American communities as well as maintain ties with their native culture; thus, illustrating the multifaceted nature of acculturation. However, the impact of ICTs is not uniform across all of the different waves of refugees who fled from Vietnam. This study demonstrates that interaction and communication are key aspects in cross-cultural adaptation and the importance of media in contemporary everyday life.

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CHAPTER1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction and Context

In 2013, an estimated 232 million people were living outside of their country of origin (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2013). Refugees account for more than fifteen million or 6.5% of this population (UNHCR, 2013). A refugee is a person who flees his own country “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (UN General Assembly, 1954). Leaving family, friends, homes, possessions, and countless aspects of their native country behind, refugees must cope with a myriad of vulnerabilities as they attempt to rebuild their lives in new environments, such as the United States.

For decades, the U.S. has been the sanctuary for hundreds of thousands of refugees from all over the world: one of the most significant refugee populations has been those arriving from Vietnam. These refugees initially fled their homeland to escape political oppression by the National Liberation Front for South Vietnam as the Vietnam War was coming to a conclusion in April 1975. After that date, there were a series of separate waves of refugees that continued to flee from Vietnam for more than three decades. The first wave occurred just days before the Communist Army invasion of South Vietnam, otherwise known as the fall of Saigon. An estimated 96,000 to 100,000 “high-risk” Vietnamese, a well-educated group which included members of the South Vietnamese army or individuals who held special ties with the American government, were evacuated by military aircrafts during the last remaining days of the war. An

additional 40,000 to 60,000 Vietnamese escaped via small, cramped boats and waited to be rescued by U.S. ships in the South China Sea (Liu, 1979; Freeman, 1995).

This mass exodus was far from over. It continued with the second and third wave, which occurred from 1978 to 1982 when over 271,000 people fled from Vietnam to escape political persecution. These refugees escaped by boat or trekked across miles of land to seek safety in neighboring Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, and the Philippines. Thousands lost their lives while the lucky survivors found themselves trapped in crowded refugee camps to wait for permanent resettlement elsewhere. The fourth wave arrived between 1983 and 1989, during which time the Orderly Departure Program (ODP), led by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), played a significant role. Under the ODP, qualified individuals were resettled directly from Vietnam to countries such as the U.S. and Canada (Freeman, 1995; Robinson, 1998). Approximately 16,500 people were resettled each year through the ODP (Robinson, 2004).

Finally, the fifth wave of Vietnamese refugees found resettlement under another UNHCR initiative known as the Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA). Put into effect in 1989, the CPA was a multifaceted approach that combined the efforts of seventy countries, which included the new Vietnamese government, countries of first asylum, and third countries of resettlement. The initiative helped stem the number of people who continued to escape Vietnam and created more opportunities for legal migration under the ODP. More than 400,000 refugees were resettled through the CPA, which consisted mainly of re-education camp prisoners, their family members, and children of U.S. military officers. When the CPA officially ended in 1996 after seven years of operation,

only small pockets of refugees remained from the crisis that had burdened the international community for over three decades (Robinson, 2004).

Statement of the Problem

Although the exact number remains unclear, hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese refugees have been resettled in the U.S. since the conclusion of the Vietnam War. They came from diverse backgrounds and by many different means. With the most recent significant wave arriving during the early to mid 1990s, the Vietnamese are considered a relatively new immigrant group. Therefore, many of these individuals still face a variety of challenges as they try to establish new lives in American communities. Even with the help of government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, community organizations, and generous individuals, Vietnamese refugees still struggle to overcome daily adversities (Freeman, 1995). Obstacles relating to language, employment, education, healthcare, and cultural customs are commonplace. In addition, feelings of fear, isolation, and nostalgia are oftentimes consuming as refugees attempt to manage the separation from the familiarities of their homeland. For many of these migrants, the ability to prevail over such barriers in order to become self-sufficient in a new cultural setting may be a goal that takes months or even years to achieve. Determining the factors that are either aiding or deterring refugees in this process is an area of research that deserves attention.

Throughout U.S. history, legislation has significantly impacted the admission and adaptation of refugees. U.S. immigration policy has changed considerably since the beginning of the twentieth century, reflecting shifting political, economic, and social

contexts. The concern for refugees did not become an integral part of U.S. immigration policy until the end of World War II. But strong exclusionary sentiments and ideologies prevented many groups of refugees from gaining admission into the U.S for years thereafter. As restrictive protocols were revoked in 1965 to allow for greater inclusiveness and consideration for people from different national backgrounds, refugee admission and assistance programs were expanded as well. This set the tone for the special policies that were enacted as the Vietnamese refugee crisis unfolded.

Although U.S. immigration policy provides a solid foundation for refugees to enter and adjust in the U.S, many people question the adequacy of this system. LeMaster & Zall (1983) argue that policy governing refugee admissions and resettlement is vague, inconsistent, and serves the interests of few people. Similarly, other researchers contend that the U.S. system fails to meet the needs that it is designed to serve, especially with the shifts in ideology and fluctuations in the economy (Barkdull, Weber, Swart, & Phillips, 2012). Considering the arguments that policies are less assertive and effective than they should be, this raises questions regarding what other factors within the social environment may impact refugees' experiences as they transition and acculturate to the U.S.

In recent years, scholars have found that information and communication technologies (ICTs) are playing vital roles in the processes of cultural adaptation amongst refugees (Moore & Clifford, 2007). ICTs are modern technologies that allow people to communicate and exchange information in ways that transcend earlier constraints of time and space (Garett, 2006; Shortis, 2001). Encompassed under this umbrella term are technologies such as radio, television, cellular phones, the Internet, digital applications,

and satellite systems. The prevalence of these technologies allows people to communicate and foster ties with others both near and far more easily than ever before. As the result, research also illustrates that these technologies are giving those who have been displaced the ability to keep in contact with their home countries and maintain aspects of their native identities (Thompson, 2002). Due to the capabilities provided by ICTs, cultural adaptation is occurring in complex ways and generating hybrid identities.

Considering that interaction and communication are key aspects in the process of cross-cultural adaption, studying the role of ICTs in the acculturation of Vietnamese refugees in the U.S. provides greater understanding of how and how well this group is managing the changes to their lives and their identities. This study aims to reveal how ICTs can aid or even hinder refugees as they undertake these transitions.

Therefore in this study, I will explore the following research questions:

1. How do information and communication technologies help Vietnamese refugees acculturate in the United States?
2. How do information and communication technologies help Vietnamese refugees maintain contact with their native culture?
3. How does the role of ICTs differ for earlier waves of refugees (1970s and 1980s) and more recent waves of refugees (1990s)?

Research Methodology

In order to answer these key research questions, a multifaceted research methodology was carried out. This study first examined U.S. immigration policies that pertained to refugees. I then adopted a case study approach, which allowed a close and

in-depth examination of the Vietnamese refugee community and their interactions with ICTs in a particular context. Sacramento, California was chosen as the primary research location because significant portions of the 25,000 Vietnamese Americans currently living in this greater urban area are either first or second-generation refugees (United States Census Bureau, 2010). It was here that I conducted interviews with a total of twenty participants in the target population.

Data Collection

Research on United States immigration policy relating to refugees from 1948 onwards was assessed to reveal the ways in which this system helps or hinders the process of acculturation. The following policies were analyzed: Displaced Persons Act of 1948, Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, Refugee Relief Act of 1953, Migration and Refugee Act of 1962, Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, Indochina Migration and Refugee Act of 1975, Indochina Refugee Children Assistance Act of 1975, and the 1980 Refugee Act. Alongside these policies, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol were examined as well. These policy documents were retrieved from various Internet policy archives as well as library microform archives. After all of the documents were gathered, they were thoroughly read and noted for key differences.

Next, the collection of data was centered on participant interviews. Interviews provide access to the observations of others, aid in the understanding of people's interior experiences, open a window to the past, and rescue experiences that might otherwise be forgotten (Weiss, 1995). From the target population, snowball sampling was used to

select the participants for these interviews. I approached qualified individuals from the target population that I was able to locate myself first. Then I asked those individuals to introduce me to their contacts who would be qualified for this study. I proceeded with this method until I was able to garner a total of twenty participants who were willing to be interviewed.

An informed consent form was issued and signed by all participants. Participation in the study was completely voluntary and all were assured of the confidentiality of their identities and any information that would be provided during the interview process. In the efforts to make the experience both convenient and comfortable for each participant, interviews took place in informal settings that were chosen by the participants. Interviews were audio-recorded and these recordings were used as a supplementary source to my hand-written notes. Depending on the skills or preferences of the participants, these interviews were conducted in either English or Vietnamese. The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed pre-determined questions to be asked while letting new leads and issues to naturally arise. Questions mainly inquired about the participants' background, information seeking behavior, communication or interaction patterns, and identification with both host and native cultures.

Participants were asked a series of questions regarding their background. This section included questions about their age, where they lived in Vietnam, their education and occupation in Vietnam, and when they were resettled in the U.S. Participants were also asked about the feelings they possessed when they left Vietnam, particularly whether or not they wanted to flee or stay in their homeland. These questions were important because they served as points of comparison as well as foundations for understanding the

content that were generated by subsequent questions. Participants were then asked about their information seeking behavior that began once they resettled in the United States. They were questioned about the types of information that they wished to acquire about American culture as well as the types of knowledge that they wanted to retain of their native culture. Questions also delved into the ICTs that participants use to achieve these tasks. Furthermore, my interview with participants also inquired about their means of communication with people living locally as well as abroad. These questions concluded with the issue of identification and how participants perceive their cultural identity to be today.

Framework for Analysis

As the U.S. policies were analyzed according to their content, attention was paid to how this content has changed throughout time. These policies were examined alongside the political, economic, and social conditions under which they were enacted and how this affected refugees' experiences with acculturation in the U.S. While many of these laws grant foreigners protection, assistance, and legal rights, the attainment of these things may not necessarily make their transition and adaptation into new communities automatically easier. This data set helps to address the research question regarding the differences in the process of acculturation of earlier and more recent waves of Vietnamese refugees. Hence, this data set was assessed alongside the data obtained from participant interviews in order to reveal correlations.

Data collected from interviews were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. First, recorded interviews were transcribed. Interviews conducted in

Vietnamese were translated and transcribed into English. In order to insure the accuracy of these transcriptions, they were reviewed again with the help of another Vietnamese native speaker. The interviews were then carefully read and coded according to themes that were present and consistent in all or most of the interviews. Handwritten notes that were recorded during the interviews were also considered in analysis. These notes, particularly those regarding the participants' nonverbal behavior, were particularly valuable in this assessment because they emphasized the verbal responses that were provided.

Definition of Terms

There are key terminologies that are employed throughout this paper. Due to the varied use of these terms in academia, the following definitions are critical to the understanding of this study.

Foremost, the term *acculturation* refers to “those phenomena which result when groups or individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, p. 149). This process, thus, involves multi-dimensional and multi-directional changes. Next, *information and communication technologies*, or ICTs, applies to technologies that enable people to communicate, collaborate, and demonstrate (Garett, 2006). The main technologies included under this broad term are radio, television, films, cellular phones, the Internet, digital applications, and satellite systems. Another distinctive feature of ICTs is that they allow the constraints of time, geographical

space, physical presence, and national boundaries to be shrunk and condensed (Shortis, 2001).

Significance of the Study

This study regarding the role of ICTs in the acculturation of Vietnamese refugees in the United States is valuable for a number of reasons. One of the primary aims is to foster greater understanding of interaction and communication as key aspects in the process of cross-cultural adaption. Considering the prevalence of radio, television, cellular phones, the Internet and satellite systems, ICTs are integral tools in daily interactions. These technologies enable connections to be developed between people in close proximity and across the globe. Therefore, this study adds to the body of knowledge regarding the ways in which ICTs assist cultural adaptation and complicate this process by allowing people to maintain contact with native cultures. In addition, the research on Vietnamese refugees contributes to the understanding of this distinctive group of people. Vietnamese-Americans are one of the largest ethnic groups in the U.S. today and, yet, recent research has largely neglected how this population has changed over time. It is important to consider that many of these individuals have become active members of American communities while keeping the traditions and values of their native country very much intact. Thus, this study also adds to the body of knowledge on immigrant groups and their contributions to the formation of multicultural societies in the U.S. as well as in other countries.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The research on subgroups and sub-cultures is highly influential in this current study, which focuses on the acculturation of Vietnamese refugees in the United States and examines the roles that new information and communication technologies play in this process. In the efforts to address the interrelated issues within this topic, the existing literature on race and culture, assimilation and acculturation, implications of ICTs, Vietnamese refugees, and identity will be reviewed. These bodies of literature encompass the perspectives of scholars from the fields of sociology, anthropology, psychology, and communication.

Foremost, theories in sociology on race and culture will be analyzed to illustrate how ideas about assimilation and acculturation emerged in the United States during the early to mid twentieth century. This body of work provides the foundation to explain the communication theories that developed later on which sought to address issues regarding cross-cultural adaptation. Research on the implications of ICTs will then be presented to show how these innovations affect the social and cultural relations of migrant populations. Previous studies that examine the acculturation of Vietnamese refugees in the United States will also be reviewed to demonstrate that this topic deserves further investigation, and specifically in relation to ICTs. Lastly, the ways in which the process of acculturation influences the formation of identity will be discussed. This literature review will conclude with an explanation of how the current study will attempt to fill in some of the lacunas within the existing bodies of work.

Sociological Theory of Assimilation

One of the greatest contributors to modern sociological thought on race and culture is Robert Park. As a founding member of the Chicago School of sociology during the 1920s and 1930s, Park was primarily concerned with race relations in the United States. He defined race relations as, “all the relations that ordinarily exist between members of different ethnic and genetic groups which are capable of provoking race conflict and race consciousness or of determining the relative status of the racial groups of which a community is composed” (Park, 1999, p. 106). Park reasoned that race relations are products of migration and conquest, for these occurrences both involve the movement and mixture of people (Park, 1999, p. 109). Based on these notions, Park developed a model of assimilation known as the “race relations cycle” to explain the stages that ethnic and genetic groups undergo as they come into contact with other groups and adjust to new environments (Park, 1950). The stages of contact, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation constitute an ongoing process during which people of diverse races and cultures aim to achieve social balance and equilibrium (Park, 1950). However, Park’s assimilation model has been critiqued for its ambiguous nature and generality that makes it an unfit blueprint for the complex relations that exist in many multiethnic societies (Lyman, 1968).

Attempting to resolve these problems, Milton Gordon formulated a more multiplex model of assimilation in the 1960s. Derived from his research of ethnic groups in American communities, Gordon argued that there are seven major variables or sub-processes within the overall assimilation process (Gordon, 1964). The seven variables are acculturation, structural assimilation, marital assimilation, identification assimilation,

attitude receptional assimilation, behavior receptional assimilation, and civic assimilation (Gordon, 1964, p. 71). These sub-processes occur at varying degrees and are not experienced uniformly by all minority groups that enter majority group settings.

Gordon explained that the first sub-process experienced by an ethnic group is cultural and behavioral assimilation, otherwise known as *acculturation* (Gordon, 1964, p. 77). This includes the adoption of the host society's language, dress, manner, and even patterns of emotional expressions (Gordon, 1964, p. 79). Gordon noted that acculturation is unique in the sense that it can take place without any other types of assimilation occurring at all. Hence, acculturation can occur autonomously and is not necessarily dependent on other processes.

Yet, what is even more significant is structural assimilation, which is defined as the entrance into the host society's clubs and institutions (Gordon, 1964, p. 71). Gordon claimed that, "once structural assimilation has occurred, either simultaneously with or subsequent to acculturation, all of the other types of assimilation will naturally follow" (Gordon, 1964, p. 81). Essentially, he considered structural assimilation as the cornerstone that holds the assimilation process together. Although Gordon did not elaborate on the other five dimensions as thoroughly as the first two, he did emphasize that they are all interrelated and influence one another. Moreover, Gordon's model offers specific points of comparison that can be measured up against other theories of immigrant adjustment in the United States (Gordon, 1964, p. 74).

Despite its contributions, Gordon's seven-variable model is limited. It follows a simplistic model of one minority group and one majority group, which ignores the multitude of ethnicities that exists in American society and the multiple kinds of impacts

(Alba & Nee, 1997). Therefore, Gordon's conception did not provide much of an improvement on Park's race relations cycle. Gordon also did not specify if his model of assimilation could be applied to both individuals and groups. Consequently, this ambiguity afforded room for further ideas to emerge regarding the complex phenomena that occur when people and places intermix with one another.

Assimilation vs. Acculturation

The post WWII period brought immense shifts in racial dynamics and ideology worldwide. Old concepts of race were challenged as upsurges of migration, social movements, and changes in academia occurred. The population dislocations following the war increased the flow of migration to destination countries in North America (Cheswick & Hatton, 2003). At the same time, the civil rights movement and the peace movement also helped shift the ideology in the U.S. towards racial equality (Klarman, 1994; Wittner, 1984). The nature of secondary education in the U.S. also changed with enactment of the G.I. Bill in 1944 and the increasing inclusion of immigrants into higher education (Goldin, 1999). Accordingly, sociological theories about race were increasingly critiqued for their limitations and pressured to reform in order to eliminate sentiments of prejudice and discrimination. While state policies worked to reduce racial injustices, theories on race and culture also came to reflect these efforts (Winant, 2000).

As these changes took place, the uses of the terms assimilation and acculturation became more varied in research. Oftentimes the two terms were employed interchangeably to mean the same thing, with sociologists preferring assimilation and anthropologists preferring acculturation (Gordon, 1964). At other times they were used as

sub-categories of one another, as evident in Gordon's model of assimilation. From the field of anthropology, Teske and Nelson (1974) remained consistent with Gordon's conception in their argument that acculturation is a necessary condition for assimilation. Although acculturation is a distinct process and can unfold independently without leading up to assimilation, the latter cannot occur unless the former is fulfilled first (Teske & Nelson, 1974). Hence, they continued to consider assimilation as a uni-directional process that lacks freedom and flexibility.

Conversely, Berry (1997) contended that assimilation is just one of the many strategies of acculturation. According to this perspective from cross-cultural psychology, cultural groups may choose to adopt any one of four strategies – assimilation, separation, integration, or marginalization – as they determine how best to acculturate in different settings and situations (Berry, 1997, p. 9). Assimilation is defined as the strategy that is embraced when a minority group does not wish to maintain their distinct cultural identity and, therefore, interacts with other groups in order to gradually acquire other cultural characteristics (Berry, 1997). From this perspective, acculturation is conceived as a multi-directional and flexible process where different strategies may be employed at different times.

Also from the field of psychology, Sam (1997) conducted an extensive analysis of the ways in which assimilation and acculturation have been conceptualized in the social sciences. He concluded that acculturation is a far more embracing and encompassing notion than assimilation. In terms of directionality, acculturation regards change as a mutual or reciprocal process between groups, while assimilation holds the perspective that change can only occur in a single direction with one group becoming increasingly

like the other (Sam, 1997). Since directionality influences dimensionality, acculturation is advantageous in regards to this aspect as well. Acculturation considers change as bi-dimensional, meaning that groups can maintain their original cultural identities while they acquire characteristics of new cultures (Sam, 1997). From a uni-dimensional standpoint, assimilation tends to assert that groups progressively lose their original cultural identities as they integrate more and more into new cultures. As the result of these fundamental differences, Sam argued that acculturation offers a wider platform for discussions around refugees and immigrants as well as for further theory development. This study, thus, adopts the idea of acculturation as the stage on which the current research questions will be explored.

For the purpose of this study, the classical definition of acculturation that was developed by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits in 1936 will be employed. As noted earlier, Redfield et al. (1936) defined acculturation as, “those phenomena which result when groups or individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original patterns of either or both groups” (p. 149). This definition embodies the multi-dimensional and multi-directional alterations that are experienced by contemporary migrant populations as they enter and adjust in complex cultural environments. The history of Vietnamese refugees in the United States from 1975 to present day is no exception. Hence, an in-depth look will be taken of these experiences in order to reveal how the Vietnamese are changed by the dynamic American culture that they enter and vice versa.

Communication Theory and Cross- Cultural Adaptation

Scholars in the field of communication have taken further steps to develop ideas on the acculturation of ethnic groups. Notably, two theories of intercultural communication have emerged to explain the processes that occur as members of different ethnic groups intermix across national and cultural boundaries. The first is Young Yun Kim's integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation. Focusing on the acculturation of individuals rather than entire groups, Kim incorporated immigrants, refugees, international sojourners, and all other individuals who make the transition from one culture to another into her theory (Kim, 2000). Although the experience of each individual is unique, they are similar in the fact that they all strive towards the same goal and that is cross-cultural adaptation.

Kim defined cross-cultural adaptation as, "the dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environments, establish (or reestablish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those environments" (Kim, 2000, p. 31). Kim also emphasized that this theory does not explain whether individuals go through this process but how and why they do (Kim, 2000, p. 10). In other words, cross-cultural adaptation is inevitable for all who relocate across cultures. This inevitability stems from the fact that cross-cultural adaptation is based on communication, or the exchange of messages (Kim, 2000, p. 31). Since communication essentially lies at the core of all human activities, the process during which individuals adjust to new cultures involves some form of communication at every level because messages are constantly being sent and received. Thus, Kim claimed that communication facilitates the interaction between the individual and the cultural

environment. Accordingly, the adaptation of an individual to a given cultural environment occurs in and through the transaction of messages. As long as the individual stays in contact with that environment, adaptation will naturally transpire (Kim, 2000, p. 32).

Central to the communication theory of cross-cultural adaptation is the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic. This theory posits that when individuals enter new environments, they experience stress due to the push and pull exerted by the old and new cultures (Kim, 2000). This psychological tension, which is developed through both interpersonal and mass communication, causes the individual to pull away and resist adaptation. However, individuals learn how to manage this stress as they increasingly engage in more successful communication patterns (Kim, 2000). Personal growth occurs as elements of the new culture are acquired through acculturation and some elements of the old culture are lost through deculturation or, in other words, the unlearning of cultural aspects (Kim, 2000). As time progresses, levels of stress decrease while adaptation and growth increase. Individuals eventually reach a “calming” stage where tensions between the old and new cultures subside. Therefore at this stage, their relationships with the new environment are no longer an intense struggle (Kim, 2000, p. 59). Moreover, Kim claimed that an individual who becomes fully adapted may reach a stage where they are able to develop an intercultural identity that exists beyond all boundaries of culture (Kim, 2000).

Eric Kramer’s theory of cultural fusion contrasts with Kim’s theory of cross-cultural adaptation. Kramer (2003a) critiqued Kim’s hypothesis that individuals must inevitably adapt to existing cultural systems: he argued that this theory disregards the

possibility that immigrants may change the new culture (p. 4). He also dismissed the idea of deculturation, or unlearning: it is not necessary for a person to completely forget something old in order to acquire something new (Kramer, 2003b, p. 239). Instead, Kramer claimed that growth is “additive and integrative” and adaptability is multi-linear and multi-dimensional (Kramer, 2000).

Kramer, thus, offered the theory of “culture fusion” as an alternative concept of acculturation. The researcher explained cultural fusion as the process of combining elements from two or more cultures to create new, hybrid cultural forms (Kramer, 2000). It is an approach that values and embraces the differences within each culture and, therefore, preserves them by incorporating them to generate something new. However, this incorporation is not prescriptive and instead can take a variety of courses depending on each context. Cultural fusion also takes an ecological rather than mechanical approach to communication (Kramer, 2000). Based on hermeneutics, it accounts for the subjective interpretation of messages and acknowledges the fact that individuals do not perceive the world uniformly.

Kramer noted that the concept of cultural fusion is especially relevant in today’s world where dynamic forces are creating frequent cultural churnings. “Under the currently hyperactive conditions, migrating populations, commercialism, and progressivism, are creating niches, changing the faces of nations, lifestyles, and energizing a fusional ‘in-between’ of cultural interaction” (Kramer, 2000, p. 203). With environments subject to continual change, acculturation cannot occur in a uni-linear manner where individuals progress towards one predicable identity of a host culture. Hence, Kramer’s theory of cultural fusion recognizes the possibility that individuals

living in multi-cultural societies may interact and come to identify with a wide array of cultures and not just one.

Yet, what neither Kramer nor Kim addressed is the role of intercultural communication in fostering cultural capital, a concept first expressed by Pierre Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital consists of a set of skills, knowledge, and practices that give individuals and groups power in addition to economic and political means. Through this conception, Bourdieu stressed that capital needs to be considered outside of the traditional economic sense because of the complexity of the social world. He stated, “It is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). Thus capital can exist in a variety of different forms, one of which is cultural capital.

Within cultural capital itself, there exist three different variations: the embodied state, the objectified state, and the institutionalized state. In the embodied state, cultural capital is acquired when external wealth is “converted into an integral part of the person” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244). Hence, the person directly cultivates cultural capital and this capital becomes a natural component of their life. On the other hand, cultural capital in the objectified state exists in material objects and media (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 225). The acquisition of such capital can, thus, be materialistic and symbolic. Lastly, the institutionalization of cultural capital takes capital beyond the limits of the individual and confers a sense of legitimacy upon the holders of this capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 226).

Bourdieu’s conceptualization of cultural capital is relevant to this study because it allows multi-cultural communities to be examined as a network of relations where people

depend on each other as sources of information, knowledge, and skill. As refugees transition into new communities, cultural capital should be considered as both an embodied value and a desired goal because it serves as a significant long-term resource. It will be important to note the different types of cultural capital that can be exchanged and how they are exchanged. Hence, the discussion and investigation of acculturation should be considered alongside with cultural capital.

Information and Communication Technology

Furthering the perspective that communication is central to acculturation, scholars have recently explored how ICTs have changed this process. Foremost, from a global viewpoint, Appadurai (1990) explained how modern technological advances have revolutionized cultural transactions. Before inventions such as the automobile, airplane, camera, telephone, and computer were created, interactions across cultures required great cost, time, and effort (Appadurai, 1990). Now, communities and people around the world have “entered into an altogether new condition of neighborliness” as a result of the technologies that have emerged in the past century (Appadurai, 1990, p. 2). However it is important to note that these changes are not uniform, for dominant vectors of communication still exist. Nonetheless, technology has introduced greater complexity and dimensionality to global interactions, which can no longer be understood under the lens of traditional concepts.

Appadurai formulated a framework that takes into account the complex, overlapping, and disjunctive nature of the new global cultural economy. In this framework, global cultural flow is divided into five dimensions or scapes: ethnosca-

mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes (Appadurai, 1990). These scapes are subjective constructs that take on different meanings depending on the historical, linguistic, and political points of view of those who interpret them. Of particular importance to this study are ethnoscapescapes and mediascapes.

Ethnoscape refers to the people or groups of people who migrate across geographical and cultural borders, representing the fluidity of communities and networks. Included in this conception are tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and others who make up the shifting world that exists today. This movement is driven by changes in international capital, production and technology, and policies of nation-states, as well as personal imaginations and desires to relocate elsewhere. Ethnoscape conveys that group identities are no longer bound by territorial locations, and therefore this helps stimulate global cultural flow as ethnic populations intermix across spatial boundaries (Appadurai, 1990).

Moreover, mediascape describes the widespread availability of electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information. The term is also employed to refer to the representations of life that come from the media, images that can be pieced together to create imagined worlds. Mediascapes, most importantly, “provide large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and ethnoscapescapes to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed” (Appadurai, 1990, p. 9). As the result of the interconnectedness of different media and the variety of images that they produce, it becomes difficult for viewers to distinguish fact from fiction and this distinction becomes increasingly blurred as the

media landscape becomes progressively congested with different repertoires (Appadurai, 1990).

Yet in another essence, mediascapes help people understand their lives as well as the lives of others (Appadurai, 1990). The development of scripts or frameworks through the media allows people and things that may be far away to be mapped and categorized. Within the context of migrants, the prevalence of the media may greatly affect the process of acculturation. As previous mental constructs of the imagined world are balanced with the actual interactions and experiences within new environments, acculturation may become a difficult process for some migrants as the result of this cognitive dissonance. Mediascapes also enable ties with home countries and aspects of native identities to be maintained, which further complicate acculturation. In conclusion, Appadurai asserted that technological advances have transformed cultural transactions and should be considered in the context of human movement and cross-cultural interactions (Appadurai, 1990). Considering Appadurai's notions, this study explores the impact of these tools, especially in regards to ethnic media, and the ways in which they are transforming the refugee experience.

Ess (2001) expanded on these ideas as he explores the ways in which new technologies are leading us to a new kind of cosmopolitanism. This is because technologies are allowing us to preserve cultural values and differences while enhancing the global communication capabilities that tie us to all to one intercultural global village. As cultural transactions occur, people increasingly become multicultural which allows them to live and adapt in many different cultures. The author contended that, "becoming multicultural is a necessary component of an electronic global village that aims towards

an intercultural synthesis of the global and the local” (Ess, 2001, p. 25). Ess also noted that this novel conception of cosmopolitanism is not emerging automatically as an inevitable consequence of the advancement of technologies alone. Instead, the social context in which these technologies are used must also be taken into consideration in order to assess how they are bridging the local cultures and the global culture, as well as fostering a multicultural population around the world (Ess, 2001).

Yet the idea that the media has fostered this kind of cosmopolitanism has been highly contested. Sparks (2007) examined how the globalization paradigm has come to dominate discussions of media and communications today. In doing so, he outlines the critiques regarding the claims that media delivery systems and global cultural products, such as television and film, are eroding national cultures and replacing them with a new notion of global culture. This landscape is, in fact, still marked with diversity, differences, and inequality. Sparks states, “At best, the ‘cosmopolitans’ who inhabit global culture are a relatively small number of people, at least at present, but they are relatively influential, since they tend to be occupationally involved in intellectual and cultural niches” (p. 135). With that being the case, not everyone gets to participate or be included within the purported intercultural global village; hence, conveying a false sense of cosmopolitanism.

Continuing the examination of the role of new technologies, Hongladarom (2001) studied the role of the Internet in facilitating communication between the local and the global. Through a case study of an online newsgroup in Thailand, Hongladarom argued that the Internet has given rise to two types of communication trends. On one hand, the Internet helps strengthen community ties by enabling communication that reinforces the

identity of local cultures. The researcher found that members of the Thai newsgroup use this online platform to share their thoughts and feelings about current events with others in their local tight-knit community. Without much regard to whether or not their posts are understood by the rest of the world, the newsgroup uses words and phrases that only specific members can fully grasp (Hongladarom, 2001, p. 312). Concurrently, the capabilities of the Internet are cultivating a global or cosmopolitan culture by promoting communication across cultures. As a globalizing agent, the Internet has the ability to peel away the histories and other cultural embodiments that make cultures distinct in order to promote a general arena where people from uncommon backgrounds can communicate (Hongladarom, 2001, p.316). However, Hongladarom concluded that the Internet brings about the ability for cultures to evolve as ideas are exchanged across boundaries. A culture can maintain its distinctiveness while embracing the values and beliefs of other cultures. It is thus critical to acknowledge that cultural identities are always in motion and communication patterns enabled by modern technological capabilities are speeding up the rate at which this is occurring (Hongladarom, 2001).

Nevertheless, Castells (1999), much like Sparks, contended that ICTs, the central tools of organizational change and globalization, are promoting a system of inequality and exclusion that is reminiscent of the same cultural power dynamics of the past. As these technologies are now a pre-requisite for economic and social development, there are some social agents, such as corporations and nation states, that are able to excel in this capitalistic environment while others continue to struggle as before. As Castells explained,

In this regard, what is happening is that regions and firms that concentrate the most advanced production and management systems are significantly attracting talent from around the world, while leaving aside a significant fraction of their own population whose educational level and cultural/technical skills do not fit the requirements of the new production system (p. 3).

A country's capabilities to become included within the modern technological system are rooted in the history of colonialism. In addition, the lack of key aspects, such as cultural and educational development, sustains a downward spiral of underdevelopment.

Therefore according to Castells, not all cultures are necessarily able to participate in this system of exchange and development, or at least not equally. This relates to Sparks' argument regarding the inequity and marked cultural differences that still exists in the global circulation of cultural commodities.

Progressing towards the literature on ICTs and its impact on immigrant populations, the ways that this term has been conceptualized and utilized must be reviewed. Scholars who research ICTs have developed similar, yet, varied definitions of ICTs. Akpan (2003) defined ICTs as all technologies of information and communication, which includes information processing, email, telephone, fax, satellite communication, videotext and cellular phone. Similarly, Shortis (2001) used ICTs as an umbrella term to refer to technologies such as the Internet, email, chat rooms, and fax machines to name a few. He also elaborated that these technologies involve words, objects, and practices that did not exist some twenty years ago and may become out of date in the next ten years considering the rapid rate at which technology is advancing. As noted earlier, Garrett (2006) defined ICTs as technologies that have changed the ways in which people,

particularly social activists, communicate, collaborate, and demonstrate. Coming from different fields in academia, all of these scholars agreed that ICTs allow the traditional constraints of time, geographical space, physical presence, and national boundaries to be significantly reduced (Shortis, 2001). Accordingly, this current study aims to illustrate how the capabilities of these technologies may impact the connectivity that refugees have with multiple cultures.

Scholars have found that there are many factors that affect the adoption and use of ICTs. Kabbar and Crump (2006) analyzed the characteristics that influence the adoption or non-adoption of ICTs by newly arrived immigrants from developing countries. Considering that disadvantaged groups of new immigrants may have very little to no experience with expensive digital technologies, adjustment to life in a developed country where ICTs are commonplace is a substantial challenge. The researchers, therefore, interviewed the refugee population living in the capital city of Wellington, New Zealand to explore how various ICTs, such as personal computers and cell phones, are used and if they are used at all. Among the factors that lead refugees to adopt ICTs are the influences of close family and friends, ethnic community peers and leaders, and perceptions of relative advantage (Kabbar & Crump, 2006, p. 116-117). Although ICTs were perceived positively by nearly all of the refugees who were interviewed, the results of the study also revealed that there are many barriers that prevent some people from adopting these technologies. Three of the most significant obstacles are language, education, and lack of skill or knowledge to operate the technologies (Kabbar & Crump, 2006, p. 117-118). This is especially true for older generations who typically expressed that ICTs are too complicated and are better suited for younger generations. Therefore, variances such as

generational differences deserve further attention in regards to the ways that they affect the adoption and use of ICTs.

Kim and McKay-Semmler (2013) studied technology-mediated communication between non-native and native-born members of host societies. The researchers found that ICTs are employed at varying degrees depending on who the interactions are conducted with. Non-native individuals utilize ICTs, mainly email and the Internet, to communicate and maintain relationships with family and friends who live abroad. However, they use ICTs less to communicate with native-born members of the host societies; face-to-face interpersonal communication is more preferred and frequently used (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013). Considering that the sample of Kim and McKay-Semmler's study consisted of a group of relatively well-educated non-natives from a small university town in the United States, level of education plays a key role in these findings. Educated non-natives feel more comfortable engaging in direct communication with native-born Americans, for findings indicate that most these individuals actively participate in professional organizations and social clubs (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2013). However, the researchers failed to address how education may be related to language and the abilities to communicate in the language of the host society. The lack of language skill may be the reason behind why many immigrants and other non-native groups lack dialogue with others in their new communities. Since language is the heart of communication and communication being the center of acculturation, this aspect must be addressed.

Moreover, research finds a sector within the global media landscape that is increasingly prevalent and influential is ethnic media. Defined as "media that are

produced by and for immigrants, racial, ethnic, and linguistic minorities, as well as indigenous populations living across different countries,” ethnic media comes in a variety of forms including newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television channels, and films (Matsaganis, Kats, & Ball-Rokeach, 2011, p. 6). In the United States, the presence of ethnic media can be traced back to the 1800s with the production of abolitionist, Native-American, Latino, and Chinese media content (Matsaganis et al, 2011, p. 31-34).

However with the onset of World War I and World War II, the production environment of media in the U.S. changed immensely. Negative public sentiments from white Americans towards outsiders and specifically towards ethnic content forced many media outlets to close their doors (Matsaganis et al, 2011, p. 35). As the result, the dominant Anglo press received considerably more attention during these years. Yet at the same time, the few ethnic media that did survive served as valuable tools for communities to remain connected and informed. For instance, Chinese-language newspapers utilized Chinese-American servicemen as writers, which helped them stay in touch with people at home in addition to giving the publications a first-hand and unique perspective of the events on the battlefield. As the U.S. opened its doors to a wider variety and number of immigrants after 1965, such as the Koreans and Vietnamese, the need for ethnic media quickly escalated (Matsaganis et al, 2011, p. 36 -37). This ignited the interests of ethnic communities to create media outlets that specifically cater to their members.

Researchers have found that the increasing presence of ethnic media online affects how they are used and who uses them. Ethnic media primarily serve two main functions, connection and orientation (Matsaganis et al, 2011). Ethnic media, in

collaboration with the capabilities made possible by ICTs, connect immigrants to the developments in their home countries and communities. Through the Internet, immigrants can connect with the same news sources that they may have received in their home countries and read about local events and issues that affect their family and friends who still reside there. Ethnic media also serves an orientation role by communicating the social norms and rules of the places of settlement, serving as tools that connect immigrants to employment opportunities, informing immigrants of their legal rights, and helping newcomers connect with others with similar experiences. (Matsaganis et al, 2011, p. 58-64).

Many of the ethnic media outlets that have established themselves online are also generating content that specifically target second and third-generation immigrants (Matsaganis et al, 2011). This strategy stems from the idea that younger generations are likely to possess higher media literacy than older generations. Accordingly, children, adolescents, and young adults are more likely to be users of the Internet and be attracted to online content. As a result, this has implications for how online media can serve as resources for immigrants. This generational divide demonstrates that age is a critical factor in predicting the adoption of resources and tools. However, these findings raise questions regarding whether age is a determining factor for Internet use or other ICTs as well. Like other studies have also shown, a more in-depth observation must be taken of the interconnections between age and other factors such as level of education and access to various ICTs.

The literature on ICTs and immigrant populations reveal that communication and cultural exchanges are occurring in ways like never before. Research also shows there are

a variety of factors that influence the adoption and use of such technologies. These variables affect overall interaction patterns and levels of cultural knowledge that have implications on how well individuals come to adapt in new communities. Greater understanding of these factors will help improve the assessment of technological strategies that aim to foster cultural transactions, leading to improved effectiveness in the long run. The current study hopes to aid in this advancement.

Vietnamese Refugees in the United States

The research on Vietnamese refugees dates back nearly four decades. As the result of their significant presence in many American communities since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, Vietnamese refugees have garnered a considerable amount of attention from academic research. Scholars have primarily focused on studying the factors that influence acculturation amongst this group of people, in addition to examining the unique communities that they have been able to build in the U.S. The literature concerning Vietnamese refugees also concentrates on the significance of ICTs in establishing transnational ties between Vietnam and its diaspora.

Much of the earliest work on this topic aimed to provide basic understanding of the resettlement process that Vietnamese refugees undergo in the United States. Smither and Rodriguez-Giegling (1979) studied a group of Indochinese refugees to measure the marginality, modernity, and anxiety that this group experienced. Of important note, this study defined modernity as a personal sense of openness to the change, variety, and challenge that are a part of novel experiences (Smither & Rodriguez-Giegling, 1979). The researchers then compared the findings of their study with Indochinese refugees

alongside those of non-Vietnamese Americans citizens. Their findings indicate that refugees experience higher levels of marginality and anxiety, and lower levels of modernity than non-Vietnamese Americans (Smither & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 472-475). In other words, refugees experience a great sense of distance between themselves and mainstream American society as they make their transition into that society.

Montero (1979) took a step further in examining the resettlement and adjustment of Vietnamese refugees in American society. Using national data and results from five sample surveys with thousands of first wave Vietnamese refugees, Montero looked at the specific stages that refugees underwent as they progressed towards socioeconomic adaptation. Since the only refugees included in this study were those who were resettled in the U.S. between the years of 1975 and 1977, his findings showed numerous common characteristics among this population. The majority were well-educated and held professional, clerical, sales, or managerial positions back in Vietnam, which created a lot of pressure and expectations for them to attain similar white-collar positions in the U.S. Unfortunately, the survey results revealed that most of these refugees encountered downward mobility in their newly adopted country as they were forced to settle for blue-collar jobs (Montero, 1979, p. 41). However the employment rates for these Vietnamese refugees were extremely high, with as much as 95 percent of males and 93 percent of females attaining employment (Montero, 1979, p. 43-44). Montero also discovered that as time transpired, the income for refugee households increased and the dependency for public assistance decreased. This demonstrates that despite their early struggles, the Vietnamese are making strides in socioeconomic adaptation and building sufficient lives within American communities.

Moreover, Nguyen and Henkin (1982) discovered that the different conditions under which refugees fled Vietnam affected the subsequent adaptation processes that these individuals undergo in the U.S. The researchers noted that the course of adaptation for refugees was much different than other classes of immigrants. In order to test this argument, they conducted a study on the first two initial waves of Vietnamese refugees to uncover the positions that they held about their lives in the new cultural environment. The first wave of refugees, consisting mostly of elites, left Vietnam during fairly acute political crises. Despite the fact that this group has found considerable success in the U.S., research findings showed that they tend to be unsatisfied with their new life and remained resistant to adaptation. On the other hand, the second wave of refugees, who did not come from highly-educated backgrounds, were much more appreciative of their lives in the U.S. and tended to possess more open attitudes towards adaptation to American culture. (Nguyen & Henkin, 1982).

Scholars have tried to further identify the predictors of acculturation among Vietnamese refugees. Comparing personality factors, age, level of education, and time spent in the United States, researchers have found that personality factors are significant predictors of acculturation (Smither & Rodriguez-Giegling, 1982). Conscientiousness and likability are personality characteristics that are highly correlated with acculturation success. By the same token, Matsuoka (1990) claimed that age of entry is a significant determinant of how well and quickly a refugee assumes American cultural patterns. The researcher found that there is considerable contrast between Vietnamese parents and children in their willingness to welcome change, which often results in family disunity and conflict (Matsuoka, 1990, p. 343). Finally, current employment status,

socioeconomic status in Vietnam, length of time in the U.S., and education were all identified as predictors of behavioral acculturation (Celano & Tyler, 1991). Hence, research shows that acculturation occurs varyingly and depends on a number of interrelated factors that make each individual's experience unique.

Exploring deeper into the topic of acculturation, Aguilar-San Juan (2009) looked at the relationship between place-making and community-building for Vietnamese refugees in the U.S. Place refers to a space that draws together the elements that generate identity: territory, culture, history, and individual perceptions. On the other hand, community encompasses solidarity, sentiments that bring people together, and significance, senses of accomplishment and fulfillment. When a group of people territorializes and establishes symbols for a place, this boosts the feelings of community. Aguilar-San Juan examined this phenomenon in two different "Little Saigons", or diasporic Vietnamese communities reassembling the former Saigon, in Orange County, California and Boston, Massachusetts. Through interviews with community leaders, which include former military officers, doctors, business owners, social workers, clergy members, and government officials, the researcher found that Vietnamese communities are trying to preserve their ethnic identities as much as they can. For example, the organizational and architectural elements of shopping centers embody the notable features of traditional Vietnamese culture. Instead of working towards being more American, members of these communities are actively engaged in a place-based process of creating and claiming a group identity for their people (Aguilar-San Juan, 2009). Therefore, Little Saigons serve as important sites for the Vietnamese to organize their resources and establish their own individual presence in an American context. This also

provides concrete evidence for the classical theoretical notion of acculturation that claims this process occurs in a multi-dimensional and multi-directional manner where there can be changes to all of the cultures involved in a certain setting (Redfield et al., 1936).

Lieu (2011) delved further into the importance of diasporic Vietnamese communities. In examination of the Little Saigon in Orange County, California, the researcher argued that this enclave not only strengthens Vietnamese ethnic identity but also manifests the dreams of what Vietnam could have been if the war had resulted differently. Orange County's Little Saigon is a thriving commercial and social center that bustles with thousands of private businesses and civic participation. Therefore, it represents the economy and democracy that many expatriates wish to see in the now communist-controlled Vietnam. Lieu claimed that these economic and political values have also become a platform for numerous Vietnamese Americans to successfully enter into mainstream politics in the U.S. Chiming into the right-wing ideas that are extremely prevalent in Orange County's conservative suburban neighborhoods, Vietnamese American politicians have carved a strong political path for themselves as well as helped bolster the security of the institutions and identity of their people in the local area (Lieu, 2011). This is illustrative of the ways that the Vietnamese community is culturally, economically, and politically engaging with American society. By enhancing their unique identity and shaping their representations, this community is altering and making significant contributions to the landscapes of American society as well.

Ethnic media production is another approach that the Vietnamese diaspora have adopted to make a mark for themselves in the U.S. Hence, Lieu continued her investigation by studying a popular Vietnamese variety show series called *Paris by Night*.

Produced by and for the Vietnamese diaspora, each *Paris by Night* production typically features musical acts, comedic skits, and fashion shows that exhibit cherished features of Vietnamese culture. Not only does this variety show act as a source of entertainment, but it also establishes “new ways of literally envisioning Vietnamese culture in exile, carving out spaces for the articulation and formation of postrefugee gender, ethnic, and cultural identities” (Lieu, 2011, p. 81). In these ethnic media productions, the former image of Vietnamese refugees as a distraught and powerless group of people are torn away and replaced by representations of a strong middle-class and model minority in American society. Although *Paris by Night* creates a false sense of fulfillment and success for the Vietnamese diaspora by highlighting the possession of materialistic things and other ideas of bourgeois decadence, the fact that Vietnamese Americans have used this public space to successfully showcase their ethnic pride should not be dismissed (Lieu, 2011). Thus, ethnic media serves as a cultural tool that unifies the diaspora and consolidates Vietnamese identity in the U.S.

Expanding upon the importance of ethnic media, Valverde (2012) explored the transnational connections that the Vietnamese population in the U.S. have established and maintained with their homeland. With the help of technological advances, transnational activities have broken down the geographical boundaries, negative sentiments, and contrasting ideologies that the diasporic community often possesses with post-war Vietnam. Valverde examined how the production, dissemination, and consumption of Vietnamese popular music have stimulated the flow of ideas and influence between those living in Vietnam and the diaspora. For the early waves of refugees that were resettled in the U.S., music was considered important beyond its entertainment value because it a

way for refugees to reconnect with and preserve the culture that they left behind.

Refugees who were involved with the music industry back in the homeland soon found a window of opportunity to firmly reestablish their skills and replant Vietnamese culture abroad. Vietnamese popular music quickly spread its influence especially during the mid 1990s. Considering that the musical content consisted of “a special blend of nostalgia that appeals to not only members of the diasporic community but also residents of Vietnam” (Valverde, 2012, p. 30), this industry was able to thrive despite the immense geographical distance and, oftentimes, strict government regulations. Aided by the capabilities of technology, songs and performers were able to reach music lovers back in Vietnam and helped continue a common ethnic tie between groups of people.

Valverde also discussed the impact of ICTs on the formation of transnational virtual communities that helped spark sociopolitical transformations in Vietnam and the U.S. Transcending national and community restrictions, the Internet allowed Vietnamese activists within a online forum called VNForum to communicate, collaborate, and demonstrate their concerns about social, economic and political issues that affect both Vietnam and the diaspora. VNForum developed with the goal of using the Internet to promote a safe place for healthy dialogue that would also instigate real life changes. The forum garnered subscribers from fifty different countries, which helped set the stage for numerous powerful campaigns to manifest. Several movements received international attention but the most noteworthy was the No-Nike campaign for labor rights. Members of VNForum used the forum to promote awareness of severe labor abuses that were occurring in Nike shoe factories throughout Vietnam. Vietnamese Americans, the Vietnamese government, and human rights groups soon joined together to urge Nike to

create better working conditions for its employees (Valverde, 2012). Valverde concluded that through ICTs, “communities are rebuilt and new ones emerge and evolve to address the needs and desires of a people and their counterparts in diaspora” (Valverde, 2012, p. 89). Therefore through the Internet, Vietnamese living in the U.S. and abroad were able to actively participate in creating change and maintain their identity with their native land more easily than ever before.

Although there has been a substantial amount of research on Vietnamese refugees in the United States, there still remain many gaps in this body of literature. Most of the research on this population was conducted in the 1970s and 1980s during the initial waves of migration and resettlement. The most recent waves of Vietnamese refugees that arrived in the United States during the mid-1990s have been given very little attention. It would be unfair to generalize all Vietnamese refugees under the same categories and characteristics of old research findings, for there are numerous differences between earlier and more recent waves of refugees. In addition, research on the acculturation of this refugee population in the United States has barely touched upon this process in relation to ICTs. Therefore, these are some of the lacunas that this current study aims to fill.

Development of Cultural Identity

Another issue that this study aims to explore is how acculturation impacts the development of identity. Culture provides the framework on which human experiences and actions are built for a wide range of matters. As Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) explained:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action (p. 357).

In other words, culture is the basis for identification and creates frames for reference, meaning, and behavior. However, culture does not only determine behavior but it is also the outcome of behavior. This notion suggests that the formation of identity is a dual process of production that is not stagnant and has no predictable outcome.

Stuart Hall expanded on this notion, claiming that identification is a process that is always in motion and never-ending. Hall (1990) explained that there are usually two ways to consider cultural identity. The first conception regards identity as belonging to a single shared culture. Cultural identity, in this sense, reflects a stable and unchanging framework of meaning that is made up of common historical experiences and codes of behavior. On the other hand, the second position considers cultural identity as something that is not necessarily predetermined by history. Although rooted within history, cultural identities are also subject to constant transformation and renewal. Identity does not proceed in a fixed, unchanging straight line. Instead, this conceptualization “accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions” (Hall, 2011, p. 17). Championing this latter conception, Hall stated that identities are constructed through discursive practices

as well as systems of power (Hall, 2011). With the heightened movement of people across the globe in modern times, identities are constantly introduced to new forces, making their construction evermore complex. This study aims to reveal how the identities of Vietnamese refugees are affected by the many different cultures or cultural elements that may exist in a single context.

Synthesis

Focusing on the roles of ICTs in the acculturation of Vietnamese refugees in the United States, this study draws upon the existing literature from a variety of academic fields. Although very strict and narrow in scope, early sociological ideas about assimilation and acculturation formulated by Park and Gordon provide the basic foundation for the understanding of the relationship between race and culture. These concepts were later refined and clarified, with acculturation becoming more encompassing and better suited for discussions around the context of contemporary refugees and other migrants. Communication scholars then took these ideas on acculturation and created theories through their own lens to address the issue of cross-cultural adaptation. The perspective that communication is central to acculturation is furthered by the exploration of how ICTs have changed this process. Research on Vietnamese refugees in the United States applies the ideas and concerns about acculturation that have been expressed by theorists. Lastly, Hall explains the complex nature of identification, which provides the foundation for how processes of acculturation may impact identity formation.

Even though the present bodies of literature cover many different aspects relating to race and culture, acculturation, and the implications of ICTs, there are still numerous gaps that need to be filled. In summary, this study aims to take a closer look at the multi-dimensional and multi-directional alterations that occur when a contemporary migrant population enters and adjusts in a tangled cultural environment. Furthermore, there has yet to be much research on the newer waves of Vietnamese refugee who resettled in the United States in the late 1980s and 1990s. This study will take a more comprehensive approach in considering all of the migration waves that fled Vietnam in the last days of the war and the decades that followed the war. Finally, the research on the acculturation of Vietnamese refugees has meagerly considered the impact of ICTs in either hindering or aiding their abilities to establish sufficient lives in the U.S.

CHAPTER 3: POLICY ANALYSIS

Introduction

United States immigration policy has shifted immensely since the beginning of the twentieth century. These shifts are reflective of larger political, economic, and social changes that have occurred both domestically and internationally. Therefore, internal agendas as well as external global forces have shaped the fluctuating pattern of U.S. immigration throughout the decades. The need to provide protection to refugees did not become an integral aspect of U.S. immigration policy until World War II had concluded. Before this, legislation that aimed to keep the country's national ethnic heritage intact restricted entry for many groups of people, especially those that came from Asia (Ong & Liu, 1994). It was not until the 1960s, after two decades of civil rights movements had instigated intense discussions about race and the need to remedy institutional racism, that the national origin quota system was finally repealed with the 1965 amendment to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952.

The year 1965 appropriately serves as a significant marker in the recent history of U.S. immigration, for it represents a major change in perception regarding how immigrants should be included in American society. Instead of assimilation, which is unidirectional and requires immigrants to give up their native identities to meld completely to a single Northern European American identity, ideas about cultural pluralism became increasingly embraced and emphasized. Also as U.S. corporations began reaching out to the global market, immigrants became an increasingly important aspect for the expanding U.S. economy. Such a shift in ideology and economic conditions continued to be cast within immigration policies that were enacted from then on. This includes the special

policies passed in order to meet the demands of the Vietnamese refugee crisis that emerged after the conclusion of the Vietnam War in 1975. In essence, these policies opened the door for foreigners to showcase their cultural differences as they also attempted to adjust to the novelties of American culture.

Analyses of U.S. immigration policies that relate to the resettlement of refugees reveal that legislation does influence acculturation. The following eight policies were examined: Displaced Persons Act of 1948, Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, Refugee Relief Act of 1953, Migration and Refugee Act of 1962, Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, Indochina Migration and Refugee Act of 1975, Indochina Refugee Children Assistance Act of 1975, and the 1980 Refugee Act. I conducted these analyses using the landmark year of 1965 as a point of reference to compare the different ways in which immigration policies reflected broad ideologies and impacted the experience of refugees as they transitioned to the U.S. Although formal legislation does influence cross-cultural adaptation, factors within immigrant and refugees' social environment may have much greater impact. Nonetheless, the examination of the changes within policy provides a solid foundation on which further explanations can be built regarding the acculturation of refugees, particularly those who came from Vietnam.

Pre-1965 Immigration Policy

Up until the end of the nineteenth century, there was very little distinction made between refugees and other migrant groups within U.S. immigration policy. Refugees were regarded like other immigrants and were expected to meet the same set of requirements to enter American soil. This proved to be especially problematic when the

immigration system became focused on national origins, for this prevented immigrants of certain nationalities from entering the U.S. even if they were fleeing from danger in their native countries. The first legislation that was based on national origin was the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which banned unskilled Chinese workers from entering the U.S. (Ong & Liu, 1991). However, restrictive immigration policy did not enter full force until the enactment of the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924. These policies established numerical limitations for Southern and Eastern Europeans and created arbitrary geographically barred zones consisting mostly of Asian countries. Such restrictions spawned from the nativist movement, which was based on the ideology that people of certain religions or ethnicities could not be welcomed into the U.S. (Bennet, 1998). Immigrants were blamed for many of the economic and social ills during the time, which included the decreasing wages and working conditions of U.S. workers as well as the increasing crime and poverty rates in urban areas (Violet, 1991). However with the onset of WWII, the U.S. could not neglect foreign policy goals nor ignore global humanitarian demands. As a growing dominant economic and political leader, the U.S. realized its responsibility to help alleviate the unprecedented flight of refugees from war-ravaged Europe.

This led to the passage of the first refugee legislation in U.S. history. The Displaced Persons Act (DPA) of 1948 was enacted in order to assist the victims of Nazi persecution and detainees of WWII. The DPA established who could qualify as an “eligible displaced person”, stating that they must meet all current requirements under U.S. immigration laws for admission into the country. This meant that a person’s eligibility for an immigration visa depended on a national origins quota as defined in the

Immigration Act of 1924. When admitted into the U.S., qualified individuals must be able to successfully enter the workforce without taking away employment from any current U.S. residents. They must also demonstrate that they will be able to settle peacefully within American communities by maintaining sufficient housing and staying away from public offenses. Immediate family members of eligible displaced persons, including their spouse and dependent children under the age of 21, may also gain entry into the U.S as long as they are able to fulfill the same requirements. Furthermore, the DPA set a numerical limit for immigration visas at two hundred thousand for the first two fiscal years. An additional two thousand visas could be granted without regard to nationality quotas in exceptional circumstances (Displaced Persons Act of 1948). In total, the legislation permitted the resettlement of more than 400,000 people from European countries (Violet, 1991).

Analysis of the DPA of 1948 reveals that narrow uni-directional Eurocentric ideas about assimilation and cultural interaction were still dominant at the time. The requirements that displaced individuals were expected to fulfill showcased ideas of how immigrants should be included within American society. It was assumed that immigrants would enter into the U.S. and seamlessly blend into the current employment, housing, and legal conditions of the country. There was also no consideration within the Act stating that assistance would be provided to help individuals make this transition. Moreover, the nationality quota within immigration law limited who could be admitted into the U.S. and many refugees were turned away as consequence of such restrictions. These attitudes regarding assimilation and national origins, therefore, curtailed the progression of U.S. immigration policy and impacted the experience of refugees.

The millions of refugees who were forced to leave their homelands during and after the devastation of World War II captured the concern of the international community. As the result, the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was approved. Officially entering into force on April 22, 1954, the Convention defines a refugee as a person who flees his or her own country “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951, Art. 1(A)(2)). The Convention also lays down the rights of refugees and outlines the obligations of member states. A few of the most emphasized principles within the document are non-discrimination, non-penalization, and non-refoulement, or the expulsion of a refugee against his or her will.

The 1951 Convention, however, was constrained by geographical and temporal limitations, for it only sought to protect those who became refugees as the result of events occurring in Europe before January 1, 1951 (Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951). Therefore, an additional Protocol was adopted in 1967 in order to remove these restrictions and to allow universal coverage for all future situations in which the protection of refugees would be needed (Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1967). Although the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol are technically independent instruments, they are tightly interwoven and are principal components in the protection of refugees worldwide. The United States is a signatory of both treaties. Accordingly, the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol provided the basis on which later U.S. policies were constructed.

Nevertheless, the next major piece of immigration legislation did not establish any specific considerations for refugees. The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1952 was enacted in the midst of a period of intense anti-Communist sentiments among key government legislators, often called McCarthyism, and there were heated debates regarding U.S. foreign policy goals (Schrecker, 1994). Although the U.S. wanted to highlight its image as the leader of the first world, in direct competition with the U.S.S.R., China, and their satellites, it did not want to liberalize immigration laws to welcome more individuals who had suffered under Communist rule. Instead, the 1952 INA upheld the system of national origin quota for admitting immigrants as set forth by the Immigration Act of 1924 (Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952). The legislation was supported by the ideology that the sociological and cultural balance in the U.S. needed to be preserved (Viallet, 1991). Thus, nationality continued to be the primary characteristic under which foreigners were determined to be eligible for entry. Besides what was already in place, there were no additional provisions made in regards to refugees despite the political conditions of the time (Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952).

Fortunately other means arose to enable refugee admission outside of the national origin quota system. The Refugee Relief Act (RRA) of 1953 authorized 205,000 special non-quota immigrant visas to be given to refugees, stating that the determination of visa eligibility shall be made without discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, or national origin. Even so, the 1953 RRA still required an assurance to be made regarding how foreigners were expected to adapt in the U.S. Similar to preceding legislation, individuals granted admission into the U.S. were supposed to assimilate or merge

smoothly into the American cultural fabric without causing any trouble to its current state. This requirement applied especially to employment and housing (Refugee Relief Act of 1953). These expectations were problematic, for they assumed that all refugees would adapt in the U.S. in the same manner. It disregarded the fact that people carry with them different sets of skills, knowledge, values, and expectations, all of which affect how they will adjust in a new cultural environment. In addition, it failed to recognize the problems of systemic racism, which negatively affected employment, education, and housing for affected groups. Refugees also encountered varying social and cultural factors in their places of resettlement which influenced adaptation as well. The RRA did not recognize this and there lacked indication that any additional resettlement assistance would be provided to refugees besides the initial costs of transportation to the U.S.

Then in 1962, the U.S. took a step towards strengthening its commitment to helping refugees transition into the country's framework. Congress passed the Migration and Refugee Act (MRA) of 1962 to continue the membership of the U.S. in the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration. Under this legislation, the U.S. government accordingly agreed to contribute to programs of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that provide relief and assistance to displaced persons. The MRA also declared that support would be given to national public organizations that aim to provide health, educational, and employment services to refugees. Particular emphasis was placed on the establishment and maintenance of employment and professional training for refugees who need such reinforcement (Migration and Refugee Act of 1962). Hence, the commitments set forth by the 1962 MRA symbolized greater attention and concern to the needs of refugees. This also reflected a change in the ideology regarding

how foreigners should be included in the U.S. Before this, foreigners were expected to assimilate seamlessly into the U.S. without causing any ripple effects. But in the 1960s, a new paradigm of global neoliberalism began to develop in which the globalization and contribution of immigrants were considered key to economic growth. More emphasis began to be placed on immigrants' abilities to actively participate in strengthening the prosperity of the country. Policy, thus, became increasingly inclusive and multicultural.

Post-1965 Immigration Policy

The INA of 1952 was amended in 1965, representing the unofficial turning point for U.S. immigration policy. Approved during the midst of the Civil Rights Movement, when deeper questions about race, nationality, and systemic discrimination were being raised throughout U.S. society, the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of 1965 finally abolished the national origins system. It further stated that, "no person shall receive any preference or priority or to be discriminated against in the issuance of an immigrant visa because of his race, sex, nationality, place of birth, or place of residence" (Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, Section 202(a)). These amendments signaled that political ideologies about race and culture were greatly changing towards all groups of people, including those who were seeking entry into the U.S.

Instead of nationalities, the INA of 1965 prioritized family reunification, skilled and unskilled labor, and refugees. These changes reflected the ideology that discrimination based on race should be eliminated. As the result of this belief, policymakers aimed at creating an immigration system that would be founded upon equal opportunities and fairness towards all (Kennedy, 1966). The 1965 legislation made clear

that whenever possible, parents and children, brothers and sisters, and husbands and wives should not be separated. Great efforts should be made so that immediate family members can be sent to the same country or be brought back together in the same country. Next, professionals in the fields of arts or sciences and laborers who can fill in the gaps within the American workforce are also granted admission.

Moreover, the 1965 INA included specific provisions for refugees, something that was not provided in the 1952 version. Refugees qualified for entry into the United States if they had fled from persecution in any Communist-dominated or Middle Eastern country. Considerations were also established for individuals who were uprooted as the result of natural disasters. Further guidelines were laid out for managing refugees who had entered the U.S. under conditional terms. The amendments, all in all, gave permanent residence to all refugees without the need for other special programs or legislation (Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965).

Overall, the 1965 INA significantly changed the flow of immigration to the U.S. As this occurred, the cultural landscape in the U.S. also quickly altered. Yet Reimers (1983) argued that this legislation alone does not account for the radical changes that transpired, for even the policymakers themselves did not anticipate the major results that were produced. Indeed without the national origins quota in place, people from different geographical locations found increasing opportunities to gain entry to American soil. This particularly included Asian immigrants. Their population in the U.S. grew steadily right after 1965 and rapidly in the 1970s, in part because of fast naturalization processes and the family reunification system. But more importantly, it was the factors associated with the social, economic, and political environments that caused these shifts in immigration

to occur (Reimers, 1983). Accordingly, these forces affect acculturation as well because this process is embedded within larger frameworks and contexts.

Policies Relating to Vietnamese Refugees

Ten years after this legislation was enacted, the emergence of the Vietnamese refugee crisis created further demands for the U.S. immigration system. The Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act (IMRAA) of 1975 was signed by President Gerald Ford in order to assist the tens of thousands of refugees who fled from Vietnam during the closing days or immediately after the war. This policy granted refugees from Cambodia and Vietnam special permission to enter the U.S. and authorized \$155 million to be spent towards the establishment of a resettlement program (Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975). In the efforts to assist the children of this population, the Indochina Refugee Children Assistance Act (IRCAA) of 1975 was also approved. Recognizing that education is fundamental to childhood growth, the U.S. aimed to assist agencies in providing public education for refugee children from the ages of five to seventeen. Both state and local educational agencies were qualified to receive grants to operate their programs for the 1976 and 1977 fiscal years. The legislation also authorized adult education programs to be set up for older refugees, particularly for the instruction of reading and mathematics (Indochina Children Assistance Act of 1975).

These two bills illustrated the expansion of refugee admission and greater recognition of the needs of refugees. Even though the U.S. was heavily involved in the Vietnam War and thus felt a sense of obligation to help alleviate the chaos that transpired in the aftermath of the conflict, the enactment of the IMRAA and IRCAA still showed

increasing openness to refugees and willingness to integrate them into the American fabric. Many of these provisions were set in vague terms, especially in regards to the specifics of the resettlement program and the length of time of assistance. But the tone of these arrangements were not initiated in a forceful manner where individuals were absolutely required to follow a set of protocols as in earlier legislation. At the same time, this made policy less powerful in dictating how refugees will transition in the U.S. and allows room for other forces to exert their influence.

Decades of reforms to liberalize refugee admission culminated in the 1980 Refugee Act. Still standing today, the Refugee Act amends the INA of 1965. It defines the term “refugee” according to the definition given in the 1951 Convention Relating the Status of Refugees. The legislation gives power to the President to determine the number of refugees that can be admitted into the U.S. each year and this number may be adjusted if unforeseen emergencies arise. Detailed asylum procedures as well as status adjustments for refugees are also laid out. Furthermore, the 1965 INA establishes the Office of Refugee Resettlement to coordinate assistance services and programs for refugees. This includes making contracts with voluntary organizations that work directly with refugees in the resettlement process. Finally, this policy repeals the provisions of the preceding 1975 IMRAA; hence, making it the primary legislation to deal with the resettlement of Indochinese refugees (Refugee Act of 1980).

U.S. immigration policy in relation to refugees has significantly changed since the first refugee legislation was passed in 1948. Prior to the expansion of refugee admission and assistance programs, the U.S. made little distinction between refugees and other immigrants. Therefore, the forcefully displaced were subject to the same strict protocols

as the voluntarily displaced. As reforms broke down restrictive barriers, notably the national origins quota system, more doors were opened up for people to gain admission into the U.S. World conflicts paired with ideological transitions and a changing economic mode of production ignited the creation of policies dedicated to absorbing the global refugee population. This set the stage for additional policies to be passed following the Vietnam War. The examination of formal legislation reveals that policy does affect how refugees adapt in the U.S. But as time transpired and policies became increasingly liberalized, this influence slowly decreased. This may also suggest that forces within the domestic political, economic, and social environment became more powerful. The next chapter analyzes the findings from participant interviews to reveal the forces that now affect acculturation.

CHAPTER 4: INTERVIEW FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The twenty interviews that I conducted for this study provide insight into the ways in which ICTs impact Vietnamese refugees' acculturation in the United States. There are five main themes in these interview findings: resettlement background, culture and identity, types of media, communication patterns, and computer usage. Furthermore, these findings are discussed in the context of the different waves of emigration.

Resettlement Background

The Vietnamese refugees that I interviewed come from a variety of resettlement backgrounds. The year in which these participants fled from Vietnam ranges from 1975 to 2011; therefore, encompassing a wide range of realities that each wave of asylum seekers encountered as they left Vietnam. Out of the twenty participants included in this study, nine escaped their native country before the year 1990, which represents the first four phases of the mass exodus. The eleven remaining participants left Vietnam in 1990 or later, constituting the last wave of refugees that have received minimal attention in academic literature thus far. This section will review the interview findings that reveal how refugees' resettlement background sets the foundation for the extent to which ICTs affect their acculturation in the United States.

Political Refugees

For at least fifteen participants, the reasons that drove them to flee Vietnam stemmed from the dangerous political environment that resulted at the conclusion of the

Vietnam War. When the Communist forces of the National Liberation Front for South Vietnam, or Viet Cong, captured the South Vietnamese capital of Saigon in April 1975, millions found their lives in jeopardy. Those who had supported the South Vietnamese cause, in alliance with the U.S., during the war feared that they would be the first to be targeted by the new Communist leaders. Evacuations of the most vulnerable individuals began on April 15, days before the war even officially ended. The Interagency Task Force (IATF), a special agency established by U.S. President Gerald Ford, was in charge of coordinating these evacuations and relief efforts (Liu, 1979).

One interviewee was a woman who was the daughter of a major in the South Vietnamese military. As the result of her father's political affiliation and role in the war, the then eleven-year old girl and her family were part of the privileged first wave that was safely evacuated out of Vietnam by the IATF. She recalled the high level of secrecy that her family had to keep during that time, "I remember distinctively, my mom was like, do not tell your friends. Do not tell anybody because if we don't get out, we're dead" (Personal Communication, September 29, 2013). Fortunately, these secrets were kept and her family was rushed onto an American military aircraft to be lifted out of the country in the middle of a night in mid-April.

However, the majority of participants who fled Vietnam because of political reasons did so by boat on the high seas. Seven interviewees made the dangerous journey to a neighboring country by small, overcrowded, and unstable boats. Pushed by the desire to rid themselves of the extreme hardships and restrictions imposed by the Communist regime, these refugees were willing to risk their lives and leave the familiarities of their native country behind. For instance, one outspoken participant explained that even

though there was a 90 percent likelihood that he would die on a boat in 1980, the slim chance of survival was better than continuing his life in a country under Communist leadership (Personal Communication, September 28, 2013). Other refugees described their flight by sea as being very fortunate, for they had made unsuccessful attempts in the past or knew others who had encountered misfortune. These positive outlooks are contrasted with the fact that at least ten percent of all Vietnamese asylum seekers lost their lives during these voyages. In addition, many of those who survived were subject to ambushes by pirates, robbery, and rape even before reaching their first country of asylum (Freeman, 1995). A woman who courageously fled Vietnam by herself in 1979 compared her personal journey to those that she had heard about, “Yeah and people just cheat them. Just like we have the boat, they took your money and they don’t take you anywhere. But I was lucky” (Personal Communication, September 29, 2013).

For the political refugees that left Vietnam later on during the mass exodus, a much safer journey was in store. Through international resettlement programs, ODP and CPA, and the U.S. specific program called Humanitarian Operation (HO), refugees were resettled directly from Vietnam to the U.S. in a more organized manner. Under these programs, refugees could qualify for resettlement if they meet certain criteria. To qualify for ODP, a Vietnamese refugee could enter the U.S. if they had a close relative already living in the country, if they had been employed by an American government agency, or if they were closely affiliated with the U.S. before the conclusion of the Vietnam War (Chan, 2006). CPA allowed an agreement to be established that ensured the Vietnamese government would facilitate the legal departure of individuals who qualified for ODP.

Furthermore, the HO program followed the same criteria as ODP, specifying however that the third criterion also be applied to reeducation camp detainees (Do, 1999). Reeducation camps were part of the tactic by the Communist regime to suppress its potential political opponents by removing them from society. As political prisoners, the military officers, policemen, civil servants, leaders of counterinsurgency programs, professors, and artists who were placed in these camps were subject to hard labor, starvation, and political indoctrination. HO provided the opportunity for those who had suffered at least three years of reeducation to come to the United States (Chan, 2006).

Of the remaining interviewees who fled from Vietnam on political grounds, all did so through the HO program. These five refugees were either imprisoned in reeducation camps themselves or had an immediate family member who endured such punishment. A former officer in the South Vietnamese army explained that he was kept in reeducation camps for five and a half years after the conclusion of the war. Through the HO program, his entire family was resettled in the U.S. directly from Vietnam in 1994 (Personal Communication, August 17, 2013). Similarly, another participant recalled that she was approved to come to the U.S. in the same year as her family because her father was a military officer who had been placed in a reeducation camp (Personal Communication, September 30, 2013). After years of much suffering and hardship, these HO refugees traveled comfortably via commercial airplanes to their new homes in the U.S. Thus, their resettlement experiences contrast markedly with those of the earlier waves of asylum seekers.

My interview findings show that each wave of emigration experienced different sets of obstacles. Although these refugees were tied to common political sentiments, the

varied circumstances in which they left Vietnam affected their willingness as well as their abilities to adapt in the United States. This is because some of these refugees received direct assistance that helped them flee Vietnam and resettle in the U.S. while others did not. Experience differed even more when comparing those who left through family sponsorship and for more economic reasons than political ones. The relationship between the use of information and communication technology and political ideology will be examined in detail later on.

Material and Immaterial (Affective) Possessions

Participants also discussed the material goods and emotions that were brought with them when they left Vietnam. These questions were intended to be open-ended in the hopes to uncover a variety of responses ranging from material to immaterial. I discovered that what refugees left behind in terms of possessions affected their willingness to maintain cultural ties with Vietnam, or to abandon these ties in order to acquire new ones in the United States.

The eleven interviewees that disclosed information about material goods said that they brought very few things. Since they could not bring much with them on their journey, the majority only carried the necessary money or clothing that they needed to begin their life elsewhere. Only a couple of individuals claimed that they brought various keepsakes, such as print media and photographs, with them when they fled Vietnam. In one sense, refugees had no choice but to leave many of the physical aspects of their lives in Vietnam behind. But they were also willing to do this in order to have the opportunity to start anew elsewhere. In fact, one participant claimed, “It’s like I don’t

bring nothing from Vietnam because they have nothing over there to bring over here. We're talking about material. I just bring the memory of the horrible life over there when I live with the communists" (Personal Communication, September 28, 2013). By both emphasizing the lack of worthy material things and highlighting the negative sentiments that drove him to break away from Vietnam, this refugee expressed his willingness to rebuild his life in another place.

The interviews revealed that the majority of refugees brought with them varying levels of uncertainty and there appears to be no direct correlation between refugees' feelings and the wave of emigration in which they belong. A woman who left Vietnam in 1986 when she was a mere eight years old summarized her feelings, "Probably wondering what the U.S. would be like? So excited to go. But scared at the same time. Pretty much you're so adapted to Vietnam, you miss your family and the environment that you're kind of scared" (Personal Communication, September 28, 2013). Even though this woman was excited to come to the U.S. to discover the novelties that it had to offer, she was also fearful of leaving behind the familiarities of her homeland.

Other refugees disclosed similar feelings of openness to new cultural realities and hesitancy to abandon familiar aspects of daily life. This was expected, for leaving one's birthplace for a foreign land and an uncertain future entails a variety of mixed feelings. Yet, remarkably, none of the participants told me that they would remain in Vietnam if the political or economic conditions there were different. This could suggest that they do not possess a strong enough urge to maintain immediate contact with their native culture if it means sacrificing other types of freedoms. Later in this discussion of interview

findings, I will analyze how all of these paradoxical feelings may correlate with how refugees view their current identity today.

From my interviews, I found that refugees lacked strong emotional and material attachments to Vietnam, which might support greater openness to adopting aspects of American culture. Alternatively, this could lead refugees to become more alienated since they do not have strong attachments to their past nor their present environments. However these findings are limited by my use of snowball sampling to select participants, which was not wide enough to capture other possible responses that could have led to more concrete conclusions.

City of Arrival

The refugees' initial destination within the United States provided a significant foundation to analyze the process of acculturation. Although all the interviewees currently reside in the Sacramento, California area, only ten told me that this was their initial resettlement location. Two individuals first arrived in Camp Pendleton, California and Camp Chaffee, Arkansas. These were the first two out of the four U.S. refugee camps that were opened in 1975 to house the first wave of Vietnamese refugees as they arrived on American soil. The other two reception camps were located at Eglin Air Base, Florida and Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. Operated by the IATF and the U.S. military, these camps offered refugees an orientation to American culture, which included vocational and language training (Montero, 1979). Of the remaining participants, seventeen were resettled in cities throughout the state of California, such as San Jose,

Santa Cruz, San Diego, and La Puente. Two individuals, a husband and wife, were resettled in Lincoln, Nebraska and one individual was resettled in Phoenix, Arizona.

Given that half of the participants landed eventually in Sacramento, the question must be what is desirable about the city that attracted a growing number of Vietnamese people? Cultural capital, what Pierre Bourdieu describes as the sources of information, knowledge and skill that people hold and can be exchanged with others, could have been a motivational factor for those who moved to Sacramento from cities with very few Vietnamese people. As earlier waves of Vietnamese refugees moved there, the next waves followed until a population of more than 25,000 Vietnamese Americans developed. Sacramento has become a place where Vietnamese people could easily join together to build and share information and knowledge, and rebuild their cultural capital. It has become a site that grants Vietnamese refugees greater access to cultural connections, including information and entertainment media, and influences identity; therefore, affecting the process of acculturation.

Culture and Identity

Culture largely influences a person's identity. As explained earlier by Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952), culture provides the foundation for identification or the behavior that constructs identification. Considering that identity can be composed of many different cultures, it is important to examine how refugees are influenced by both Vietnamese and American culture. In regards to acculturation, the way in which a person identifies himself or herself indicates how much that person feels adapted to that culture. Interviews reveal that refugees are not only adopting American culture but also contributing their

Vietnamese culture as they build their lives in the U.S. The analysis of culture and identity provides the basis for understanding the impact of ICTs on acculturation.

Influences of American Culture

Participants discussed how acquiring English language skills and job-related skills and opportunities were the most important avenues of adaptation to American culture when they first arrived in the United States. Many of the interviewees had absolutely no knowledge of English when they were first resettled in the U.S and struggled to adjust for various amounts of time as they learned the language. A participant said that she took English as a Second Language (ESL) classes and began learning from the very beginning, for she did not even have knowledge of the alphabet. Hindered by the lack of language skills, she took up a job position as a dishwasher at a restaurant in order to survive (Personal Communication, September 30, 2013). Another participant shared her initial aspirations of continuing her profession as a midwife in the U.S. But because her English was very limited, she could not go to school to obtain the additional skills and certifications to pursue this goal (Personal Communication, September 28, 2013). Hence, refugees realized very early on that language skills help facilitate better and greater job opportunities.

Nevertheless, it appears that this sample of refugees may have overcome these early obstacles. Out of the twenty interviews, twelve were conducted entirely in English and eight were conducted in Vietnamese. Participants were, of course, informed that interviews would be conducted in whichever language they feel most comfortable communicating in. With a slight majority of participants preferring to communicate using

English, this demonstrates that many Vietnamese refugees have attained a sufficient level of English language skills. This does not necessarily mean that their Vietnamese language skills have diminished, for there is no indication that interviews would be inadequate if they were conducted in Vietnamese. But this may suggest that participants now feel secure with communicating in the language of the host culture. From this, it may be possible to deduce that these improved English language skills could be used as tools to help participants attain better jobs. However, this is not certain because many occupations require more than just language skills, including certifications or technical skills. Nonetheless this is still a positive indication that barriers can partially be broken down through the development of language skills

Influences of Vietnamese Culture

Participants were asked to reflect on the various aspects of Vietnamese culture that they want to maintain as they continue their lives in the United States. Family bonds received the most responses, followed by traditional cultural holidays and language. Seven people said that the value of family is considered one of the most significant values in Vietnamese culture. Oftentimes, the family bond intersects with the importance of celebrating cultural holidays. As one participant explains, “I think it’s basically about having a good time during the holidays, during the New Year, and then on the weekends when we come together. I think that’s what we really wanted to keep, just like the family union and having a good time with the family members” (Personal Communication, September 17, 2013).

The interviewees also thought that retaining the Vietnamese language was valuable. As mentioned earlier, eight out of the twenty interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, which is significant. In contrast with acquiring a new language that is necessary to achieve a social goal such as attaining a job, the importance of keeping one's native language lies on more personal grounds. A participant, now a mother of two, regrets that her Vietnamese is not at a higher level and wishes that her American-born daughters were more willing to take advantage of the opportunities to learn the language (Personal Communication, September 29, 2013). This demonstrates that she has a desire to pass on their native culture to future generations in the U.S., thereby altering or contributing to American culture. In fact, other participants also conveyed a similar aspiration of sharing aspects of Vietnamese culture with their American children and friends. They acknowledged that there are many good things that can be learned from both cultures.

Identification

The examination of cultural influences led to the discussion of identity. Participants were asked how they would identify themselves now. As discussed in the literature review, this question is based on Hall's explanation of identity and Kramer's theory of cultural fusion, which contribute to the understanding that individuals living in multi-cultural societies may interact and come to identify with a wide array of cultures. Acculturation does not occur in a uniform manner where individuals progress towards one predictable identity. The influences exerted by American, Vietnamese, and even other cultures within the U.S. uniquely shape each refugee's individual identity.

As expected, there were a variety of responses. Eight participants identify strongly with both Vietnamese and American cultures and, thus, identified themselves as being an equal mixture of the two. These participants recognized that changes have indeed occurred in their perception, attitude, and behaviors since being in the U.S. Consequently, these alterations prevent them from completely identifying with their native Vietnamese cultural roots. Yet at the same time, these changes are not strong enough to prompt participants to identify only with American culture or the mixture of cultures that make up American culture. Straddling the boundaries of these cultures, these individuals are also affected by the numerous values that they want to maintain. Therefore, they described themselves as Vietnamese Americans.

Other participants identified themselves as either Vietnamese or American. Political ideology was a significant factor in these responses. None of the participants who left Vietnam after 1990 identified as American. As a matter of fact, the majority see themselves as Vietnamese. While on the other hand, the few participants who did identify as American all fled from Vietnam during the 1970s and early 1980s. Considering that these earlier waves of refugees had stronger ideological connections with the South Vietnamese government and its U.S. ally, this again provides reason to believe that ideology is a critical factor in identification. Time should also be taken into consideration because the more time that an individual spends in a culture, the more interactions and connections he or she will likely have with that culture.

Indeed, ICTs may complicate identification because these technologies provide people with opportunities to interact with multiple cultures. The examination of

interviewees' communication patterns and employment of media in the process of acculturation explores this matter.

Communication Patterns

Communication patterns embody an important dimension of acculturation. Since communication lies at the center of acculturation, analyzing methods of interaction is critical in determining the extent to which refugees are willing to adapt or have adapted within American culture. ICTs are the principal avenues of interaction; they are the channels through which individuals can communicate with others living within the same neighborhood or even thousands of miles away. Thus, examining ICT use helps determine how Vietnamese people in the diasporas are maintaining connections with people in their native Vietnamese culture. In this section I will discuss the ways in which different methods of communication through ICTs allow refugees to connect with multiple cultures.

Communication with Vietnam

The Internet serves as the most common medium for participants to communicate with family and friends in Vietnam. This is made possible because Internet access in Vietnam has increased significantly since 2000 when there were only an estimated 200,000 Internet users. By 2012, this number had grown to over 31 million, about one third of the total population (Internet World Stats, 2012). The rapid growth of the Internet has, therefore, eased the difficulties in maintaining relations that were present in the earlier years of resettlement.

Most participants tend to use emails and social media to keep in touch with loved ones who live in their native country. Foremost, they prefer email because it offers more flexibility in comparison to other methods of communication. Email accounts are easy to create and maintain as users please. Emails also allow the communicator to think through his or her thoughts before sending their messages to the receiver. In turn, the receiver usually has minimal pressure to respond immediately if at all.

Social media ranks second as the most popular form of Internet communication amongst the interviewees. Facebook is the only social networking site that was mentioned as a tool of interaction with people in Vietnam. This site offers similar benefits as email, for one participant said, “First of all it’s a good way to interact and you don’t have the pressure. Like I don’t write letters to my mom because I don’t like the formality of writing a letter. It’s just so serious. But if you chat a few lines on Facebook, it’s just like hey” (Personal Communication, September 29, 2013). Hence, the form of address is important in understanding the kinds of ICTs people choose for different kinds of interpersonal communication.

The telephone was not frequently used by the refugees who keep in touch with family and friends in Vietnam. Many participants said that telephone calls are used as a secondary method of interaction after email or social media. They regard it as a decreasingly relevant tool because others are now available at less cost and more convenience. In order to make calls to Vietnam, users are usually required to purchase phone cards with preloaded monetary value or a predetermined number of minutes. This oftentimes creates hassles and limitations for users. However as an older form of communication, the telephone may still be preferred by older generations. A 35 year-old

participant claims that she doesn't purchase phone cards to make calls to Vietnam, but she knows some older people who still do. She also said that paying money for communication services is unnecessary now that so many are available via the Internet for free (Personal Communication, September 28, 2013).

Indeed, interview findings revealed that younger and older people adopt different communication strategies, with the former being less likely to utilize the telephone and more likely to employ Internet tools. Despite this generational gap, the Internet is increasingly occupying a bigger role in helping refugees create and maintain ties with other people over time and space. Convenience and cost are two significant factors in this change.

Communication with the United States

In contrast to the methods of communication used to connect with people abroad, refugees tend to use the telephone more to connect with family and friends who live in the United States. In this context, telephone use means both voice calls and text messaging using cell phones. Since cell phones are so prevalent in the U.S., these activities are very feasible to carry out. With a few quick and easy touches, cell phone users can interact with people in the same community or across the country. Unfortunately, these cell phone capabilities are not as practical for transnational communication. Moreover, findings show no difference in how younger and older generations use the telephone. Both generations acknowledge that they employ this technology to communicate with people living in the U.S. But data does not reveal how

often they make phone calls or send text messages and how this differs between generations.

The Internet has also become a primary medium for establishing and maintaining ties within the United States for refugees. Half of the participants said that they regularly send emails to nearby family members and friends. Emails are also oftentimes used in conjunction with telephone calls as an overall strategy of communication. As one interviewee shares, “Anytime there is something urgent, I use the phone. If not then I usually just send emails” (Personal Communication, September 29, 2013). Again, emails offer certain advantages that the telephone or other ICTs may not have and, thus, are an integral tool of daily interaction for many individuals.

Apart from personal acquaintances, successful communication with local government authorities is a critical aspect of acculturation. As refugees adapt into American society, interactions with these figures become increasingly necessary. The three participants who addressed this topic claimed that paper mail or telephones are usually the only forms of communication that they have with the government leaders in their community. In addition, this category of interaction seems to be kept at a bare minimum or only enacted whenever absolutely required. Hence, these answers suggest that some refugees may not feel perfectly comfortable with reaching out to people outside of their inner circle. However, the only refugees who spoke about this issue were those who came during the most recent wave of emigration and have not spent as much time in the U.S. Perhaps it would have been useful to inquire about their communication with leaders of Vietnamese organizations or other ethnic leaders. The sample of this study may also be too small to know the extent that these findings are true.

Types of Media

In order to get to the heart of the role of ICTs in the acculturation process, my interviews also inquired about the various type of media with which participants interact. Information, entertainment, and social media are all distinct and, yet, interrelate with one another. My questions asked them about which media they used and how they used them, important questions in determining the extent to which they impact the lives of refugees in the United States.

Information Media

Findings show that whenever participants need to search for information, whether it is news of current events, instructional, or technical knowledge, the sources that they typically look at are located on the Internet, television, or print media. Most said that they use a combination of two or three of different tactics when searching for information. But overwhelmingly, the Internet was an important medium for nineteen out of the twenty interviewees. In addition, although they would say that they used multiple sources, they relied primarily on information found on the Internet.

This may stem from the fact that the Internet is more accessible now than ever before and offers the most real-time information available. In fact, one participant provided this insight to explain why she depends on the Internet rather than older forms of media, “To me, newspapers are obsolete. Their days are gone...Even TV is not accurate because they put too much spin in it, it’s no longer news” (Personal Communication, September 29, 2013). Although sources on the Internet are not exempt from source and framing biases, the abundance of sources online allows receivers of

information to exercise some selection and editorial choice. As the same interviewee added, “It’s up to the reader, for us, to look at the Internet, all the different kinds of sources online and come to a conclusion ourselves (Personal Communication, September 29, 2013).

The majority of participants preferred English or U.S. content over Vietnamese content. Only five interviewees said that they utilize some source of Vietnamese ethnic media, but usually in conjunction with American media. However this is 25%, which is significant. Only one interviewee responded that Vietnamese sources are the only ones that he draws upon for information, and claimed that his limited English language skills was the main reason. Reading and watching content produced in the Vietnamese language, therefore, allows him to better understand and grasp the heart of the matters that he inquires about. He also emphasized the high number of Vietnamese language news sources available today, especially on the Internet (Personal Communication, September 6, 2013).

Language abilities, thus, seem to play a significant role in determining which media sources people utilize for information. People are not necessarily choosing American content because those in Vietnamese are unavailable. Instead, it may be because they are more comfortable with reading, watching, or listening to content in English. Considering that more than half of the refugees in this study preferred to conduct their interview in English, this leads to the assumption that their English language abilities may be at levels where they are equal to or even surpass their Vietnamese language abilities. Of course, the correlation between choice of information media and language becomes slightly trivial when considering the political ideologies that may lie

behind these preferences. Ideologies held by refugees may conflict with those that are embedded within some Vietnamese media sources, especially those that are state-owned. As a result, this could be a factor that helps sway refugees' preference more towards American content.

Moreover, there was a correlation between the year of departure from Vietnam and their choice of information sources. This relates to language skills, political ideology, and even identity. Refugees who fled Vietnam before the year 1990 primarily only utilized American content, whether online, television, or in print. On the other hand, those who left the country after 1990 preferred a mixture of both American and Vietnamese sources. The majority of these refugees were resettled in the United States either directly from Vietnam or within a year after escaping the country. Hence their year of departure and year of resettlement do not differ significantly, if at all. Those who have lived in the U.S. longer have had more time to develop their English language skills and are more likely to possess greater proficiency than those who were resettled in the country at a more recent time. They may also progressively lose some of their Vietnamese language abilities as the result of not using it consistently in their daily lives and becoming more acculturated in the U.S. Consequently, these individuals may have developed a media preference that leans more towards American media rather than their native ethnic media.

Political ideology corresponds with the year of departure from Vietnam. Refugees who left Vietnam before 1990 were more likely to be associated with the South Vietnamese government and its U.S. ally. These individuals, overall, preferred American media content for information. They were also the ones who identified themselves as

strictly American. On the other hand, those who fled after 1990 had other reasons for leaving, which primarily included family sponsorship or reunification. Since their ideologies may not be as strong as those who left the country in earlier years, these latter refugees may not necessarily want to sever their relationship with Vietnam completely. Hence, this could explain why they maintain a mixture of both American and Vietnamese information sources.

Entertainment Media

Participants were also questioned about which entertainment media they prefer. Most participants acknowledged that they dedicated time to at least one type of entertainment media, with films receiving the most positive confirmations, followed by television and then music. Only two out of the nineteen interviewees who addressed this topic said that they did not utilize any entertainment media in their daily lives due to a lack of time or other personal inclinations.

Their preference for types of entertainment media also corresponded with the year of departure from Vietnam. Refugees who left Vietnam before 1990 primarily favored American films and television. Once more, higher language skills, conflicting ideology, and identity are likely to be significant reasons behind this preference. However those who fled after 1990 tended to enjoy a combination of both American and Vietnamese media content. This latter group also enjoys other Asian ethnic media content, mainly films from Korea, mainland Chinese, and Hong Kong. A participant who departed Vietnam and resettled in the U.S. in 1994 said, “I watch American movies. But most of the time when I have free time, I watch Korean dramas. Then there’s Vietnamese shows,

you know like *Paris by Night*” (Personal Communication, September 30, 2013). Other Asian ethnic media content are usually available with Vietnamese voice-over and act as an accessible source of entertainment with familiar cultural characteristics. Similarly, the Vietnamese variety show series *Paris by Night* offers a medium through which diasporas can identity and engage with their native culture.

According to Thompson (2002), ethnic diasporas are increasingly taking advantage of new technologies along with entertainment media to establish connections and strengthen ethnic identities. Through the Internet, films and television programs can be easily disseminated all over the world. The production of different Asian ethnic media content has also greatly risen in recent years. Therefore, technological advances and entertainment industries are playing important roles in promoting hybrid cultures where ethnic media content are more accessible than ever before.

Social Media

As a rapidly evolving aspect of ICT, social media presents opportunities as well as challenges for acculturation. Social media enables users to create content, gather and share information, and communicate with others all in one web-based place. In technical terms, “Social media is a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p.61). Web 2.0, is an Internet platform that allows users to collaborate with others to continuously produce and modify content. Thus, content results from a collective effort and does not belong to any one individual. In relation to Web 2.0, User Generated Content describes the different

forms of media content that are created and made available by users. Social media fuses these two components as it generates online applications that allow opportunities for social presence and self-presentation. These applications can be separated into six different categories: blogs, social networking sites, virtual social worlds, collaborative projects, content communities, and virtual game worlds (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 62).

Social networking sites are the most common type of social media used by the refugees interviewed in this study. Most interviewees said that they use Facebook, the largest social networking site in the world. With Facebook, users can create personal profiles, post information and photos, and interact with other users all over the world through email and instant messaging. One participant told me that, because of Facebook, she practically knows everything that goes on in the everyday lives of her family members who live in Vietnam. Her niece regularly posts pictures of new merchandise that she sells at her store and even of the meals that she enjoys everyday. Through the ease of sharing information on Facebook, this participant also says that she feels included in special family gatherings and holidays despite being thousands of miles away (Personal Communication, September 29, 2013). A couple of interviewees said that they use LinkedIn, a social networking site dedicated to making professional connections across the globe. Interestingly, interview findings illustrate that social networking sites are primarily used for sharing information and communicating with people living abroad instead of in the United States. While only one interviewee said that they use Facebook to interact with people in the U.S., six interviewees claimed that they regularly use this site to maintain contact with family and friends in Vietnam.

Other than social networking sites, some participants also utilize user-generated content (UGC) communities. YouTube, a UGC community that facilitates the creation and exchange of videos, serves as a platform for refugees to discover information and entertainment content. When asked about his information-seeking behavior, one participant said, “If I want to learn something, I want to learn with vision. I just open like YouTube and I learn from them” (Personal Communication, September 28, 2013). On the other hand, another participant shared that she sometimes uses YouTube to watch movies of various kinds (Personal Communication, September 28, 2013). Although none of the interviewees claimed that they have YouTube profile pages that would enable them to share videos directly with fellow users, the fact that they utilize this type of social media shows that they are actively engaging with content that connects them with other peoples and cultures. Since users are exposed to such a wide variety of content from the U.S., Vietnam, and other Asian cultures, this complicates the acculturation process confirms what previous research has discovered about the formation of hybrid cultures (Kramer, 2000).

Computer Usage

The majority of interviewees acknowledged that the computer plays an important role in their everyday lives. Five people, or 25% of the interview sample, responded that the computer is not a consistent feature of their day-to-day lifestyle. For those who do use the computer on a daily basis, the amount of time spent doing so ranges from two to twelve hours per day. There is little correlation between an interviewee’s age and the amount of computer usage: the participants who spend the most time on the computer,

between ten to twelve hours, are 51, 36, and 33 years of age. However, computer use for participants over the age of 60 drops significantly to just between three to five hours a day. These findings are consistent with previous research that finds computer use more commonplace for adults under the age of 60 than over the age of 60.

Researchers have found that income, education, and race create differences in computer use as well (Brodie, Flournoy, Altman, Blendon, Benson, & Rosenbaum, 2000). Although this study does not explore any of those factors specifically, it does inquire about the relationship between computer use and occupation. Participants who dedicate six or more hours per day on the computer consistently claimed that the computer is a component of their current job, which tended to be in professional occupations. For example, three of the participants work in the information technology industry as technical personnel or integrative circuit designers, and thus spend a considerable part of their workday on the computer. A few participants also said that the way they communicate with coworkers is through email, which makes up a portion of their computer time. This is an important indication of acculturation because it illustrates that refugees are successfully interacting with people in their work environment and organizational culture. Because less than half of the interviewees disclosed any details about their current jobs, it is difficult to make any further conclusions regarding the correlation between computer use and occupation.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The findings of this study show that the process of acculturation is influenced by a number of factors. The first factor is policy. Analysis of U.S. immigration policy reveal that formal legislation has had a significant influence on the ways in which refugees are welcomed and included in the United States. Throughout the twentieth century, U.S. policy has reflected shifts in ideological frameworks, economic demands, and attitudes towards the rest of the world. During the 1920s, restrictive legislation based on national origin was enacted as the result of the nativist movement and its strong ideas about white racial superiority. Refugees received no special recognition and were subject to the same nationality quotas that limited entry for other migrants. In the 1950s, during the Cold War and McCarthy era, the issue of immigration became entangled in the fervent debates over foreign policy. Although nationality remained the basis on which admission into the U.S. was granted, some special considerations were given to refugees in order to meet the global humanitarian demands that resulted after World War II. However, ideas of assimilation remained almost as dominant then as in earlier decades.

Then in the 1960s, after years of the civil rights movement and the peace movement, the ideology in the U.S. shifted towards racial equality. At the same time, a new paradigm of global neoliberalism began to develop in which the globalization and contributions of immigrants were considered key to economic growth. National origin ceased to be a feature within immigration policy and employment development with some emphasis on family reunification was put into place instead. This set the tone for the policies that were enacted in 1975 to cater to Vietnamese refugees.

As immigration policy became increasingly liberalized, its direct influence on the cultural makeup of the U.S. slowly decreased. Cultural pluralism and integration became more embraced, which eased the constraints and expectations that were established by legislation. In a sense, national policies became less influential in the process of acculturation because they no longer forcefully dictated how foreigners should adapt to the U.S. Specifically in regards to Vietnamese refugees, provisions that dealt with resettlement and assistance programs during the 1970s were set up in very vague terms and open to interpretation. Acculturation must also be noted as a continuous and long-term process, and most of these policies only dealt with refugees' entrance and the initial steps of resettlement. Therefore, this has meant that other forces within the U.S. social environment to exert much more influence on the acculturation process than immigration and refugee policy.

In a comparative study of the U.S. and Canada, focusing on Portuguese immigrants and Vietnamese refugees, Irene Bloemraad has demonstrated that the state still has a primary role in shaping national identity and citizenship. Comparing policy in the U.S. and Canada, and between these two different populations, she notes significant differences embedded within institutional and policy structures, including but not limited to immigrant and refugee policy, where the state has a significant determining role (Bloemraad, 2006). She argues that although the specific national backgrounds and characteristics of immigrants are important, state laws, regulations, and programs are the fundamental forces that create a sense of belonging for newcomers. This is true especially in regards to immigrants' political participation or their engagement in the political system of the adopted country, which is central to citizenship. Federal government action

grants immigrants political rights and creates understandings of citizenship, and in turn, immigrants' political behavior influences the outcome of political contests and the policies that governments pursue. (Bloemraad, 2006).

By the same token, Will Kymlicka contends that the state lies at the core of creating stability and unity in multicultural societies. National legislatures and policies have the abilities to promote minority rights and enhance equality for citizens, and in turn, citizens help legitimize the existence and authority of the state through actions such as voting. This mutual dependency fosters strong ties between citizen and state, which is critical to the vitality of democratic institutions in multicultural societies. Kymlicka claims that the assertion of minority rights in the context of national politics demonstrated that groups want to be included and integrated to a certain extent. The state should not refuse these demands, for doing so would decrease minority groups' allegiance to the state and encourage secessionism. Therefore, the state is portrayed as an integral and inevitable component in defining citizenship and the development of national solidarity (Kymlicka, 1995).

The interviews with Sacramento-based Vietnamese refugees illustrated this connection between state policies and lived experiences. In alignment with the shifts in immigration policy towards economic growth, the acquisition of job-related skills and opportunities was considered a main avenue towards cultural adaption for many Vietnamese refugees when they first arrived in the U.S. beginning in 1975. A particularly critical component in their employment goals was their ability to learn the English language; therefore, highlighting the importance of language in the acculturation process. The liberalization of immigration policy also affected how foreigners are able to

showcase their cultural differences and contribute to the cultural makeup of the U.S. Many Vietnamese refugees said that they wanted to maintain and share numerous aspects of their culture with others in the U.S., most notably the value of family bond and the Vietnamese language. They believed that while adopting aspects of American culture is necessary, preserving their native culture is just as significant and worthwhile. As legislation became less restrictive and more inclusive, this has opened the door for acculturation to manifest in many different shapes and forms; hence, allowing the formation of hybrid cultures and identities.

This provides support for Kramer's theory of cultural fusion, Bourdieu's conception of cultural capital and Hall's notion of identity. Since environments are subject to constant change, cultural fusion recognizes that acculturation cannot occur in a uni-linear manner where individuals mold into a single predicable identity of a host culture. People bring with them different sets of knowledge, skills and values that are not necessarily disposed when they enter into new settings. Instead, these differences become preserved and incorporated into the creation of something new, and individuals living in multi-cultural communities may come to identify with multiple cultures. Cultural capital strengthens this phenomenon, for as immigrants depend on one another as sources of information, knowledge, and skills, these aspects are kept alive. Hence, the cultural presence of the Vietnamese people has increasingly grown in Sacramento as the city has become a site where cultural connections are built and accessed. This influences the acculturation of Vietnamese refugees as they interact and come to identify with the different elements within this diverse cultural environment. Identification is a continuous

process and therefore, the way in which people view themselves are always subject to change.

Further contributing to the understanding of the many forces that affect acculturation, my interviews with Vietnamese refugees reveal that ICTs have become important factors in the process of cross-cultural adaptation. These technologies are fostering new global ties and are instrumental in the complex relationship between culture and identity. Notably, the Internet allows people to interact across many different cultures more easily than ever before. Most of the interviewees said that they use the capabilities provided by the Internet, especially email and social media, to communicate with family and friends in the United States as well as those who live in their native country of Vietnam. At the same time, the convenience and accessibility of online interactions has decreased the use of older forms of communication, such as the telephone. However, this pattern is not uniform because costs and availability still oftentimes depend on the context in which communication occurs.

The Internet is also facilitating cultural exchanges through information and entertainment media. News of current events, films, and television programs from all over the world are now widely disseminated and conveniently available through the web. Hence, this is why a number of interviewees said that besides American and Vietnamese media content, they often interact with other Asian ethnic media content as well. This provides evidence that technological advances and media industries are playing important roles in the promotion of hybrid cultures and affecting the process of acculturation.

However, this study finds that the use of ICTs alone does not account for the differences in acculturation experiences between refugees or the waves of refugees that

left Vietnam. The utilization and significance of ICTs are, instead, interrelated with numerous other dimensions of interpersonal and public communications, particularly occupation, language, and ideology, which also correspond with the different waves of departure. In regards to occupation, individuals who work in professional fields are more likely to spend more time on the computer and utilize the Internet to communicate with others. While on the other hand, language is a significant determinant for the different types of cultural interactions that are conducted through ICTs. Refugees who belong to the earlier waves of departure tend to have greater English language skills and interact with more American media content than those who left more recently. By the same token, the political ideologies that correlate with their years of departure and reasons for leaving Vietnam also help lend support as to why refugees choose certain media sources. The importance of these components suggests that ICT use may not be a primary determining factor in acculturation.

Despite these findings, it is evident that ICTs have become an integral aspect in the everyday lives of refugees. Communication scholar Mark Deuze contends that we now live in media. He claims that “key areas of human existence have converged in and through our concurrent and continuous exposure to, use of and immersion in media, information and communication technologies” (Deuze, 2011, p. 137). Since media are all around us and are commonplace in our experiences of everyday life, we tend to become unaware of the ways that they construct our lives and identities. But this does not necessarily mean that people have simply become passive consumers or victims of the effects of media. Deuze argues that, in fact, people are actively participating in the production of media as well. This means that while people are shaped by media, media

are also shaped by people. Therefore, lived experiences are the products of a two-way process that involves people as both consumers and producers of media (Deuze, 2011). The experiences of refugees as they acculturate in the United States demonstrate this contemporary phenomenon.

Summary of the Research

This study aimed to assess the role of information and communication technologies in the acculturation of Vietnamese refugees in the United States. These refugees initially fled their homeland to escape political oppression after the conclusion of the Vietnam War in April 1975. After that date, a series of separate waves of refugees continued to flee from Vietnam for more than three decades. Hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese refugees have been resettled in the U.S., with the most recent wave arriving during the 1990s. As a relatively new immigrant group, the Vietnamese still face daily challenges as they try to establish new lives and culturally adapt in American communities. Previous research has found that ICTs assist cultural adaptation and complicate this process by allowing people to maintain contact with their native cultures. Therefore, the capabilities of ICTs affect how refugees manage the changes to their lives and their identities. Three research questions were proposed regarding the impact of ICTs and how this impact differs between the various waves of refugees that departed from Vietnam.

Acculturation was first analyzed through the lens of U.S. immigration policy, for formal legislation has significantly affected the admission and adaptation of refugees throughout history. But beginning in the mid twentieth century, the influence of national

policy slowly decreased as restrictive barriers were broken down, and cultural pluralism and integration became more embraced. This opened the door for forces within the domestic political, economic, and social environments to become more powerful in affecting how refugees adapt in the U.S.

Today, ICTs are integral forces in helping Vietnamese refugees acculturate in the U.S. The wide availability of technologies such as the Internet and cell phones are allowing people to communicate with their acquaintances that live in the U.S., including family, friends, and coworkers. Through the conveniences of the Internet, people can read about popular current events and attain information about issues that directly affect them and their communities. Films and television programs are also helping refugees familiarize themselves with various aspects of culture.

Concurrently, these technologies are also connecting refugees back to their native Vietnamese culture and helping them maintain their ethnic identity. Communication with those who live abroad in Vietnam is easier than ever before with social media, email, and other similar capabilities provided by the Internet. Ethnic media produced for and by the Vietnamese people are keeping Vietnamese culture and identity alive for the diaspora, as well as contributing to the cultural landscape of the U.S. This tie back to the idea that acculturation is a multi-dimensionality and multi-directionality process that involves changes to all groups of people that are involved.

The impact of ICTs on acculturation is not uniform however. Contextual factors such as language skills, and ideology, and occupation greatly affect what ICTs are employed and how they are employed. Corresponding with the different waves of departure from Vietnam, these aspects jointly help shape refugees' acculturation

experiences in the U.S. Therefore, this study generates more understanding of interaction and communication as key aspects in cross-cultural adaptation. The knowledge about Vietnamese refugees as a distinctive group of people also adds to the wider body of knowledge on immigrant groups and their contributions to the formation of multicultural communities in the U.S. as well as in other countries.

Recommendations for Future Research

First and foremost, future studies regarding this topic should incorporate a larger sample of interviewees. This study only included twenty interviewees, which limited the revealed information and the study's findings. Furthermore, the acquisition of interviewees should move beyond the snowball method, for this would allow refugees with more varied experiences to be included. By doing so, the different uses of ICTs could be showcased more clearly and more definite conclusions could be formed about their impact on acculturation.

Future research should also consider studying voluntary agencies, or VOLAGS, that provide sponsorship and initial resettlement services to refugees are admitted into the United States are instrumental in the process of acculturation. These non-profit organizations work cooperatively with federal, state, and local governments, as well as other service providers to ensure that refugees' immediate needs are met as they make their transitions. These needs include financial assistance, housing, healthcare, and employment. Among the primary VOLAGS that provide such services are the Church World Service, Ethiopian Community Development Council, Episcopal Migration Ministries, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, International Rescue Committee, US

Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and World Relief Corporation. Therefore, the impact that these organizations have on the lives of refugees as they transition to unfamiliar environments should be explored. Particularly, the information and communication that is provided to displaced individuals, especially during the initial resettlement stages, greatly affects how well these individuals are able to adapt to American culture. This research would lead to a broader framework for understanding of the process of acculturation.

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