

MARITAL SATISFACTION AND ACCULTURATION:
A STUDY OF PAKISTANI INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS WITH DEPENDENTS IN
THE U.S.

A Thesis

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by

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Abstract

of

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Majority of Pakistani postgraduate international students are accompanied by their co-ethnic dependents in the U.S., however, the acculturative process of this understudied population in a new cultural environment with a spouse is still unknown. This could be due to stereotypical view of international students as ‘single’ based on contextual gap in the previous literature. Drawing on Kim’s Integrative Communication theory, the role of marital satisfaction as mediator was introduced as a new predictor of acculturation to expand the contextual element in the theory. Furthermore, the co-ethnic partners who travel with the primary sojourner from one cultural environment to another do not fit in the definition of ‘ethnic’ groups as in Kim’s Integrative Communication theory. The present study, therefore, examined the role of contact quality in host interpersonal communication and consumption of American media outlets (television and websites) to predict acculturation of Pakistani graduate students in the U.S. using marital satisfaction as a mediator. Data was sourced from across the U.S., using snowball sampling via surveys.

The quantitative analysis revealed that marital satisfaction with co-ethnic partner mediated the relationship between their contact quality in host interpersonal communication and psychological well-being, which was one of the two studied outcomes of acculturation in the present study.

_____, Committee Chair
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Date

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

More than one million international students choose to study in the United States every year (Institute of International Education, 2019) and among them are many of those who travel with their spouses and children. The accompanying members of the family are called ‘dependents’ who stay with the primary visa holder, i.e. the international student. Amidst becoming global citizens for the purpose of education, they strive to hold their relationship together in the place of sojourn. However, research on how the relational satisfaction with co-ethnic partners impacts international students’ adjustment after moving to a new place is relatively scarce (Lasode & Awote, 2014). Customarily most students, whether they are domestic or international, are assumed to not possess any additional responsibilities besides classroom learning and a stereotypical out of class experience, and such impression of these students as being care free is clearly evident in previous research (Lynch, 2008). Such assignment serves as one of the reasons why the majority of the higher education institutions in the U.S. are not designed to cater to international students with dependents beyond classroom learning (Moreau & Kernot, 2015).

Such assumptions about international students’ sojourn as an individual experience evidently persist in research data with only a few studies that address the underlying issue, i.e. studying the role of accompanying dependents of international students (Brooks, 2015), in their adjustment process. Likewise, past research presenting

international students as youthful, careless, and naive contributes to a prominent pattern of invisibility in data collection approaches as well (Stephanie et al., 2016). In most of these studies, young undergraduate students are partaken, ignoring higher education enrollments, and therefore the communication experiences and acculturation needs of international students with accompanying dependents are overlooked (Wintre et al., 2015). It is also evident in previous research that most scholars consistently emphasize the value of establishing friendships with host nationals to better acculturate in a new culture, while the relational clash between marital roles with co-ethnic dependents and establishing friendships with host nationals at the same time is not primarily discussed (Yusoff & Othman, 2012).

In addition, it is important to note that a multitude of experiences that international students with dependents face during acculturation can also cause deteriorated relationships (Asadinik, 2009). In some cases, the partners ultimately lead to divorce or separation (Asadinik, 2009) upon relocation because of partners' inability to adapt. For instance, in a previous study of recent post-migration experiences of Pakistani Muslim adolescent females in the U.S., Khuwaja et al. (2013) explored that inter-family conflicts occur between migrated females and their family members over socializing with friends from distinct ethical and religious backgrounds in the host community. It signifies that the sojourners may have problem in relationship maintenance with either groups, consequently leading to interpersonal conflict with partner. Similarly, Lasode and Awote (2014) in their descriptive research of married university undergraduate female students studied whether marriage is an asset or liability, especially to female undergraduate

students abroad. The researchers found that 83.1% of female college students who combined education, job, and familial responsibilities faced stress, which resulted in interpersonal conflict with their partners. The present study therefore aimed to investigate the relationship between co-ethnic social support in the form of marital satisfaction and the acculturation process of student sojourners. Sterle et al. (2018) also suggests that the vast majority of studies ignore to explore how families and dependents affect a sojourner's adjustment in cultural aspect of relocation. In their recent study of expatriates moving abroad with families, Sterle et al. (2018) further found out that marital stress is a prominent reason in failing to acculturate during their assignments.

In another study of expatriates, Lazarova et al. (2015) found that upon relocation with family, marital breakdown was one of the most frequently observed causes of their failure to acculturate in a new place. However, it would be interesting to know whether marital distress would play a part in mediating the overall acculturation of sojourners in contrast with host interpersonal and mass media communication. Overall, researchers have highlighted that the social support provided by the accompanying partners is scarcely explored (McNulty, 2014), which poses an important need to understand the relational challenges that are faced by a population like international students with dependents, and how such challenges impact the host interpersonal communication and mass media consumption. Based on these researches, the present study supplements the need for knowledge about successful integration of international students with accompanying dependents in host communities during their short-term stays.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the present section, the researcher provides pertinent literature to examine the context of; acculturation of international students, student sojourners in the United States, acculturation with co-ethnic partners, quality of interpersonal communication with host nationals, functional fitness and psychological well-being of sojourners, and consumption of American media outlets to acculturate in the U.S.

Acculturation of International Students in a New Cultural Milieu

When individuals relocate from their own country of birth, culture, and identity to an entirely new region with cultural dissimilarities to their own, behavioral changes and value adaptation becomes the fundamental aspect of immigrant relocation and acculturation (Kim, 1978). Many aspects of daily life must be relearned in accordance with the customs of their host country, leaving the immigrants in a fragile state of uncertainty in their initial stage of adaptation (Kim, 2001). With the passage of time, the immigrants better understand the norms and social structure of their newly adapted state and adjust to the cultural references of their host society. This phenomenon of adjustment is called “acculturation.” To define, acculturation is the dynamic process of change over time as sojourners adjust to a new cultural environment (Berry, 2003). Throughout her research, Kim (2001) suggests that communication is the backbone of acculturation and provides the fundamental means by which immigrant individuals expand their knowledge and develop insights into their new environment. Therefore, it is important to understand the functional role of communication in acculturation process of the understudied population, i.e.

international students with co-ethnic dependents to explore how communication is in hand with education, as these minority groups merge in to a larger cultural milieu of shared ideas and values.

The present study aims to explore an array of relevant literature in this section that discuss international students as sojourners in the U.S., acculturation with co-ethnic dependent partners in the place of sojourn, interpersonal communication with host nationals, consumption of American media content and acculturation in the U.S., and justification of why the present study is focused on Pakistani graduate students. To date, research on cross-cultural transition and adjustment is prodigious, yet has remained largely unsynthesized. The present study is designed to assess the generalizability of past findings to a more diverse sample of sojourners and to consider additional mediating variables in relation to the adjustment process, i.e. marital satisfaction of international students.

International Students as ‘Sojourners’ in the United States

To define, sojourn is a temporary short-term stay in a place that is usually unfamiliar or new to an individual who relocates from home (Su, 2017), and the individuals who relocate are called sojourners. Although there are no fixed criteria for defining a sojourn in terms of its duration, six months to five years are commonly cited parameters (Su, 2017). Some of the examples are of international students studying abroad for a degree, business owners traveling for meetings, or even relocated refugees in temporary camps. However, student and business sojourners are usually more committed than tourists to their new locations but less involved than immigrants and resettled refugees (Ward,

2001). International students, similar to immigrants, voluntarily relocate abroad, however their return is anticipated and planned. In discussion of sojourn experience, it is also important to understand the concept of cross-cultural adaptation for the present study. Kim (2001) defines cross-cultural adaptation as a process in which individuals relocate to a new, unfamiliar socio-cultural environment, while constantly trying to establish a stable relationship with the place of sojourn. Another important concept to understand in international students' role as sojourner is of 'acculturation' which is the process by which individuals amass some aspects of their new host culture (Kim, 2001) in contrast to the earlier definition of acculturation by (Redfield, et al., 1936), according to which the process mainly focused on individuals who had spent a significant amount of time in one culture and later experienced another culture first-hand, leading to some form of change in either former or latter cultural patterns. Expectedly coping responses to counter stresses resulting from cultural transition are natural and inevitable aspects of acculturation and cultural change for most immigrants, refugees, international students or sojourners.

Acculturation with Co-Ethnic Partner in the Place of Sojourn

In the present study, the term co-ethnic 'partner' was used to describe "husbands, wives, civil and common-law partners of the opposite or same sex" (Doyle et al., 2016, p. 185), also addressed as spouses in the previous literature. Generally, any group entering a new culture faces issues pertaining to cultural adjustment and adaptation in the host country. Immigration or migration can be regarded as a major life event for migrants and such a "transition from home to campus includes many changes in day-to-day life habits,

eating differently, spending time establishing new friendships, creating a new daily routine, and loss of immediate and daily support from family members at home” (Omachinski, 2014, p. 3). Furthermore, upon relocation the newly established relationships with local community members can facilitate with adjustment, however, at the same time such new beginnings can often lead to losing close relationships from their native communities (Khuwaja et al., 2013). Although the number of international students who have chosen U.S. as their academic destination for higher education in 2017-18 was more than one million, out of which 382, 953 are graduate students (Institute of International Education, 2018), an established assumption of international students’ and scholars’ roles as student migrants is that they do not possess any additional responsibilities as parents and are therefore deemed as careless (Lynch, 2008). Of these international students, many are accompanied by their families, as USICE (2014) reports that a total number of 144,318 foreign dependents was documented as of January 2014. The foreign dependents are either the spouse or qualifying children of a student visa (F-1 or J-1) holder. For these international sojourners at universities and local communities, there is an array of interpersonal as well as intrapersonal challenges (Khuwaja et al., 2013).

The existing intercultural literature primarily highlights the experiences of single international students (Yellig, 2010). Although a significant percentage of international students is married, still, very little is known about their communicative experiences and cultural adaptation in the U.S. as “cultural outsiders” (Yellig, 2010, p.2). In general, most of the existing studies that explicitly focus on international students’ communication

experiences narrowly address the assumption that “international students must adapt or adjust to sociocultural system which is different from their own” (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 322). However, it is evident that adjustment and academic success of higher education students depends on a multitude of factors such as past academic performance, their extracurricular activities, “relationships with people outside of college including parents, friends, and employers all shape the college transition process” (Omachinski, 2014, p. 1). Besides, the potential for adjustment processes to be complicated among international students who are acculturating with spouses and family also have been noted in the literature, for instance, in one study, it was found that relationship with partners was a top concern for international graduate students (Yi, et al., 2003). Married graduate students confront marital hardships during their study, which influence their success in different aspects of life such as their course of study, adjustment to the new culture and their marital relationship (Gold, 2006). This can result in an increased social isolation among married international students exacerbated by more general issues pertaining to cultural adjustment and homesickness.

The outdated representation of international students as “young and carefree” furthers the trend of this populations’ invisibility in existing communication research (Doyle, et al., 2016). It can be predicted that any student, regardless of the nature of the romantic relationship, who invests more time with the partner may lose opportunities to establish other social relationships such as friendship with other students, extra-curricular activities including meetings and competitions, etc. Therefore, the same applies to the international students who live with their spouses or families. Fostering intercultural

adaptation while studying abroad is also important in this endeavor. Another significance of the present study builds upon the interpersonal communication aspects in marital relationships of these international students. Among a multitude of experiences that married immigrants face may include difficulties in adaptation as well as chances of deteriorated relationships, ultimately leading to divorce or separation (Asadinik, 2009). However, the role of spouses in acculturation has not been extensively studied. Existing literature does not illuminate the accompanying spouses and children of international students and does not analyze “their parental and spousal roles, decision making, academic progress, and experience in the country of sojourn” (Doyle et al., 2016, p. 186). At the same time, in an earlier study by Sweatman (1999) of missionary workers, the researcher analyzed the role of marriage as a stress moderator within a new culture and argued that it can magnify or minimize the stress and cultural shock within a new culture for the individuals. In terms of adaptation, it can be implemented to international students with accompanying partners as well (Yellig, 2010). It is therefore important to understand the experiences of international students with dependents to construct ways in higher education that is compatible with their personal needs for a positive overall experience in the country of sojourn (Brooks & Waters, 2013).

Interpersonal Communication with Hosts and Acculturation

Earlier researches have primarily focused on the role of social support in sojourners’ acculturation in their host communities and although international students’ interpersonal communication with their host national social networks have been found to be highly beneficial in helping with their culture shock and acculturative stress through

familiarization with the host cultural values and traditions (Yan & Berliner, 2011), the studies seem to isolate the two support systems, i.e. host versus ethnic, as sojourners relocate. For example, in a study by McKay-Semmler and Kim (2014), the researchers explored the role of communication in Hispanic youth's acculturation in American public schools and found out that host interpersonal communication and participation with host nationals provided an excellent support system for the students. However, the said communication and participation does not take place in vacuum, and the two opposite sides of the spectrums, ethnic and host, must be studied together. Similarly, in Kim's (2001) research of adult immigrant populations in the U.S., the researcher found that host interpersonal communication serves an important impetus in acculturation process of these populations. Furthermore, Zhang and Goodson (2011) also bring evidence that host nationals act as both moderating and mediating factors in sojourners' acculturative process. However, in both studies, the role of co-ethnic partners who experience the relocation with their partners, i.e. international students, is not discussed.

Consumption of American Media Content and Acculturation in the U.S.

Media promotes the sojourners' ability to learn the host national language and familiarize themselves to the cultural norms of local community (Reichenberg, 2016), emphasizing Kim's (2001) use of mass communication by sojourners as predictive of their acculturative process. It is evident in past research that there exists a strong association between media consumption and acculturative success of sojourners (Croucher et al., 2010; Dalisay, 2012), reinforcing the need to analyze the role of media content especially in the recent political and sociocultural environment. Another reason to

study the media consumption patterns of sojourners with partners is to predict whether co-ethnic presence of their dependent partners mediates the acculturative process in any way. Supportive of Kim's theory, Allison and Sommer (2011) explored in their study of international students in the U.S. that greater consumption of American media content such as television, video games, and music, etc. were positively correlated to successful acculturation, whereas students with greater ethnic media use showed lower acculturation. Similarly, Yang (2018) supported the aforementioned role of media use in acculturation of Chinese international students in the U.S., however, all studies do not address any moderating variables that could possibly be navigating the acculturation. Consistent with Kim (2001), the present study aims to contribute to the existing literature review on host media consumption and acculturation, while assessing the moderating role of marital satisfaction of the participants.

The role that the media plays in this regard has also been highlighted in various studies. Media has already been discussed as an important communication medium for immigrants, as well as locals. Furthermore, it has been seen that the media usually paints Muslims as a single minority stratum (Sayyid & Vakil, 2010). Theoretically speaking, British Muslims, and those around the world are a diverse group comprising of many different ethnic backgrounds, further split into political, cultural and socioeconomic factors (Modood, 2006). While the more conservative approaches to racism have been largely curbed over the past two decades, Sept 11, 2001 terror attacks and the resulting war on terror has put the spotlight on Muslim nations as a whole, and Muslim nationals of Western countries. The role that media plays at this point is very important, as it

bridges the information gap on both sides of the spectrum where it is needed. Negative coverage to either the natives or the sojourners results in higher stress situations and impairs acculturation and adjustment. The media has increasingly associated Islam and Muslims with negative connotations, and this is something that has been said over and over again in research throughout the western media. It has also been noted that a negative image of Islam and Muslims has dominated the American media since the Iranian revolution in 1979 (Karim, 2002). Due to the media's role in the negative portrayal of Muslims in the USA, hate crimes have been on the rise against them, the Council on American Muslim Relations noted (CAIR, 2002). Speaking shortly, it can be said that media discussions have paved a way for locals to see minorities and outsiders as the 'other', and essentially not a part of the community.

In relation to marital satisfaction and consumption of media, a few studies have examined how media consumption is related to marital satisfaction. For instance, Dew and Tulane (2015) studied the role of new entertainment media such as social networking sites and videogames and their impact on marital quality with participants' partners. The results suggested that the variables showed negative relationship and greater consumption of media, in fact, does contribute to marital satisfaction. Moreover, the study suggested that more interactive types of media enable partners to connect with people other than their marital relationships, which is more likely to detract them from marital responsibilities. Similarly, frequency of using media content also impacts the marital satisfaction and vice versa. For instance, Osborn's (2012) study of television media consumption and negative outcomes for intimate relationships suggested that participants

who viewed television content with romantic themes showed lower marital commitment. Similarly, Dew and Tulane (2015) stated that partners in low-quality marriage have greater chances of high media consumption to compensate for the deteriorated relationship with the partner, and therefore media consumption is their way out in such situation. Past studies, however, do not address the collective relationship of the three variables; marital satisfaction, media consumption, and acculturation. Provided that each individual spends about 10% of their daily time on some type of media consumption (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010), the author aims to explore whether marital satisfaction can impact how media consumption supplements sojourner acculturation process.

The present study extends the existing scholarship of media consumption's role in acculturation by investigating influence of international students' marital satisfaction with their co-ethnic partners, providing newer domains to understand relational influences of ethnic communication in acculturation.

Why Study Pakistani Graduate Students?

Pakistani graduate students are a significant population to the present study. Despite being the third largest Muslim majority country with highest number of international students in the U.S. (IIE 2014), Pakistani international students still do not constitute an adequate representation in most communication literature. The author aims to bring this understudied population to front through exploration of their acculturative process. Also, for most Pakistani students who attend graduate studies in the U.S., there is a greater chance of receiving an outside funding or scholarship to attend university (Haider et al., 2013).

Pakistan being a Muslim majority country in the South Asia may give an interesting insight into the acculturation patterns, since Muslim women, as in the case of spouses living with their husbands, may be under stricter constraints due to the Muslim families following their faith and traditions to the letter, and due to the strict hierarchies and segregation of genders (de Wit et al., 2008). This poses a problem specifically for women who may not be able to or allowed to communicate freely with members of both genders of host country, thus making acculturation into host society potentially problematic. On the other hand, family life has been proven to act as a buffer for Muslim women, as Muslim family ties are very strong, and there is still a degree of an extended family system still prevalent in Muslim families (Kent & Bhui, 2003). Even more so, women play a very strong role with respect to preserving religious and cultural values, which has been appreciated within the community (Tuinebreijer et al., 2011).

While most universities offer a host of programs and activities for international students' spouses to help with the cultural shock and acculturation process, with these activities ranging from English as Second Language (ESL) courses and interest groups, very little is known about them due to a student's marital status being a private affair. With so many studies dealing with the acculturation of international students, sojourners and immigrants, there is truly very little body of literature describing or exploring the married international students' acculturation process, or the utilization of programs that would help in this process. There are studies that take do acknowledge 'expatriate' spouses of the business world, however, no past studies as per researcher's knowledge have focused on

the international students' co-ethnic dependent's role in acculturation; functional fitness and psychological well-being.

Speaking of Pakistani students, unlike undergraduate students who have high economic capital, graduate students represent a greater section of the culture since they represent diverse educational interests to relocate. An important reason to study Pakistani graduate students with dependents is the family structure in the collective cultural setting of majority population, since in collectivistic cultures like Pakistan conformity and respect are paramount to individuals than their own personal interests (Falak et al., 2009), therefore, it would be interesting to note how such values function in the new cultural setting, i.e. predominantly individualistic culture of the U.S. Furthermore, studying the student population from Pakistan would explain the role of marital satisfaction as a mediator variable because families spend more time together (Aydin, et al., 2014) which could be supplementary in the study of predicting relationship between host interpersonal communication and acculturation.

Theoretical Framework

Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation

In her theory, Kim (2001) identifies communication as an essential part of sojourner adjustment as they move from one place to another. Communication in this context can be used as an overarching term that includes all actions that an individual takes to exchange messages with the environment (Kim, 2001). These messages can be verbal, nonverbal, or unintentional communication strategies that people use in everyday

conversations to influence one another (Kim 2001). In the present study, the problem of international students' adaptation to a new host environment is crucial as it is directly connected to the mental and social health of international students (Shafaei & Razak, 2016).

One of the primary concepts used in her theory that directly aligns with present research is how such communication takes place in a new environment or culture, and the process through which individuals achieve an overall fit in that new environment. Throughout the present theory, communication is described as a tool through which individuals achieve the 'cross-cultural adaptation'. According to Kim (2001), cross-cultural adaptation is a continuous process during which individuals who move to a new place struggle to establish and maintain stable and functional relationships with the unfamiliar environment.

Addressing the adaptation needs of international students in specific, Zhou et al. (2008) states that it is essential to understand the psychological, sociocultural and educational experiences of these student sojourners in order to promote global understanding. Previously, researchers have used theories to study cross-cultural adaptation of international students focusing mainly on social and friendship networks (using culture learning theory), social skill acquisition (using stress and coping theory), as well as group perceptions and expectations of sojourn (using social identification theories) (Zhou et al., 2008). However, to supplement the yet to be explored moderating role of accompanying co-ethnic dependents in acculturation, integrative communication

theory may be ideal because it includes the role of ethnic as well as host environment on sojourners' functional fitness and an overall physical well-being (Kim, 2001).

Additionally, among many other challenging factors that impact international students' acculturation process in the U.S. culture is their communication with domestic students. According to the present theory, a sojourner's competence in a new cultural environment is interlinked with their interaction with the host mass media as well as interpersonal communication with host individuals (Matsumoto, 2010). The communication that international students establish with domestic students as well as other members of their host community can be explained with integrative communication theory in terms of interpersonal host communication. Conclusively, the entire process of acculturation is still mediated by their host environment depending on how tolerant the host environment is towards the sojourner (Matsumoto, 2010). This particular concept of acculturation comes from Kim's (2001) open-systems perspective that focuses on the interconnectedness of human communication with environment instead of only looking at one aspect (Gudykunst, 2005). As per Kim's integrative communication theory, acculturation is defined as the process by which individuals adapt to some (but not all) elements of their host- environment. With her theory, Kim aims to navigate the role of communication in acculturation from supplementary to primary importance through following six organizing principles.

Organizing Principles

The integrative theory holds five organizing principles; the first principle articulates that when individuals relocate to a new place, their first instinct is to acquire stability with their host environment (Gudykunst, 2005). Kim (2001) suggests that the struggle to maintain such equilibrium through adaptation is natural to all individuals as they face a new and relatively more challenging environment. The second principle is that adaptation is an all-encompassing phenomenon, meaning that the sojourner has no option but to adapt to the majority group culture for effective communication (Gudykunst, 2005). The third principle states that adaptation takes place through communication and the more they communicate with host members, the greater their adaptation will to be (Gudykunst, 2005). The fourth principle states that the present theory focuses more on how and why the individuals adapt to the new environment, instead of whether they adapt or not (Gudykunst, 2005). The fifth principle articulates that the present theory lies between the deductive and inductive approach to get insights of the individuals' personal experiences as they move to new culture. The sixth principle states the two key terms that Kim (2001) uses in her theory; 'adaptation' and 'stranger' to establish their relationship. Kim (2001) defines stranger as all individuals who move to a new cultural or subcultural host environments and strive to achieve an overall equilibrium.

Boundary Conditions for Cross-Cultural Adaptation

In her theory, Kim (2001) defines three core conditions for the afore-discussed primary concepts; communication, cross-cultural adaptation, and strangers to specify

their adaptive situations. The first condition underlies that strangers must have lived and had established strong ties in one culture, and then moved to a new culture (Kim, 2001). The second condition specifies that individuals after moving to their host culture are at least minimally dependent on their host environment, let it be for personal, professional, or other social reasons (Kim, 2001). The third condition articulates the strangers' engagement with their hosts through firsthand communication experiences (Kim, 2001). All three conditions are to address the situational context of those individuals who had spent a significant part of their lives in a different culture before moving to a new one. Kim (2001) however specifies that these conditions do not necessarily address the accompanying children or native members related to the moving individuals as they experience limited adaptive change, primarily focusing on adult acculturation as an individual and not keeping in context the role of accompanying members of the sojourner in a new cultural environment.

Process of Cross-Cultural Adaptation

All human beings are born in an unfamiliar culture. As they grow up, they learn its traditions, cultural context and adjust to its practices in their formative years, through the process called enculturation (Gudykunst, 2005). However, given the circumstances, throughout the history people have crossed cultural boundaries in search of improved life, better employment opportunities, higher education, and to establish interpersonal networks and relationships. These individuals, despite the duration of their stay in the new cultural environment are then expected to maintain healthy functional relationships

with their host environment (Kim, 2001) which is described procedurally in Kim's (2001) integrative communication theory.

Entering a New Culture- Defining Acculturation, Deculturation and Assimilation

As individuals enter a new culture, they face similar process to that of enculturation. However, this time the situational context and cultural patterns are different to the ones they were instinctively accustomed to (Kim, 2001). Upon relocating from the home culture, an individual's internalized cultural values are challenged, causing increased awareness of their surroundings (Kim, 2001). Such deviating situations can cause shock and internal conflicts, and a need to adapt and grow in the new cultural environment through the process called 'acculturation' (Kim, 2001). Generally, acculturation is defined as the dynamic process of change over time as sojourners adjust to a new cultural environment (Berry, 2003). Kim (2001) states that in order to adapt to a new cultural milieu, it is necessary to unlearn some of the previous values that may conflict with the new situational context. Such unlearning towards adaptive change is called 'assimilation' (Kim, 2001). As explained in Gudykunst (2005), "the ultimate theoretical directionality of adaptive change is toward assimilation, a state of the maximum possible convergence of strangers' internal and external conditions to those of the natives" (p. 383). In this convergence, time spent in the host environment does not guarantee the complete attainment of assimilation (Kim, 2001).

The Stress-Adaptation-Growth Dynamic- A Process Model

Kim (2001) in her integrative communication theory describes adaptation as a 'stress-adaptation-growth' dynamic, in which stress, adaptation, and growth are the primary elements of cross-cultural adaptation in every host environment. This cyclic and continuous process eventually leads to improved functional fitness and psychological well-being of sojourners as the dynamic moves forward and upwards. In simpler words, Kim (2001) suggests that in the process of acculturation and deculturation towards assimilation, sojourners experience an inner transformation that can produce disintegration (Kim, 2001). Sojourners find themselves in a conflicting situation of whether to retain their old practices and identity or to adopt new ways of adjusting that align with their hosts. The stress-adaptation-growth dynamic is rooted in open-systems, which is "the natural tendency to resist the evolution that accompanies the destruction of the old structure, and to look backward to the original culture and its habits as an essential aspect in the dynamics of evolution" (Kim, 2001, p. 55). Once the sojourners work out new ways to handle stress through cultural understanding and 'adaptation', they overcome the disequilibrium and attain subtlety and 'growth' in the host environment (Kim, 2001). This means that the sojourners are now more self-proficient in communication as well as self-expression for each of their social needs. In Kim's (2001) integrative communication theory, the author explains three interrelated outcomes that occur in sojourners upon relocating; increased functional fitness, improved psychological well-being, and attainment of an intercultural identity.

The three facets are the achieving goal of sojourner adaptation and therefore will be studied as dependent variables in the present study. Increased functional fitness indicates that sojourner has developed improved communication abilities in host culture (Kim, 2001). Similarly, upon entering the new culture, sojourners face culture shock that can result in poor psychological health (Kim, 2001), leading to conflict between intrinsic values and host culture. The third outcome is the gradual development of an intercultural identity in sojourners, which is an evolutionary process that occurs beyond enculturation of individuals upon relocation (Kim, 2001). Additionally, for each sojourner, communication is the primary requisite to cross-cultural adaptation. Kim's (2001) integrative theory provides structural elements that build upon the very concept of communicating with host environment for increased adaptation. The first is sojourner's ability to communicate effectively with host nationals to familiarize themselves in the new environment. The second is social communication which involves sojourner's ability to involve in host environment through interpersonal and mass communication (Kim, 2001). There are two facets of the host social communication; host interpersonal communication and host mass communication, that are fundamental to present study (Kim, 2001). As the author describes, host interpersonal communication helps strangers to receive important information and detailed insights about their cultural values and mindsets to fully understand and relate their own behavior to their host environment.

Similarly, while addressing host mass communication, Kim (2001) discusses that although host mass communication does not require personalized communication, access and exposure to mass media of host culture strongly influences sojourners' social

participation and adjustment. There can be a variety of channels for instance, via social networking sites, online media, radio, television, etc. While discussing the impact of host interpersonal and mass communication, it is also important to note the impact of ethnic social communication on their acculturation. Sojourners also rely on their ethnic communities such as co-nationals for “material, informational, emotional, and other forms of social support” (Kim, 2001, p. 79) in their earlier phase of relocation. Therefore, the present study would focus on the ethnic groups’ role in sojourners’ inadequate involvement in their host environment, as they persevere with their original ethnic identity.

In the present study, integrative communication theory will provide a roadmap to predict how Pakistani international students acculturate in the U.S. while living with dependents, i.e. their intimate partners. In a previous study by Kim and McKay-Semmler (2014), the researchers used integrative communication theory to get theoretical insight into how communication plays its part in overall functional and psychological well-being of Hispanic youth in dominant American cultural milieu. Kim and McKay-Semmler (2014) used integrative communication theory because “it is the only theory that explicitly identifies patterns of interpersonal communication associated with the main interest of this study—the psychological and functional well-being of Hispanic youth with respect to the dominant US cultural environment” (p. 136). Using the theory, the researchers found out that communication with locals greatly facilitated Hispanic youth in establishing friendships across ethnic boundaries, as well as increased successful contribution in organizational structures, greatly impacting their chances of achieving

higher professional goals. Therefore, it is expected that the theory will provide excellent testing grounds in present study to check how marital satisfaction mediates the adaptation process of international students and what measures can be taken personally as well as by the college and university administrators to make sure that this specific population can adapt better on campus and the new culture.

Grounded in integrative communication theory, another study by Kim and Mckay-Semmler (2014) explored if technology-mediated interpersonal communication with co-ethnics negatively impacts their face-to-face communication with hosts during acculturation process. The researchers found out that sojourners preferred technology-mediated communication to connect with co-ethnics, and their involvement in direct host interpersonal communication was directly correlational with their overall functional fitness and psychological well-being. To date, mediated role of co-ethnic dependents' role in international students' acculturation has not been given due attention particularly from the viewpoint of the broader context of communication. Therefore, using Kim's integrative communication theory in present study will provide a guided direction in order to predict communicative patterns of international students with dependents in the U.S. as these co-ethnic partners may hinder their participation in the new cultural milieu.

Similarly, Pitts (2009) studied expectations and reality of the U.S. sojourners' adjustment process abroad using integrative communication theory as theoretical framework. The research revealed that these sojourners were able to refine their cultural expectations and developed a nuanced cultural identity through every day talk with their co-ethnic networks, particularly the co-students. These results provide guidance to the

present study because similar to co-students, the co-ethnic dependents may also refine and create the communication and adjustment expectations of Pakistani students with dependents in the U.S. In her integrative communication theory, Kim provides six dimensions that generate 10 axioms and 21 theorems that can be empirically tested to check how positively or negatively the sojourners' acculturation is impacted from each.

The reason why Kim's (2001) integrative communication theory is used in the present study is because it addresses the environmental factors (host and ethnic) as major components of sojourners' acculturation. For the present study, her fifth theorem serves as the testing ground and it states that "The greater the host interpersonal and mass communication, the greater the intercultural transformation" (Kim, 2001 p. 91). In her theory, Kim uses the term acculturation to describe functional fitness, psychological health, and the end result of intercultural identity and transformation. The present study is designed to assess the generalizability of the postulations to a more diverse sample of sojourners and to consider additional cognitive variables in relation to the adjustment process.

The present study will predict whether marital satisfaction can mediate the acculturation process of these student sojourners. According to Kim's integrative communication theory, greater ethnic interpersonal and mass communication can predict lesser acculturation in sojourners. In the present study, international students' co-ethnic dependents may or may not pose to lower acculturative rates of their partners in case of higher or lower marital satisfaction. Since integrative communication theory provides a framework to study the acculturation through communicative interactions with their host environments, the theory will serve as an excellent lens to examine the role of marital

satisfaction in acculturation to further the communication research in interpersonal and intercultural realm. Integrative communication theory will therefore serve as testing ground to predict whether marital satisfaction of Pakistani students who are accompanied with their co-ethnic partners plays a moderating role in their acculturation in the U.S. Additionally, the theory's fifth theorem will serve as a lens to test whether accompanying co-ethnics exhibit the same significance as discussed in Kim's integrative communication theory. The fifth theorem signifies the role of interpersonal communication with host nationals and mass media communication to be predictive of their successful adjustment in the place of sojourn. However, how marital satisfaction of sojourners impacts the relationship between host communication and acculturation is still unknown. It is pertinent to understand how this particularly understudied group impacts the sojourners' adjustment in a new host environment, and by doing so, the present study will extend the theoretical understanding of the theory.

Since integrative communication theory provides a vastly accepted framework to explore the communication and acculturation of sojourners in contrast with their ethnic and host environment, it serves as an appropriate lens to study this underexplored group in cross-cultural communication research. Kim (2001) provides predictive statements about factors that influence sojourner acculturation. The present study will extend the established theorem and introduce a mediating factor, i.e. marital satisfaction, to predict whether there exists a relationship between interpersonal communications of international students with host nationals, affected by their marital satisfaction with co-ethnic

dependents, ultimately leading to successful or unsuccessful acculturation in the dominant cultural milieu, i.e. the American culture (Kim, 2001).

Summary and Hypotheses

Previous literature provided insights about relationships that exist between studied variables, i.e. contact quality in host interpersonal communication, media consumption, and marital satisfaction, and how they impact the acculturation process of sojourners. In sum, communication with host nationals was found to have both mediating and moderating effect in sojourners' acculturation (Zhang & Goodson, 2011) and upon relocation local community members tend to aid with sojourner adjustment. However, such relationship with hosts was also found to be detrimental to relationships with the native communities (Khuwaja et al., 2013). Similarly, it was also found that media consumption and marital satisfaction have negative relationship with each other, and partners in low-quality marriages consumed more media than those who were happier in their marriages and vice versa (Dew & Tulane, 2015), and at the same time host media consumption helped sojourners familiarize themselves with norms of local community and aided in acculturative process (Reichenberg, 2016). Previous literature however does not adequately address the collective relationship of all studied variables; marital satisfaction, contact quality in host interpersonal communication, host media consumption, and acculturation. Considering that relationship with partners and family was a top concern for international students (Yi, et al., 2003), and provided what we already know from the existing literature review in the realm of host interpersonal

communication, consumption of American Media content, marital satisfaction of sojourners, and their acculturation process, the following hypotheses are developed:

H1: Contact quality predicts acculturation of Pakistani graduate students

H2: Consumption of American media content predicts acculturation of Pakistani graduate students

H3: Marital satisfaction predicts acculturation of Pakistani graduate students

H4: Marital satisfaction mediates the relationship between contact quality and acculturation of Pakistani graduate students

H5: Marital satisfaction mediates the relationship between media consumption and acculturation of Pakistani graduate students.

Chapter 3

METHOD

The present study was conducted using quantitative research methods with online surveys via Qualtrics, an online survey tool. Surveys were used to collect data from the best-suited sample to receive generalizable results for the targeted population (Allen, 2017). The study was approved by the CSUS IRB for human subjects use.

Participants

One hundred and thirty-seven participants ($M_{age} = 29.2$, $SD = 5.4$, range=21-55) completed the survey for present study. The participants were Pakistani graduate students with accompanying co-national partner in the U.S., currently enrolled in a graduate program in their respective educational institution. The required number of participants was approximated through G-Power analysis. In cleaned data of 81 participants, 25 identified as male and 56 as female. Among participants, 76 were married and 5 were not married to their dependent partner. Average stay of participants with dependents in the U.S. was 2.7 years. All participants were of Pakistani origin for adequate representation of sojourn experience of the understudied population (Garcia-Murillo & Yingyi, 2018). Out of 81 participants who responded, 36 had no children, 25 had 1 child, 16 had 2, and 1 had 4 children. Samples were collected from different states across the U.S. to attain generalizable results and due to relatively smaller population. Confidentiality of each participant was secured, and anonymity of responses was maintained.

Sampling Procedure

The majority of international students with accompanying dependents were postgraduate students (Stephanie et al., 2016). Since the majority of the graduate students who study in the U.S. are accompanied by their partners, the present study primarily focused on graduate students. Due to a relatively smaller population, the researcher used snowball sampling method which is a type of purposive sampling in which existing participants recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances (Wrench et al., 2016). For snowball sampling, the participants were approached and recruited via multiple mediums. Online mediums included emails to respective student bodies, international admissions offices, and campuses' official social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn) to advertise and approach leads. Other mediums included advertisement through flyers at the international admissions and student organizations offices, campus department buildings, local mosques, word of mouth, and FtF (face-to-face) recruitment. As ideal participants completed their participation, the researcher requested them to recommend other potential participants who may fulfil the desired research requirements and are willing to complete the online survey.

All participants were contacted via provided contact information with a description of the present study and URL to fill the online survey. The research survey was created and shared through Qualtrics online as well as through URL and QR-code on flyers. The survey included consent to participate, demographic information questions about age, gender, nationality, relationship status, length of stay, state of residence, duration of marriage, and number of children. The survey also included questions to measure participants' marital satisfaction, acculturation gap, contact quality, media

consumption, functional fitness, and psychological well-being. The survey was shared in English as the graduate students are customarily required to fulfill English language proficiency requirement upon admission at respective educational institutions.

Participants can agree or disagree to consent via check option in the survey. Upon completion of survey, participants were thanked for the time and redirected to a new URL to fill out name and email to participate in a draw for \$150. The two surveys were separate, to maintain the anonymity of participants' responses.

Measurements

The present study drew measurements from existing literature review and established scales for validity and reliability of the analysis. The following scales were used to analyze the underlying variables; marital satisfaction, contact quality in host interpersonal communication, consumption of host media content, and acculturation.

Marital Satisfaction

In the present study, the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) was used to measure marital satisfaction. Four items measured the participants' marital satisfaction. Items 1, 3, and 4 were reverse-coded. The scale was adapted from Aman et al. (2019) who studied relationship of religiosity and marital satisfaction in Pakistani participants. KMSS is a brief measure containing four items on 7-point Likert scale. Originally, item responses range from 1 (not satisfied) to 5 (very satisfied), however for the present study, they are adapted to 1 (Very strongly disagreed) to 7 (Very strongly agreed) as suited to the questions. A sample of the survey item included; "I am very comfortable being close to romantic partner". The reliability coefficient was satisfactory (Cronbach's $\alpha = .60$, $M =$

5.6, $SD = 1.11$). The first item was deleted because Cronbach's α was below acceptable reliability

Acculturation Gap

In the present study, acculturation gap was calculated by the difference between married students' and partners' preference for American and Pakistani ways of life. The scale was adapted from Ying (2007). Acculturation of students was measured by the questions "How often do you prefer American ways of doing things?" and "How often do you prefer Pakistani ways of doing things?" Acculturation of partners was measured by the questions "How often does your partner prefer American ways of doing things?" and "How often does your partner prefer Pakistani ways of doing things?" Responses were coded on a 4-point scale (1= never, 2= sometimes, 3= most of the time, 4= all the time). The discrepancy score was measured by subtracting the partners' score from students' score. For the acculturation gap value measured by subtracting score of partners' "American ways of doing things" from students' score, $M = .15$, $SD = 1.06$. For the acculturation gap value measured by subtracting score of partners' "Pakistani ways of doing things" from students' score, $M = .11$, $SD = 1.08$.

Contact Quality

Contact quality was measured using a seven-point Likert scale adapted from Shim et al. (2012). Participants self-identified their most-frequently contacted host national in the U.S. Item responses ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree). Participants responded to three items. A sample of the survey item includes; "My contact

with this person has been friendly.” Cronbach’s $\alpha = .86$, $M = 5.76$, $SD = 1.1$). No items were reverse-coded. Higher scores indicate higher contact quality.

Media Consumption

Media consumption of participants was measured using a four-point Likert scale indicating the frequency of consumption (“Never”, “monthly”, “weekly”, “daily”) and the total amount of time spent in minutes if selected ‘daily’ on the various media from Pakistani and American television, print, newspapers, internet sites, as well as radio. The scale is adapted from Raman and Harwood (2016). Survey question includes; “How frequently do you consume each of the following media outlets?” For American media choices, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .64$. The descriptive statistics of American media outlets are as follows; For American television, $M = 2.57$, $SD = .1.10$. For American newspapers, $M = 1.98$, $SD = 1.08$. For American magazines, $M = 1.62$, $SD = .85$. For American websites, $M = 3.14$, $SD = .93$. For American radio, $M = 1.95$, $SD = 1.11$. For Pakistani media choices, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .56$. The descriptive statistics of Pakistani media outlets are as follows; For Pakistani television, $M = 2.59$, $SD = 1.13$. For Pakistani newspapers, $M = 1.80$, $SD = 1.04$. For Pakistani magazines, $M = 1.36$, $SD = .73$. For Pakistani websites, $M = 2.41$, $SD = .95$. For Pakistani radio, $M = 1.43$, $SD = .85$.

Functional Fitness

Functional fitness was measured using the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (SCAS) by Furnham and Bochner (1982) to measure the skills of participants needed to function in a new place. SCAS questionnaire is a 5-point Likert scale comprising of questions regarding the ability to make friends and their interaction with others at social

events. For example, “finding food that you enjoy.” Items responses range from 1 (No difficulty) to 5 (Extreme difficulty). Cronbach’s $\alpha = .92$, $M = 4.01$, $SD = .55$. All items were reverse-coded, therefore higher scores indicate higher functional fitness.

Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being was measured using Ryff’s (1996) Psychological Well-Being Scales (PWB), adapted from Jibeen and Khalid (2010) who studied the predictors of psychological well-being of Pakistani immigrants in Canada. The present version of PWB scale has 42 items, each comprised of 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree). A sample of survey item is; “In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live.” Question 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 13, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 29, 31, 35, 36, 37, 38, and 40 were reverse-coded. The PWB questionnaire measures the psychological well-being through six features; Self-Acceptance (Q11, Q22, Q34, Q40, Q8, Q19, and Q31), Positive Relations with Others (Q7, Q18, Q30, Q38, Q4, Q16, and Q27), Autonomy (Q1, Q13, Q24, Q35, Q41, Q10, and Q21), Environmental Mastery (Q3, Q15, Q26, Q36, Q42, Q12, and Q23), Purpose in Life (Q9, Q20, Q32, Q39, Q6, Q29, and Q33), Personal Growth (Q5, Q17, Q28, Q37, Q2, Q14, and Q25).

High scores in each category indicate that participants respondents are proficient in that particular area, resulting a higher psychological well-being. Contrarily, a low score indicates participants’ discomfort situation in life, resulting in lower psychological well-being. In the present study, the overall results (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .93$, $M = 4.99$, $SD =$

.837) indicate that majority of participants are inclined towards higher psychological well-being ($M= 4.99$).

Mediation Model Procedure

To predict the relationship between marital satisfaction, media consumption, contact quality, psychological well-being and functional fitness, as indicated in H1 and H2, the researcher ran mediation model 4 with the Hayes (2013) PROCESS macro for SPSS. PROCESS macro uses bootstrapping analyses for bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals in performed tests.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The demographics included the participants' age, gender, nationality, relationship status, duration of stay in the U.S., length of marriage, state of residence in the U.S., and number of children. The participants' age ranged from 21 to 55, with the average age of 29.2 years old ($M_{age} = 29.2$, $SD = 5.4$). The percentage of female participants was 63.6% and the male participants was 28.4%. All participants were of Pakistani origin. One of the requirements for the present study was to be accompanied with their intimate partner/spouse. The data showed that 93.8% participants were married and only 6.2% were not married to their accompanying partners. The results also showed that 40.9% participants did not have any children, 28.4% had one child, 18.2% had two children, and 1.1% had four children. Average stay of participants with dependents in the U.S. was 2.7 years. Average duration of participants' marriage was 3.6 years. States of residence varied for participants, however most participants, 24.7%, were from California (Also See Table 1).

Table 1*Participants' Characteristics (N= 81)*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>A</i>
Marital Satisfaction	5.56	3.35	0.60
Contact Quality	5.76	1.1	0.86
Overall Consumption-US Media	2.24	3.27	0.64
Functional Fitness	4.01	5.48	0.92
Psychological Well-being	4.99	0.84	0.93
Consumption of American TV	2.57	1.10	-
Consumption of American Web	3.14	0.93	-
Age	29.18	5.47	-
Length of Stay in the U.S. year (s)	2.72	2.44	-
Duration of marriage in year(s)	3.62	3.16	-

Pearson Correlations for Primary Variables

Before testing hypotheses, the researcher conducted Pearson Correlations to examine the relationships between primary variables of the study; marital satisfaction, contact quality, consumption of American television, consumption of American websites, functional fitness, and psychological well-being (See Table 2).

Table 2*Pearson Correlations Coefficient for Primary Variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Marital Satisfaction	—					
2. Contact Quality	.33**	—				
3. Consumption of Television	-.01	.30**	—			
4. Consumption of Websites	.06	.40**	.29**	—		
5. Functional Fitness	.19	.26*	.14	.26*	—	
6. Psychological Well-being	.43**	.38**	.10	.18	.44**	—

Note. ** $p < .001$. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed), * $p < .05$. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Hypotheses Testing

H1: Contact Quality Predicts Acculturation of Pakistani Graduate Students

H1 posited that contact quality predicts acculturation of Pakistani graduate students in two acculturation outcomes; functional fitness and psychological well-being. In the model, the researcher added number of children as one of the predictors. In order to test H1, two bivariate regression analyses were conducted. First, the researcher entered contact quality and number of children as independent variables. Functional fitness was

entered as a dependent variable. The contact quality and number of children explained a significant proportion of variance in functional fitness, $F(2, 63) = 4.90, p = .01$. The R^2 for the overall model was .14, meaning that 14% of variance in functional fitness was reported by the predictor variables, contact quality and number of children. In the final model, contact quality ($t = 2.66, p = .01, B = .17$) and number of children ($t = 2.03, p = .05, B = .16$) predicted the participants' functional fitness.

Next, the researcher entered contact quality and number of children as independent variables. The psychological well-being was entered as a dependent variable. Contact quality and number of children significantly predicted psychological well-being, $F(2, 72) = 7.6, p = .001$. The R^2 for the overall model was .17, meaning that 17% of variance in psychological well-being was reported by the predictor variables, contact quality and number of children. In the final model, contact quality ($t = 3.9, p < .01, B = .31$) was significant, whereas number of children ($t = .82, p = .41, B = .09$) did not predict the participant's psychological well-being significantly (See Table 3)

Table 3

Summary of Linear Regression to predict Functional Fitness and Psychological Well-being

Variable	Functional Fitness			Psychological Well-being		
	B	SE B	B	B	SE B	B
Contact Quality	.17	.06	.32**	.31	.08	.42**
No. of Children	.16	.08	.24*	.09	.10	.09

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

H2: Consumption of American Media Content Predicts Acculturation of Pakistani Graduate Students

H2 tested whether consumption of American media content predicts two acculturation outcomes; functional fitness and psychological well-being of Pakistani graduate students. In the model, the researcher added number of children as one of the predictors. To test H2, first the researcher entered the two most used American outlets American website ($M = 3.14$) and American television ($M = 2.57$) and number of children as independent variables. Only American website and American television was used in the analysis because Pakistani graduate students did not use other American media too often (less than monthly). The functional fitness was entered as a dependent variable. The model as a whole was significant to predict functional fitness, $F(3, 62) = 3.2, p = .03$. The R^2 for the overall model was .13, meaning that 13% of variance in functional fitness was reported by the predictor variables, American media (American television and website) and number of children. In the final model, independent variable American television ($t = .89, p = .38, B = .05$) was not significant, and American websites ($t = 2.10, p = .04, B = .16$) and number of children ($t = 2.12, p = .04, B = .17$) were significant.

Then, the researcher entered the two most used American outlets (American website and American television) and number of children as independent variables as independent variables, and psychological well-being was entered as a dependent variable. The model as a whole was not significant to predict psychological well-being, $F(3, 71) = .88, p = .46$. The R^2 for the overall model was .04, meaning that 4% of variance in psychological well-being was reported by the predictor variables, American media

(American television and website) and number of children. In the final model, the independent variable American websites ($t = 1.23, p = .22, B = .14$), American television ($t = .66, p = .51, B = .06$) and number of children ($t = .55, p = .58, B = .06$) were not significant (See Table 4)

Table 4

Summary of Linear Regression to predict Functional Fitness and Psychological Well-being

Variable	Functional Fitness			Psychological Well-being		
	B	SE B	B	B	SE B	β
American TV	.05	.06	.11	.06	.09	.08
American Web	.16	.07	.26*	.14	.11	.15
No. of Children	.17	.08	.26*	.06	.71	.06

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$

H3: Marital Satisfaction Predicts Acculturation of Pakistani Graduate Students

To test H3, the researcher first entered marital satisfaction as independent variable and functional fitness was entered as a dependent variable. The model as a whole was not significant to predict functional fitness, $F(1, 67) = 2.52, p = .12$. The R^2 for the overall model was .04, meaning that 4% of variance was reported in functional fitness by the predictor variable, marital satisfaction. In the final model, the independent variable was not statistically significant with marital satisfaction ($t = 1.59, p = 0.12, B = .10$) to predict functional fitness.

Then, the researcher entered marital satisfaction as independent variable and psychological well-being was entered as a dependent variable. The model as a whole was significant to predict psychological well-being, $F(1, 76) = 17.53, p < .001$. The R^2 was .19, meaning that 19% of variance in psychological well-being was reported by the predictor variable, marital satisfaction. In the final model, the independent variable was statistically significant, marital satisfaction ($t = 4.18, p < .001, B = .32$). To summarize, hypothesis three was supported. Marital satisfaction predicted Pakistani graduate students' two acculturation outcomes; functional fitness and psychological well-being. (See Table 5)

Table 5

Summary of Linear Regression to predict Functional Fitness and Psychological Well-being

Variable	Functional Fitness			Psychological Well-being		
	B	SE B	B	B	SE B	β
Marital Satisfaction	.10	.06	.19	.33	.08	.43**

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$

H4: Marital Satisfaction Mediates the Relationship Between Contact Quality and Acculturation of Pakistani Graduate Students

To test H4, two mediation models were analyzed using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018) on SPSS (ver. 26). First, the researcher tested if marital satisfaction mediates the relationship between contact quality and functional fitness of Pakistani graduate students. Unstandardized indirect effects were computed for each of 5,000

bootstrapped samples, and the results showed that contact quality and functional fitness were not mediated by marital satisfaction ($B = .02$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI: $-.02$; $.08$) (See Table 6)

Table 6

Marital Satisfaction Mediating Relationship between Contact Quality and Functional Fitness

Antecedent	Consequent					
	<i>M</i> (Marital Satisfaction)			<i>Y</i> (Functional Fitness)		
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
X (Contact Quality)	.32	.12	.01	.12	.07	.08
<i>M</i>				.06	.06	.32
Constant	3.77	.73	<.001	2.98	.44	<.001
	$R^2 = .09$			$R^2 = .08$		
	$F(1, 67) = 6.72, p = .01$			$F(2, 66) = 2.85, p = .06$		

Then, the researcher tested if marital satisfaction mediates the relationship between contact quality and psychological well-being of Pakistani graduate students. Unstandardized indirect effects were computed for each of 5,000 bootstrapped samples, and the results showed that contact quality and psychological well-being were mediated by marital satisfaction ($B = .09$, $SE = .05$, 95% CI: $.01$; $.19$) (Also see Table 7, Figure 1).

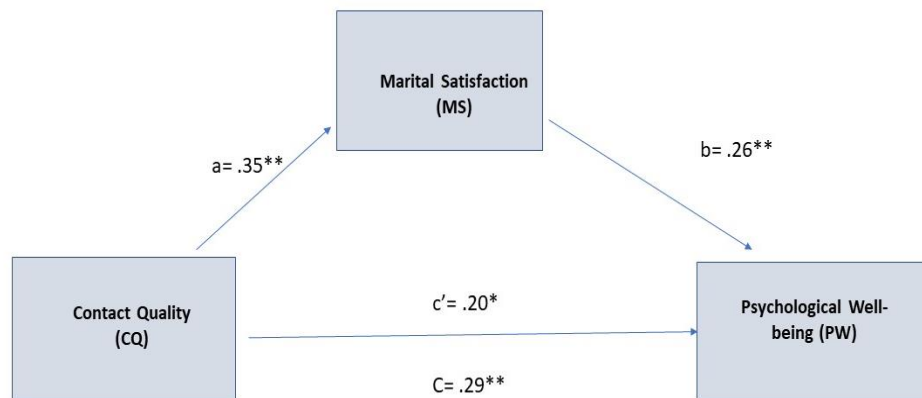
Table 7

Marital Satisfaction Mediating Relationship between Contact Quality and Psychological Well-being

Antecedent	Consequent					
	M (Marital Satisfaction)			Y (Psychological Well-being)		
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
X (Contact Quality)	.35	.11	.002	.20	.08	.02
<i>M</i>				.26	.08	.002
Constant	3.61	.64	<.001	2.40	.53	<.001
	$R^2 = .12$			$R^2 = .25$		
	$F(1,76) = 9.99, p = .002$			$F(2,75) = 12.33, p = <.001$		

Figure 1

Marital Satisfaction Mediates Relationship between Contact Quality and Psychological Well-Being



Note. ** $p < .001$. Significant at the .001 level (2-tailed).

* $p < .05$. Significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

H5: Marital Satisfaction Mediates the Relationship Between Media Consumption (American Television and American Websites) and Acculturation of Pakistani Graduate Students.

H5 predicted that marital satisfaction mediates the relationship between consumption of American television and functional fitness of Pakistani graduate students. First, unstandardized indirect effects were computed for each of 5,000 bootstrapped samples, and the results showed that consumption of American television and functional fitness were not mediated by marital satisfaction ($B = -.00$, $SE = .01$, 95% CI: $-.02$; $.02$) (See Table 8)

Table 8

Marital Satisfaction Mediating Relationship between American Television Consumption and Functional Fitness

Antecedent X	Consequent					
	M (Marital Satisfaction)			Y (Functional Fitness)		
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
(American Television)	-.003	.12	.98	.07	.06	.23
<i>M</i>				.09	.06	.11
Constant	5.65	.34	<.001	3.28	.38	<.001
	$R^2 = .00$			$R^2 = .06$		
	$F(1, 67) = .001, p = .98$			$F(2, 66) = 2.00, p = .14$		

The researcher then tested if marital satisfaction mediates the relationship between consumption of American television and psychological well-being of Pakistani graduate students. Unstandardized indirect effects were computed for each of 5,000 bootstrapped samples, and the results showed that consumption of American television and psychological well-being were not mediated by marital satisfaction ($B = -.01$, $SE = .04$, 95% CI: $-.09; .06$) (See Table 9)

Table 9

Marital Satisfaction Mediating Relationship between American Television Consumption and Psychological Well-being

Antecedent	Consequent					
	<i>M</i> (Marital Satisfaction)			<i>Y</i> (Psychological Well-being)		
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>X</i> (American Television)	-.04	.12	.75	.10	.08	.25
<i>M</i> Constant	5.70	.33	<.001	.33	.08	<.001
				2.91	.50	<.001
	$R^2 = .001$			$R^2 = .20$		
	$F(1, 76) = .10, p = .75$			$F(2, 75) = 9.48, p = <.001$		

The researcher then tested if marital satisfaction mediates the relationship between consumption of American websites and functional fitness of Pakistani graduate students. Unstandardized indirect effects were computed for each of 5,000 bootstrapped samples, and the results showed that consumption of American websites and functional fitness were not mediated by marital satisfaction ($B = .004$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI: $-.02; .04$) (See Table 10)

Table 10

Marital Satisfaction Mediating Relationship between American Website Consumption and Functional Fitness

Antecedent	Consequent					
	M (Marital Satisfaction)			Y (Functional Fitness)		
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
X						
(American Websites)	.04	.15	.77	.15	.07	.04
M	–	–	–	.10	.06	.13
Constant	5.51	.47	<.001	3.03	.40	<.001
	$R^2 = .001$			$R^2 = .10$		
	$F(1, 67) = .09, p = .77$			$F(2, 66) = 3.61, p = .03$		

The researcher then tested if marital satisfaction mediates the relationship between consumption of American websites and psychological well-being of Pakistani graduate students. Unstandardized indirect effects were computed for each of 5,000 bootstrapped samples, and the results showed that consumption of American websites and psychological well-being were not mediated by marital satisfaction ($B = .01$, $SE = .05$, 95% CI: $-.10; .12$). (See Table 11)

Table 11

Marital Satisfaction Mediating Relationship between American Websites Consumption and Psychological Well-being

Antecedent	Consequent					
	<i>M</i> (Marital Satisfaction)			<i>Y</i> (Psychological Well-being)		
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>X</i> (American Websites)	.03	.14	.84	.15	.10	.11
<i>M</i> Constant	5.52	.46	<.001	.32	.08	<.001
	$R^2 = .0005$			$R^2 = .21$		
	$F(1, 76) = .04, p = .84$			$F(2, 75) = 10.29, p = .0001$		

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The present research attempted to examine the influence of marital satisfaction among Pakistani graduate students living with co-ethnic partners in the U.S. Since no prior study to researcher's knowledge has studied Pakistani graduate students' acculturation with co-ethnic partners, the researcher proposed a new theoretical construct of 'marital satisfaction' in Kim's Integrative Communication theory by testing four hypotheses in accordance with Kim's (2001) theorems that predicted the role of interpersonal communication and consumption of host mass media in sojourners' acculturation; functional fitness and psychological well-being. The present study was conducted with an assumption that co-ethnic partners who travelled with participants, Pakistani graduate students, to the U.S. have a defining role in participants' cross-cultural adaptation.

The data demonstrated that majority of the participants were satisfied with their marital relationship with their co-ethnic partners from Pakistan while maintaining a good quality contact with host nationals in the place of sojourn. The results were in contrast to the findings of Khuwaja et al. (2013) who studied the relationship of migrated females with their accompanying families and found that inter-family conflicts occurred due to females' socializing patterns with friends from distinct ethical and religious backgrounds in the host community. The present data suggested that the sojourners can maintain quality relationship with their spouse while attaining quality of contact with their host

nationals through interpersonal communication. Therefore, it was observed that the sojourner does not necessarily prioritize one group over another, ethnic vs. host, in a new culture.

Findings of the present study also indicated that Pakistani graduate students consumed the two media outlets; American television and American websites more frequently as compared to other mass media. However, the consumption was on monthly and weekly basis for the respective media outlets. The results suggested that these findings to mean that the lower consumption of host media is because most married graduate students grapple with multiple responsibilities simultaneously including; academia, family responsibility, parenting, and employment. Moreover, graduate school itself can have intense program demands (Bulgan & Çiftçi, 2018) leading to lesser consumption of media outlets during their leisure time.

The findings further suggested that majority of the Pakistani graduate students faced slight to no difficulty in terms of functional fitness as well as psychological well-being in the U.S. In the next section, the researcher discussed the findings of analyses conducted and the implications for prospective studies.

Contact Quality and Acculturation of Pakistani Graduate Students

In examining the acculturation process of Pakistani graduate students in the U.S., the researcher tested Kim's (2001) Integrative Communication theory for the understudied population of Pakistani graduate students. The theory suggested that interpersonal communication with host nationals resulted in sojourners' acculturation,

whereas, the interpersonal communication with co-ethnics hindered the acculturation cross-cultural adaptation. Consistent with Kim's (2001) Integrative Communication Theory, the data suggested that contact quality predicted the psychological well-being as well as the functional fitness of Pakistani graduate students. The researcher found that Pakistani graduate students' contact quality in host communication predicted their acculturation. The study suggested that sojourners' communication with host community influenced their functional fitness and psychological well-being in a new cultural environment. The findings were aligned with Raman and Harwood (2016), who studied the relationship between intergroup contact acculturation in Asian Indian professionals and found that "friendly relationships with people from host culture lessen intergroup anxiety" (Raman & Harwood, 2016, p. 367).

Pakistani graduate students reported ($M = 5.76$, $SD = 1.1$) for contact quality with host nationals. The findings were similar to the results of previous study of Hispanic youth suggesting that communication with locals greatly facilitated their successful integration across borders (Kim & McKay-Semmler, 2014). Additionally, it is of note that Pakistani graduate students' contact quality in host interpersonal interactions could also be high due to their ease with the host language, i.e. English. It is because the participants belong to the relatively privileged segment of the society with convenient access to acquaint themselves with English language since Kindergarten and due to English being Pakistan's official language, used in educational institutions and professional settings (Haider, 2020), which was a significant predictor of their adjustment process in the U.S.

The findings also suggested that when children were added as one of the predictors to check whether contact quality predicts acculturation, the results showed that they in fact did predict the acculturation; both functional fitness and psychological well-being. It was interesting to note that children along with the spouses of Pakistani graduate students aided the adjustment process, despite Kim's (2001) theory postulations not mentioning the role of children from co-ethnic cultures.

Consumption of American Media and Acculturation of Pakistani Graduate Students

To examine the acculturation process of Pakistani graduate students in the U.S., the researcher tested Kim's (2001) Integrative Communication Theory. The theory suggested that although host mass communication does not require personalized communication, access and exposure to mass media of host culture strongly influences sojourners' social participation and adjustment. The findings of present study however suggested otherwise, and consumption of media did not predict functional fitness and psychological well-being of Pakistani graduate students as predicted in Kim's (2001) Integrative Communication theory. The results were contradicting with the previous study by Raman and Harwood (2016) who explored the intersecting relationship of American and Indian media consumption, intergroup contact, and cross-cultural acculturation. Raman and Harwood (2016) conceded that the two predicting variables; intergroup contact and consumption of media, collectively predicted acculturation more than either of the variables separately and suggested a positive relationship between acculturation of Asian Indian professionals in the U.S. and host media consumption, i.e.

American television and other media. Similar to the present study, respondents in Raman and Harwood's (2016) study also responded with their frequency of media consumption (Never to Daily). Additionally, the respondents ranked their preferred outlet among host media; newspapers ($M = 3.72$) and television ($M = 3.68$), whereas the participants in present study ranked American websites ($M = 3.14$) and American television ($M = 2.57$) as their top preferences in host media consumption. Both the present study and Raman and Harwood (2016) were conducted among participants from collectivistic cultural backgrounds, i.e. South Asian origin. However, the significant difference lied in the visa status of the participants, i.e. Raman and Harwood's (2016) participants were green card holders or US citizens, whereas the present study explored the Pakistani graduate students on F-1 visa, with spouses on F-2 visa category. The difference lies in the length of stay as a motivator to acculturate; green card holder or US citizens tend to acculturate more since their settlement in a new culture navigates their efforts to acculturate, whereas students on F-1 with spouses on F-2 visas are short-term migrants, who may or may not stay in the U.S. after completion of their programs.

The data also demonstrated contradictory results to another previous study by Dalisay (2012) who studied new immigrants' media use and acculturation in the U.S. Dalisay (2012) explored the consumption of English language media in pre and post-immigration of the immigrants from over 30 countries and found that they tend to increase their consumption of English language media in the U.S. as compared to when they are in their host countries. This was due to their higher proficiency in host language, i.e. English. Considering that admission into American colleges' graduate programs

require extensive English language standardized testing, the findings of present data do not corroborate with Dalisay's (2012) findings.

Similarly, Chen (2015) studied the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs' media consumption and host interpersonal networks in the U.S. to find out whether both served as strong predictors of cultural knowledge in the host culture. The study revealed that host media usage was a stronger predictor as compared to host interpersonal networks among Chinese immigrants in understanding the cultural cues, which may facilitate the adjustment process of participants.

The results called for a more nuanced approach to study consumption of host media as a predictor of functional fitness and psychological well-being of Pakistani students.

In terms of media use and acculturation, the previous research suggested that sojourners, specifically migrants or refugees use media to either engage with host culture or/ and to stay connected to their native culture (Tudsri & Hebani, 2014). While studying the refugees from Hazara, et al. (2014) examined how media consumption impacted the adjustment process of Hazara asylum seekers in Australia and whether their host language proficiency navigated their motivation to consume host or ethnic media. The results revealed that participants with low host language proficiency were more motivated to consume media in host language, i.e. English, to improve the proficiency whereas those participants who had no interest in improving the host language did not consume host media.

The findings of the present study were in line with the results and provided an important explanation to why Pakistani graduate students' host media consumption was

low. The results of the present study suggested that there is a possibility that Pakistani graduate students consciously chose to consume certain media (American television and websites) over others (American newspapers, radio, and magazines) based on whether they want to use certain media as a tool to acculturate more or less, aligning with Tudsri and Hebbani's (2014) findings. The researcher also argued that their language proficiency could also be a motivator in consuming American media over Pakistani media and vice versa since sojourners with low language proficiency consumed host media relatively more (Tudsri & Hebbani, 2014). Since most of the graduate students admitted to higher education programs are proficient in English language, they may not feel a need to improve as compared to their counterparts.

Marital Satisfaction as a Mediator between Contact Quality and Acculturation, and Host Media Consumption and Acculturation

Kim's (2001) Integrative Communication theory predicted that greater ethnic interpersonal and mass communication predicted lower acculturation in sojourners. The present study explored how accompanying co-ethnic partners living with sojourners upon relocation in a new cultural environment were to exhibit their role in their acculturation process. The results suggested that higher marital satisfaction would result in higher psychological well-being of the participants, which was one of the two acculturation outcomes studied. Kim's theory however does not partake an important factor, which is that sojourn experience is not necessarily isolated. Instead, people may migrate in groups and it is important to address those undefined groups, i.e. those who belong to the ethnic community, but are still a part of the sojourn experience.

The findings of present study revealed that marital satisfaction of Pakistani graduate students with their co-ethnic partners was positively correlated to their contact quality with host nationals as well as their own psychological well-being, which supplemented the existing study done on expatriates by Sterle et al. (2018). Previously, experiences of expatriates were explored, who move abroad with dependents; families and children. It was noted that marital stress was a primary reason towards unfulfillment of their assignments and overall difficulty in cultural adjustment (Sterle et al., 2018). The previous studies provided a lens for the present study to explore whether marital satisfaction with co-ethnic partners had any impact on acculturation of the understudied population of Pakistani graduate students in the U.S.

Similarly, previous study on acculturation of couples from Hong Kong who moved to Canada revealed that the sojourn experience with accompanying partners brought the couple closer since only one partner, the husband, was working which allowed them to spend leisure time with their wives (Zhang, et al., 2011). In correspondence of Zhang et al.'s (2011) findings, the present data suggested that the accompanying spouses' ineligibility to employment in the U.S., there was a greater chance of spending time with each other. It can be suggested that the participants and co-ethnic partners from Pakistan were relying on each other's company during acculturative process after moving to a new cultural environment, similar to Zhang et al.'s (2011) findings of the study.

The most striking finding of the present study was that marital satisfaction mediated the contact quality in host interpersonal communication and psychological well-

being of Pakistani graduate students. Considering that Pakistani individuals are more inclined to implement and endorse couple bonding as compared to the Westerners (Iqbal et al., 2019), with no prior studies that have explored the mediating role of marital satisfaction as a predictor in acculturation, it was important to note that the marital satisfaction of Pakistani graduate students with their co-ethnic partners predicted their acculturative process. Also, since majority of Pakistani population is Muslim, where the Islamic faith stresses on companionship through marriage and concept of divorce is disdained, both religiously and culturally (Alghafli, et al, 2014), the present study served as a lens to look in to their relationship maintenance patterns during acculturative process.

It can be contended that Kim's (2001) integrative communication overlooked the situational context of family structures, that was pivotal in exploring acculturative experiences of population like Pakistani graduate students with co-ethnic dependents. The findings revealed that marital satisfaction, however, did not mediate the relationship between contact quality and functional fitness, the second acculturation outcome of the present study. It can be suggested that when sojourner participants have an apt support, such as ethnic co-dependents, they do not adapt to appropriate skills needed to function in a new place.

Similarly, the findings suggested that marital satisfaction with co-ethnic partner did not mediate the relationship between American media consumption and acculturation of Pakistani graduate students in the U.S. Considering the low consumption of American websites and television from the data, it can be suggested that participants' media

consumption stayed unchanged with their accompanying spouses around them. The results suggested that future studies should comprise of experiment with experimental and control groups to observe American media consumption of Pakistani graduate students to collect pre- and post- experiment data. Previously, the literature suggested that partners in low-quality marriage have greater chances of high media consumption to compensate for the deteriorated relationship with the partner, and therefore media consumption is their way out in such situation (Dew & Tulane, 2015). Since the study did not address the collective relationship of the three variables; marital satisfaction, media consumption, and acculturation, it is contended that participants depicted relatively higher levels of marital satisfaction, functional fitness, and psychological well-being, with lower media consumption, while marital satisfaction with their co-ethnic partner did not mediate the relationship between media consumption and acculturation. This could also be explained in context of whether the couple consumed media together, i.e. watched American television shows and used American websites, instead of only the participant. Since partners in general who connect with people through more interactive mediums like social networking sites are more likely to deter from their marital responsibilities, which causes marital conflicts (Dew & Tulane, 2015). In sum, it can be concluded that marital satisfaction with accompanying co-ethnic partner was found to be an imperative predicting variable in furthering the theoretical predictions by Kim (2001), however further research exploring the role of marital satisfaction as a mediator is needed in order to conceptualize the acculturative process for Pakistani graduate students.

Theoretical Implications

This section aims to delineate the important findings of the present study to be incorporated in Kim's (2001) Integrative Communication Theory to understand acculturation in today's diverse cultural milieu. Kim (2001) argued that sojourners conform to adaptation of the host culture by unlearning their own ethnic cultural values and beliefs, minimizing ethnic interpersonal communication and mass media consumption, which facilitates their acculturation through two mediums; functional fitness and psychological well-being. The present study, however, suggested that Pakistani graduate students were able to maintain high level of functional fitness and a moderate level of psychological well-being during their acculturation process, while maintaining moderate marital satisfaction with their co-ethnic partners from Pakistan. In terms of host vs. ethnic media consumption, the results showed that the consumption of both media was low, as opposed to Kim's prediction that suggested it was through increased host mass media consumption that participants attained higher acculturation level in their sojourn process.

The findings also called for a redefinition of 'ethnic groups' in Kim's Integrative Communication theory. In studying the role of co-ethnic partners of Pakistani graduate students and how they impact the acculturative process, it was found that the spouses of Pakistani graduate students did not completely fit in the definition of 'ethnic support' category, since these co-ethnic partners were traveling with the participants, living with them in the place of sojourn, and experiencing the sojourn experience side by side with the primary participants of this study, i.e. Pakistani graduate students. Findings showed

that unlike Kim's prediction, ethnic interpersonal communication did not decrease the host interpersonal communication with the nationals, neither did it halt the participants from achieving acculturation; high functional fitness and moderate psychological well-being. In fact, the participants with more children were able to attain higher functional fitness as the study showed.

It is important to note that the unidimensional nature of Kim's model may not apply to all sojourners, due to sojourners' varying cultural, geographical, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds as well as the motive and duration of sojourn. From the American media consumption patterns of Pakistani graduate students, it can be contended that short-term sojourners may not minimize their ethnic media consumption for the host media, let alone prioritize one over another, if they are aware of returning back to their homeland after a designated period of time, usually upon their program completion. Moreover, media outlets are more accessible in today's age, therefore, the results portrayed lower consumption of American media because there is a high chance that participants were still viewing both cultures', ethnic and host, media.

Although, Kim's (2001) Integrative Communication theory served as an excellent testing ground to study whether accompanying 'ethnic groups', i.e. spouses/ romantic partners of the studied participants would impact their acculturation process, it is important to note that the new mediator 'marital satisfaction' was proposed to further extend the theoretical postulations. It is important to acknowledge that acculturation is not necessarily an isolated experience for sojourners in the current cultural milieu. Short-term migrants like international students relocating with partners and children especially

from collectivistic cultural backgrounds do not necessarily portray the same acculturative patterns as their counterparts. Similarly, a single student is not expected to acculturate the same way as a student who relocates with spouse or children.

Therefore, through the present study a recognition for non-mainstream students, such as sojourners who are married or have children was presented to highlight that sojourners move across cultural boundaries not just by themselves but also with co-ethnic group members. Such recognition tends to build the gap that exists in previous literature suggesting that international students are mainly confined to status of single individuals who move alone, diminishing their roles as spouses and parents. In sum, the findings aimed to outline an important but ignored underlying mediator that may determine the acculturative patterns of sojourners by showing through findings that marital satisfaction predicts both functional fitness and psychological well-being of the Pakistani graduate students with co-ethnic dependents in the U.S.

Practical Implications

The present study proposed implications for future research in the realm of international student policy and future research of international students, particularly the Pakistani graduate students with co-ethnic dependents studying in the U.S. First, since spouses of international students on F2 visa are ineligible to work or study full-time in the U.S. (Bordoloi, 2015), the campus directors should recognize that such prohibition tends to isolate the accompanying partners of the students. Such isolation may adversely affect the performance of their partners; the students, directly or indirectly. Similarly,

college or university counselors and instructors should not assume that all students are the same. The data showed that students who have children are more likely to acculturate in the new cultural environment. Despite the fact that higher education institutions have not catered the needs of students outside of classroom teaching, it is suggested that spouses and children of married international students should be made visible in demographic profile of graduate students with the ongoing demand to outsource skilled labor in the U.S. institutions. Increased participation policies should be harnessed to directly and indirectly aid the acculturation process of Pakistani graduate students by involving instead of isolating their accompanying partners. The study also aimed to lay foundational grounds for future researchers to fully understand the acculturation process of Pakistani graduate students who have a unique cultural origin, ability to aptly function in a new culture while looking after their psychological well-being as they shift from collectivistic to individualistic cultural environment.

As Doyle et al. (2016) discussed, it is suggested that dependents of international students are the academic equivalent of ‘paperless people’ (p. 187), the present study implies that dependents of international students who relocate for their spouse or parent’s higher education should be provided with the access to involve with the primary sojourner, i.e. the international student. A few suggestions would be access to on-campus health services, accommodation for their children in housing and affordable childcare, access to classes for partners and children, as well as visa support services. Moreover, since the study revealed that marital satisfaction in fact does aid the international students’ contact quality in communication with host nationals; university professors,

peers, potential employer, it should be of primary concern to the student counselors to provide adequate support to the unseen support group of international students since it is one of the real needs of both current and future students. Similarly, instructors could design and offer collaborative programs for learners who hold F2 visa to encourage classroom engagement, inside and outside of the university. Such engagement would also help lower the acculturation gaps between partners, if any, with an opportunity for the students to better communicate in such collaborative programs.

Additionally, other initiatives such as providing on and off-campus volunteer opportunities for both students and their partners, conducting workshops to prepare both students and their spouse about the potential adjustment challenges, as well as instilling strategies to cater those challenges should be brought to course of action for better acculturative process. Additionally, the campuses could invest in the functional fitness and psychological well-being of their international students with cross-cultural focused counseling sessions. Being away from family, learning from educational channels that are different from what they are accustomed to can bring adverse challenges to the acculturation process, which should be studied in the future.

Considering that previous studies did not take into account the contextual and situational differences of international students, the present study highlighted the cultural differences among primary sojourner and the accompanying partner by analyzing acculturative gap and how similar or different their individual acculturative patterns were, despite the fact that they were living together. Future studies can also take in to account the gender differences and how the acculturation may or may not be impacted by the

gender roles of the participants from Pakistan. Other variables, number of children, marital satisfaction, functional fitness, and psychological well-being, were addressed to help higher education institutions design their on-campus and off-campus programs that motivate these students with dependents through differences observed between the studied predictors.

Limitations and Future Studies

While the present study pertained valuable insights in the Communication studies realm, the present section states some limitations and opportunities for future research. Although the results of the present study provided ample points for prospective studies focusing on Pakistani graduate students in the U.S. with accompanying dependents, the readers warrant caution for generalization of the study.

First, it is recommended that future studies be conducted with a larger number of participants from Pakistan to ensure external validation. Second, it is ideal that studies in future studies include students from a variety of majors or programs as different academic programs may reveal the level of difficulty in syllabus, time spent on and off-campus for projects and assignments, financial variability in program fees, followed by time spent in student employment to cover those expenses; all of which affect how students choose to spend their time with their spouse, consume local media, as well as communicate with host nationals, ultimately leading to their acculturative patterns. Furthermore, it would be important to note whether the participants, Pakistani graduate students, were studying on fully funded, partially funded, or self-funded scholarship or tuition, and if financial support programs aided their adjustment. This is due to the fact

that usually fully-funded programs provide students with stipend to cover their expenses with an opportunity to travel and spend time with host nationals, unlike partial or full tuition paying students, who may not be too motivated to make the same financial choices. Third, due to the limitation of the research design, the result of the present data could not prove causality. As such it is advised that future studies opt for a longitudinal study to prove causality. Fourth, employing the survey method provided the author the authentic observation, the influence of American media consumption was still unclear because the participants of the present study consumed American media enough. Thus, it is recommended to create an experiment to test the influence of American media consumption. Fifth, it would be ideal if future studies also focus on measuring the motive to stay in the country, get employment, or return to the home country to analyze whether their plan of stay impacted their ability to acculturate through better functional fitness and psychological well-being. Sixth, majority of the data for the present study was from California state, it could be suggested that future studies implement balanced geographical representation of participants. As the researcher incorporated snowball sampling, the results may not be generalizable to a larger population and therefore it is recommended that future studies collect data using random sampling to shed light on the under looked population, i.e. Pakistani graduate students in the U.S.

Lastly, the present study did not compare acculturation patterns of students who relocated with and without spouse or children as the focus was to study marital satisfaction as predictor. It would be interesting to know how the acculturative experience

varies with and without the spouse or children, and what additional steps should be taken to help both groups with potential opportunities to interact with the host community.

Chapter 6

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the present study, the researcher tested the mediating role of Pakistani graduate students' marital satisfaction and acculturation in the light of Kim's (2001) Integrative Communication Theory. The researcher conducted quantitative research through online surveys from participants across the U.S. who were currently enrolled in a graduate level program and were accompanied by their co-ethnic spouses from Pakistan. The present study made pertinent contributions towards theoretical and practical implications of acculturation process of an understudied and ignored population; Pakistani graduate students with their accompanying co-ethnic partners by establishing a primary predictor, the marital satisfaction, in the theoretical realm of cross-cultural adaptation of sojourners in the U.S., considering the cultural and religious emphasis of relationship maintenance and role of marital relationships in the studied population. The researcher demonstrated that there is a dire need to incorporate the role of co-ethnic partners in study of acculturative process of international students, leveraging against the stereotypical assignation of international students as single, young individuals.

It was pertinent through the findings of present study that acculturation in Kim's Integrative Communication theory needed a redefinition of ethnic mass media and interpersonal communication since the co-ethnic partners accompanying the sojourners did not fit in the provided criterion. Furthermore, the researcher also provided a model to

confirm the mediating role of marital satisfaction between contact quality and acculturation; functional fitness and psychological well-being, that would help further the communication researchers assess how accompanying romantic partner like spouse plays an imperative role as social support for Pakistani graduate students during the unfolding of adaptation challenges in a new environment. A unique aspect of the study was to expand the Communication research beyond set standard of acculturative predictors and dig deeper into the contextual importance of individuals' cultural signifiers. Therefore, with provision of an extension to Kim's theoretical postulations, the present study would be beneficial to look 'out of the box' in understanding acculturation process of international students in the current cultural milieu.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

**Marital Satisfaction and
Acculturation**

Principal Investigator: Rida Umer

The purpose of this research study is to examine the relationship between marital satisfaction and acculturation of Pakistani international students. The study is a part of M.A. Thesis, conducted by Rida Umer, Communication Studies student at CSUS.

To participate, you must be:

- A Pakistani Graduate student in the U.S.
- Currently enrolled in a program
- Living with a Pakistani dependent (spouse)

**Participation in this study involves:**

- A time commitment of 10 minutes
- Upon survey completion, you will enter the draw to win \$150.

Contact Information

*To find out more about the study, please email Rida Umer
at contactumer.rida@gmail.com*

Appendix B

Survey Questionnaire

You are invited to participate in a web-based online survey on relationship between marital satisfaction and acculturation process of Pakistani graduate students with dependents in the U.S. The research is a part of thesis being conducted by Rida Umer, M.A. Communication Studies student at California State University, Sacramento. All participants must be of Pakistani origin, and currently enrolled in the graduate level educational programs in the U.S. If you volunteer to participate, you will be asked to answer questions about your marital satisfaction with co-national partner, interpersonal communication with host nationals, media consumption patterns, functional fitness, and psychological well-being. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right not to participate at all or to leave the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Incentives: Upon successful completion of the survey, three participants will receive monetary compensation of \$150 each through a draw. Responses will be assessed on completion and quality basis. Winners can receive the amount via Paypal or Venmo. You also have the option to either receive \$150 or have it donated to charity of your name.

Your responses will help the student researcher learn more about impact of dependents on acculturation process of international students who are currently enrolled in higher

education institutions in the U.S. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

It is anticipated that study results will be shared with the public through presentations and/or publications. Information collected for this study is anticipated to be completely anonymous and cannot be linked back to you. Your survey responses will be securely saved in Qualtrics, and data will be stored in password protected electronic format. The responses may be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from you. Raw data will be destroyed after a period of (5 years) after study completion.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please contact me at contactumer.rida@gmail.com , or Dr. Kikuko Omori at omori@csus.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in a research project please call the Office of Research, Innovation, and Economic Development, California State University, Sacramento, (916) 278-5674, or email irb@csus.edu.

Your participation indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Clicking on the “Agree” button indicates that:

- You have read the above information

- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are 18 years of age or older

Consent to participation:

- I agree
- I disagree

Demographic Information

Age (e.g. 25): _____

To which gender identity do you most identify?

- Male
- Female
- Transgender female
- Transgender male
- Gender variant/ non-conforming
- Not listed: _____
- Prefer not to answer

Nationality: _____

State of Residence in the U.S. _____

Length of stay in the U.S. (Year(s) & month(s)) _____

Have you ever lived outside of your home country? _____

If yes, which country? _____

What was the duration of your stay? (Year(s) & month(s)) _____

Relationship status:

- Married (Please specify the duration of marriage in years and months)
- Not married (Please specify)

How many children do you have? (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 or more) _____

On a scale from zero to ten, please select your level of proficiency in speaking, understanding and reading English language:

Proficiency in speaking English language (0= lowest, 10= highest)

Proficiency in understanding English language (0= lowest, 10= highest)

Proficiency in reading English language (0= lowest, 10= highest)

Marital Satisfaction Measure.

Please select option that best describes the answer for you in terms of marital satisfaction with your partner

I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down

- Very Strongly disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Very strongly agree

I am very comfortable being close to romantic partners

- Very Strongly disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree

- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Very strongly agree

When my partner starts to get close to me, I find myself pulling away

- Very Strongly disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Very strongly agree

I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close

- Very Strongly disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Agree
- Strongly agree
- Very strongly agree

Acculturation Gap Measure.

	Never	Sometimes	Most of the time	All the time
How often do you prefer American ways of doing things?	1	2	3	4
How often does your partner prefer American ways of doing things? (1= Never, 2= sometimes, 3= most of the time, 4= all the time)	1	2	3	4

Contact Quality Measure.

Instructions: Think of the person from U.S. American culture with whom you have had the most frequent contact and select the number from 1 to 7 that indicates your level of agreement with each statement below as it relates to them. Higher number indicates better quality of contact.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I value the time I have spent with this person	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My contact with this person has been pleasant.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
My contact with this student has been friendly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Media Consumption Measure.

I. Time spent.

On average, how many minutes per day do you spend on the following media outlets?

Open ended

Television

Newspapers

Magazines

Websites

Radio

II. Frequency.

How frequently do you consume each media outlets?

	Never	Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Couple of times a day
Television	1	2	3	4	5
Newspapers	1	2	3	4	5
Magazines	1	2	3	4	5
Websites	1	2	3	4	5
Radio	1	2	3	4	5

Functional Fitness Scale.

Please indicate how much difficulty you experience in the US in each of these areas.

	No difficulty	Slight difficulty	Moderate difficulty	Great difficulty	Extreme difficulty
Making American friends.	1	2	3	4	5
Finding American food that you enjoy.	1	2	3	4	5
Interacting at social events with Americans.	1	2	3	4	5
Following rules and regulations in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
Dealing with people in authority in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
Taking a U.S. perspective on the culture.	1	2	3	4	5
Using the transport system in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
Dealing with bureaucracy in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding American value system.	1	2	3	4	5
Making yourself understood to the Americans.	1	2	3	4	5
Going shopping in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5

Dealing with an American who is unpleasant.	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding American jokes and humor.	1	2	3	4	5
Accommodation in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
Going to social gatherings in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
Dealing with people staring at you in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
Communicating with people of a different ethnic group in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding ethnic or cultural differences with Americans.	1	2	3	4	5
Dealing with unsatisfactory service in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
Relating to members of the opposite sex in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
Finding your way around in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding the American political system.	1	2	3	4	5

Talking about yourself with other Americans.	1	2	3	4	5
Dealing with the climate in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding the American's world view.	1	2	3	4	5
Family relationships in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
The pace of life in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5
Being able to see two sides of an inter-cultural issue in the U.S.	1	2	3	4	5

Psychological Well-being Measure.

Instructions: Circle one response below each statement to indicate how much you agree or disagree.

1. "I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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2. "For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth."

Strongly	Somewhat	A little	Neither	A little	Somewhat	Strongly
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agree	agree	agree	agree nor disagree	disagree	disagree	disagree
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3. "In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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4. "People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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5. "I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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6. "I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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7. "Most people see me as loving and affectionate."

Strongly	Somewhat	A little	Neither agree nor	A little	Somewhat	Strongly
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agree agree agree disagree disagree disagree disagree

8. "In many ways I feel disappointed about my achievements in life."

Strongly Somewhat A little Neither A little Somewhat Strongly
agree agree agree agree nor disagree disagree disagree
disagree

9. "I live life one day at a time and don't really think about the future."

Strongly Somewhat A little Neither A little Somewhat Strongly
agree agree agree agree nor disagree disagree disagree
disagree

10. "I tend to worry about what other people think of me."

Strongly Somewhat A little Neither A little Somewhat Strongly
agree agree agree agree nor disagree disagree disagree
disagree

11. "When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out."

Strongly Somewhat A little Neither A little Somewhat Strongly
agree agree agree agree nor disagree disagree disagree
disagree

12. "I have difficulty arranging my life in a way that is satisfying to me."

Strongly Somewhat A little Neither A little Somewhat Strongly
agree agree agree agree nor disagree disagree disagree
disagree

13. "My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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14. "I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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15. "The demands of everyday life often get me down."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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16. "I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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17. "I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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18. "Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me."

Strongly
agree

Somewhat
agree

A little
agree

Neither
agree nor
disagree

A little
disagree

Somewhat
disagree

Strongly
disagree

19. "My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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20. "I have a sense of direction and purpose in life."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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21. "I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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22. "In general, I feel confident and positive about myself."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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23. "I have been able to build a living environment and a lifestyle for myself that is much to my liking."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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24. "I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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25. "I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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26. "I do not fit very well with the people and the community around me."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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27. "I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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28. "When I think about it, I haven't really improved much as a person over the years."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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29. "Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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30. "I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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31. "When I compare myself to friends and acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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32. "I don't have a good sense of what it is I'm trying to accomplish in life."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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33. "I sometimes feel as if I've done all there is to do in life."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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34. "I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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35. "I have confidence in my opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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36. "I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life."

Strongly
agree

Somewhat
agree

A little
agree

Neither
agree nor
disagree

A little
disagree

Somewhat
disagree

Strongly
disagree

37. "I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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38. "I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members and friends."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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39. "My daily activities often seem trivial and unimportant to me."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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40. "I like most parts of my personality."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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41. "It's difficult for me to voice my own opinions on controversial matters."

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	A little agree	Neither agree nor disagree	A little disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
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42. "I often feel overwhelmed by my responsibilities."

Strongly
agree

Somewhat
agree

A little
agree

Neither
agree nor
disagree

A little
disagree

Somewhat
disagree

Strongly
disagree

Thank you for taking the survey!

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