

News Interest of Immigrants in Hawaii

Immigrants use news to assist acculturation and to retain cultural pluralism.

► The image of American society as a "melting pot" for ethnic groups from all over the world predominated during the late 1940s and 1950s. As Handlin pointed out, "increasingly then Americans considered ethnicity a fading phenomenon, a quaint part of the national heritage, but one likely to diminish steadily in practical importance. At most, pluralism might remain a sentimental cultural monument to the past."¹

But the perception of the situation changed before long. People began to recognize that ethnicity does persist, that total integration has not occurred, and that there also have been positive aspects to cultural pluralism. In 1957, a UNESCO conference was held in Havana on the issue of cultural integration of immigrants. From that conference came the assessment that: "peace, order and good government had been established in the U.S. not by cultural uniformity, not by a process analogous to the physiological concept of assimilation, but in spite of it, in a situation of cultural pluralism."² The increased attention to ethnic studies in recent years partly reflects this recognition of cultural pluralism.

Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted* (Boston: An Atlantic Monthly Press Book, 1973).

¹ W. D. Borrie, et al., *The Cultural Integration of Immigrants* (Paris: UNESCO, 1959).

² Jack M. McLeod and Garrett J. O'Keefe, "The Socialization Perspective and Communication Behavior" in F. Gerald Kline and Philip J. Tichenor, eds., *Current Perspectives on Mass Communication Research* (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publications, 1972).

Harold Mendelsohn, "Sociological Perspectives on the Study on Mass Communication," in L.A. Dexter and D.M. White, eds., *People, Society and Mass Communication* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964).

Another impetus to ethnic studies has been the pattern of recent immigration, which is different from that of the past. Contemporary immigrants include a larger percentage of Asians than did earlier waves. Providing assistance in the acculturation process to Asian immigrants has become one of the major concerns of the government, as well as other interest groups, because of their vastly different cultural backgrounds.

Communication has traditionally been regarded as an important medium for acculturation. As pointed out by McLeod and O'Keefe, adaptation of the socialization perspective to communication research is logical in that "communication would seem to be the major vehicle through which learning takes place and shared cognitive systems are made possible."³ For most immigrants, who are relative strangers to the host society, establishing a "shared cognitive system" naturally becomes the key to acculturation. The importance of communication in this context is apparent. Mendelsohn once claimed that together with education, communication is charged with the task of "merging the minority groups into one democratic social organization of commonly shared ideas and values."⁴

Given the great expectation for communication to play the role of a socialization vehicle, it is not surprising that empirical studies have focused on the question: how does communication enhance, or relate to acculturation? A study by Nagata investigated the functional relationship among communication variables in the acculturation of three generations of Japanese

► Ms. Wang and Mr. Kincaid were research associates at the East-West Communication Institute in Honolulu at the time of the study.

Americans.⁵ Chang examined the communication behavior and value changes of three Korean immigrant groups.⁶ Kim constructed a causal model in which four factors (i.e., interaction potential, English competence, acculturation motivation and mass media availability) contributed to immigrants' cognitive complexity about the host society by means of interpersonal and mass communication channels.⁷ In another study, Yum examined the causes of the communication diversity of Korean immigrants in Hawaii and the impact of such diversity on their levels of information.⁸ Sunoo and others looked at the language competence and media exposure of a group of IndoChinese refugees.⁹ In most cases, the authors were able to demonstrate some kind of relationship between mass communication and the object of study (i.e., value change or English competence).

There are, indeed, reasons to believe that communication is important in enhancing acculturation. However, one might also postulate that communication functions to preserve ethnic identity. As pointed out by Jeffres and Hur, "communication networks hold social systems together including ethnic cultural systems."¹⁰ Their study found that the degree of ethnicity exhibited by immigrant groups in their sample was significantly related to ethnic interpersonal and mass communication patterns. Furthermore, communication was found to be the link between immigrants, their neighborhoods and the outside environment.

Proximity, a factor which has long been recognized by news editors for judging news value and selecting news items, also suggests a similar viewpoint in looking at the significance of communication to immigrants. As pointed out by Schramm in his discussion of the nature of the news, there should be two dimensions to the consideration of proximity: physical and psychological.¹¹ A reader's interest in a certain news story is believed to depend partly on how closely he associates himself with the news. The extent to which he identifies himself with a news story, in turn, depends on physically how close he is to the place where the event occurred, or whether he

has relatives or friends living in that place or he has personal memories about that place.

While the physical dimension of proximity may be important in determining the news interest pattern of the general audience, the psychological dimension should be essential in determining immigrants' news interest patterns.

Studies of the acculturation process of immigrants have shown that, in many instances, immigrants are economically integrated with the rest of the society, but culturally isolated into the second, or even the third generation.¹² This cultural isolation may encourage immigrants to seek information about their own ethnic group and about the faraway homeland with which they still identify themselves.¹³

This contrast in news interest, i.e., local news vs. homeland news is manifested in the audience research of general media and ethnic media. For the audience at large, community issues and events have been one major area of concern. As shown by Stevenson¹⁴ and Stephens,¹⁵ local news is directly related to readers' sense of attachment to the community. Another study by

Kyoshi Nagata. A Statistical Approach to the Study of Acculturation of an Ethnic Group Based on Communication Oriented Variables. The Case of Japanese Americans in Chicago. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. (University of Illinois, 1969)

⁵ W. H. Chang. "Communication and Acculturation: A Case Study of a Korean Ethnic Group in Los Angeles." Unpublished doctoral dissertation (University of Iowa, 1972).

Young Yun Kim. "Communication Patterns of Foreign Immigrants in the Process of Acculturation." *Journal of Human Communication Research*, 3:66-77 (Fall 1977).

⁸ June Ock Yum. "Communication Diversity and Information Acquisition Among Korean Immigrants in Hawaii." Paper presented to the ICA Convention, Acapulco, Mexico, 1980.

⁹ Don H. Sunoo, et al. "Media Use and Learning of English by Immigrants." *Journalism Quarterly*, 57: 330-333 (Summer 1980).

¹⁰ Leo W. Jeffres and K. Kyoon Hur. "The Forgotten Media Consumer: The American Ethnic." *Journalism Quarterly*, 57:10-17 (1980).

¹¹ Wilbur Schramm. "Nature of News." *Journalism Quarterly*, 26:259-269 (1949).

¹² Borrie, *op. cit.*

¹³ Charles Zwiggmann. "Nostalgic Behavior" in Charles Zwiggmann and Maria Pfister-Ammende, eds., *Uprooting and After* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1973).

¹⁴ Robert L. Stevenson. "Newspaper Readership and Community Ties." *ANPA News Research Report* No. 18, March 9, 1979.

¹⁵ Lowndes F. Stephens. "Influence of Community Attachment on Newspaper Reading Habits." *ANPA News Research Report* No. 17, Dec. 20, 1978.

Grotta *et al.* demonstrated that people are not only attracted by local news, but they prefer to have more of it in a small daily.¹⁶ On the other hand, for the approximately 900 ethnic newspapers in the States, two of the major content categories were home country news and group life interest.^{17,18} In other words, media could also be used in response to nostalgia, isolation, and a need to preserve ethnic identity.

Based on the above discussion, two main hypotheses are tested in this study:

- 1) For first-generation immigrants, news interest will fall into two categories:
 - a) *ethnic news events*, including news about the country of one's origin, news about one's own ethnic community in the United States and in Hawaii; and
 - b) *general news events*, including news about the federal, state and city government, Honolulu, the neighboring islands, and world events.
- 2) For the host population in the society, news interest will fall into two different categories:
 - a) *local news events*, including news about Honolulu, the neighboring islands, the Japanese community in Hawaii, the neighborhood, and state and city government; and
 - b) *distant news events* which occur in relatively faraway places: news about Japan, the Japanese community in the mainland, the U.S. mainland, the federal government and world events.

Different news interest patterns, therefore, are expected for the immigrant group and the general host population of Hawaii. In the first hypothesis (for immigrants) the predominant causal factor is psychological proximity; in the second hypothesis (for the host society) the predominant causal factor is physical or geographical proximity.

¹⁶ Gerald L. Grotta, Ernest F. Larkin and Barbara De Plois, "How Readers Perceive and Use a Small Daily Newspaper," *Journalism Quarterly*, 52:714-715 (Winter 1975).

Lubomyr R. Wynar, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Ethnic Newspapers and Periodicals in the U.S.* (Littleton, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1972).

¹⁷ Jerry Zubrzycki, "The Role of the Foreign Language Press in Migrant Integration," *Population Studies*, 12:76.

¹⁸ Where 1= not interested at all, 2=a little interested, 3=quite interested, and 4=very interested.

Methodology

In 1978 and 1979, a survey was conducted to investigate the communication patterns of immigrants and their relationship to the adjustment process. Three of the major immigrant groups in Hawaii were interviewed: 401 Koreans, 208 Filipinos and 199 Samoans. The two major ethnic groups of the host population were also interviewed for purposes of comparison: 203 local Japanese and 200 Caucasians. All the interviews were conducted on the main island of Oahu, except for the Japanese sample which included residents from both Oahu and the city of Hilo (51.7%) on the island of Hawaii. The Hawaiian Telephone Directory was used as a source book to compile the lists of people with Korean and Japanese surnames from which respondents were randomly drawn. Random and cluster sampling techniques were combined to draw the Filipino, Samoan, and Caucasian sample in order to insure enough respondents in each ethnic group. For the immigrant groups, only the first generation of adult immigrants (those who were born in the country of origin) were included in the sample. Of the Japanese respondents 93% were born in Hawaii. The Caucasians had lived in Hawaii for an average of 10 years. Face-to-face interviews were conducted by native interviewers using native-language questionnaires.

In the survey, respondents were asked to rate the degree to which they were interested in 11 types of news events (Table 1) on a four-point scale.¹⁹

Results

Factor analysis was performed on the 11 news interest items for all five ethnic groups using the Biomedical Computer Program Package. The factor analysis was a principal axis solution with oblique rotation to the direct oblimin criterion. Squared multiple correlations were used as communality estimates. According to the hypothesis, a two-factor solution was requested.

Among the three immigrant groups, the Samoan data showed the strongest

TABLE 1

News Interest Items and Means by Ethnic Group

	Means of News Interest Rating				
	Samoa	Korean	Filipino	Japanese	Caucasian
General News Items					
World events	2.83	2.59	3.75	2.92	3.27
U.S. Mainland	2.84	2.43	3.46	2.90	3.05
Honolulu	2.95	2.76	3.85	3.70	3.57
Neighboring Island	2.60	1.61	3.64	3.18	2.85
Neighborhood	3.09	2.03	3.73	3.30	3.27
Federal government	2.61	2.19	3.66	2.85	3.22
State government	2.89	2.33	3.82	3.27	3.31
City government	2.90	2.31	3.82	3.27	3.27
GENERAL NEWS MEAN	2.84	2.28	3.71	3.17	3.22
Ethnic News Items					
Country of origin	3.50	3.64	3.85	2.49	2.05
Ethnic community in Hawaii	3.41	2.69	3.82	2.90	1.94
Ethnic community in U.S. mainland	3.32	2.36	3.69	2.42	1.59
ETHNIC NEWS MEAN	3.41	2.90	3.78	2.60	1.86

support for the hypothesis. Events about Samoa received, on the average, the highest mean rating on the scale of interest, followed by events about the Samoan community in Hawaii and the Samoan community on the mainland (Table 1). Comparisons by *t*-test showed that the average interest ratings of the three ethnic news event items were significantly higher than that of general news events ($t=10.8$, $p<.01$).

The two-factor solution with the Samoan group accounted for 64.6% of the total variance. The first factor which emerged from the data was a general news dimension which included all categories except ethnic news events (Table 2). The second factor included items regarding the Samoan community, locally and outside Hawaii, and in Samoa itself. News about the neighborhood was also included in this factor; however, the loading showed that this item was bi-factorial since it also loaded on the first factor. The fact that the

Samoan respondents were drawn from predominantly Samoan neighborhoods could account for this result. The two factors were moderately correlated ($r=.50$).

Similar results were obtained from the Korean data. Means of news interest ratings showed that the respondents were most interested in events about Korea (Table 1). News about the local Korean community and the Korean community elsewhere, however, were the third and fourth highest after Honolulu events. Results of *t*-tests showed that there are significant differences on the average interest ratings between news events about the country of origin, two items about news events of one's own ethnic group and the others ($t=16.0$, $p<.01$). Ethnic news events were again rated higher.

With the Korean data, a two-factor solution accounted for 56.5% of the total variance. The first factor that emerged from the data was very similar to the Samoan pattern, consisting of general

TABLE 2
Two-Factor Solution on Immigrant News Interest

Variables	Loadings by Ethnic Group					
	Samoan		Korean		Filipino	
	1	2	1	2	1	2
GENERAL						
World	.81	.03	.75	-.12	.00	.78
U.S. Mainland	.76	.07	.76	-.04	-.17	.97
Honolulu	.60	.12	.59	.14	.69	.11
Neighboring island	.88	-.21	.41	.15	.20	.69
Neighborhood	.33	.48	.46	.36	.51	.25
Federal government	.81	-.03	.89	-.13	.43	.49
State government	.66	.23	.89	-.00	.99	-.11
City government	.72	.06	.84	.06	.92	-.11
ETHNIC						
Country of origin	-.04	.89	.01	.39	.37	.42
Ethnic community in Hawaii	.01	.89	-.05	.92	.70	.20
Ethnic community in U.S. mainland	.02	.88	.03	.87	.23	.64

news events. The second factor consisted primarily of three items: news about the local Korean community, the Korean community elsewhere and Korea (Table 2). News events about Korea had the highest interest rating, but it was poorly correlated with the other items. The two factors were positively and moderately correlated ($r=.39$).

The news interest ratings of the Filipino respondents followed a pattern which was quite different from the other two immigrant groups. Samoan and Korean respondents produced average ratings above three for only a few items. In the Filipino sample, however, virtually all of the news items received interest ratings above three on the four-point scale (Table 1). The ratings did not show signs of the influence of psychological proximity.

For example, the two items with the highest ratings were events about the Philippines (the country of origin) and Honolulu events (the place of residence). These two items were closely followed by events about city and state government. Results of the *t*-test again showed significant dif-

ferences between average interest ratings of general news events and ethnic news events ($t=2.9$, $p<.01$); however, the difference between the two means (.07) was not meaningful in a practical sense.

A two-factor solution accounted for 65.7% of the total variance with the Filipino data, and the two factors were moderately correlated ($r=.59$). The predicted news interest patterns failed to emerge. On the contrary, the results seemed to support the second hypothesis which predicted a news interest pattern on the basis of physical proximity. The Filipino news interest pattern is similar to the local/distant pattern of the Japanese and Caucasians except for one item, news about the neighboring islands of Hawaii (Table 2). For the Filipinos, news about the neighboring islands is loaded on the distant events factor; for the Japanese and Caucasians this item is loaded on the factor for local news.

A similar news interest pattern emerged from the Japanese data. The Japanese respondents rated Honolulu events highest on the average, followed by news events about the local neighborhood and then

TABLE 3

News Interest Patterns of Japanese and Caucasians

Variables	Japanese		Caucasian		
	1	2	1	2	3
DISTANT					
World	-.14	.81	-.06	.12	.82
U.S. mainland	.07	.71	-.01	.12	.73
Federal government	.19	.67	.28	-.01	.75
Japan	-.19	.81	-.13	.76	.27
Japanese community on U.S. mainland	.27	.41	.03	.89	-.03
LOCAL					
Honolulu	.74	-.12	.77	-.05	.07
Neighboring islands	.81	-.11	.62	.27	-.10
Neighborhood	.74	-.07	.75	.12	-.28
State government	.53	.44	.79	-.08	.34
City government	.61	.36	.81	-.09	.27
Japanese community in Hawaii	.56	.24	.16	.82	.02

state and city government. To respondents residing in the city of Hilo, Honolulu is not the closest city, but it is the state capital and also the largest city in the area. None of the ethnic news items was highly rated. In fact, Japan which is the country of their ancestors, received the second lowest average rating, while other Japanese communities in the U.S. mainland were rated the lowest (Table 1). Results of *t*-tests showed that general news events were rated significantly higher than ethnic news events ($t < 79.0$, $p < .01$).

Factor analysis of the news interest items revealed a "local event" factor and a "distant event" factor (Table 3). The two factors accounted for 54% of the variance, and were not highly correlated ($r = .29$).

Since the American population consisted mainly of Caucasians, their ethnic news items would coincide with other news items. The same set of items used for the Japanese group was therefore used for the Caucasian group for comparison. The average news interest ratings were close to those of the Japanese sample. Honolulu events were again rated most highly, fol-

lowed by state government news, while city government and neighborhood news events were both rated third highest. As with the Japanese data, news about Japanese communities on the mainland was rated lowest, followed by the other two ethnic items. Japanese ethnic news items were rated significantly lower than the general news items ($t = 84.8$, $p < .01$).

A two-factor solution accounted for 55.7% of the total variance of the Caucasian data. However, the results were not clear because the ethnic items were mixed in with the distant items. Since the eigenvalue suggested a three-factor solution, another attempt was made to factor the items using an eigenvalue of one as a criterion for rotation. The three factor solution accounted for 68.8% of the total variance (Table 3). The three ethnic news items which were of little interest to the respondents formed one factor. The rest of the items formed a "local event" factor including events about Honolulu, neighboring islands, neighborhood, state and city government, and a "distant factor" with world and mainland events, and events

about federal government in it. Weak correlations were found among the factors ($r < .25$).

Results of the factor analyses showed that the second hypothesis which postulated a "local" and a "distant" factor for the host population was generally supported by the Japanese and the Caucasian data, and unexpectedly by the Filipino data. The first hypothesis which suggested an "ethnic" factor and a "general" factor, however, was only supported by the Korean and the Samoan groups, not the Filipino group. The demographic characteristics of each immigrant group may provide some explanation for different news interest patterns.

A chi-square test showed that on a proportional basis, there were no significant differences among the immigrant groups in their male-female distribution. Significant differences, however, appeared on five other variables: years of education, age, length of stay in the U.S., English fluency, and occupational prestige.²⁰ The average length of stay of Filipinos was 22 years with a median of 12 years, which is almost one generation more than the other immigrant groups.

Length of stay has often been used as an index of the degree of acculturation, and it is generally believed that a longer stay implies further acculturation and adaptation to the host society.²¹ The relatively higher length of stay of Filipino immigrants, for example, probably accounts for the negligible differences in their interest in the two hypothesized types of news.

In order to observe more clearly the relationship between the immigrants' length of stay and their news interest, the indices for the two types of news interest, general and ethnic, were regressed on six demographic variables: length of stay, English fluency,

²⁰ Donald J. Treiman, *Occupation, Prestige in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Academic Press, 1977).

²¹ Recent work has emerged which reformulates the homogenization or "melting pot" thesis in more precise mathematical terms (G. Barnett and D.L. Kincaid, "A Mathematical Model of Cultural Convergence," *International and Intercultural Communication Annual*, forthcoming) which is amenable to empirical testing (D.L. Kincaid and others, "The Cultural Convergence of Korean Immigrants in Hawaii: An Empirical Test of a Mathematical Theory," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, May 25, 1981).

education, age, occupational prestige, and sex. The resultant multiple regression equation reveals that there is no unique effect of length of stay in the U.S. on general news interest ($\beta = .05$), controlling for the effects of the other five demographic variables. Together these six independent variables accounted for 35% of the variance of general news interest ($R = .59$, $F = 31.0$, $p < .01$). The four independent variables in the set which had statistically significant effects were English fluency ($\beta = .51$), education ($\beta = -.20$), age ($\beta = .16$), and sex ($\beta = .10$). In other words, immigrants with greater English fluency, with lower education, and who were older and male rather than female tended to have higher levels of interest in general news items.

The same multiple regression analysis was conducted for ethnic news interest. The six independent variables accounted for 15% of the variance of ethnic news interest ($R = .39$, $F = 10.7$, $p < .01$). A different subset of variables, however, was found to have statistically significant unique effects: English fluency ($\beta = .33$), education ($\beta = -.30$), age ($\beta = .18$), and length of stay ($\beta = -.14$). Immigrants with higher levels of English fluency, lower education, who are older and who have stayed in the U.S. fewer years tended to have greater interest in ethnic news items. Thus, controlling for the effects of the other demographic characteristics, length of stay is negatively related to ethnic news interest, as expected. Ethnic news interest declines with length of stay, if the effects of English fluency, education, and age are held constant.

Discussion

Results of this study showed that the psychological dimension of proximity plays an important role in determining the news interest patterns of two immigrant groups in Hawaii, the Koreans and the Samoans, but not of the Filipinos. Although all three immigrant groups showed higher interest in ethnic news, Filipino preference for ethnic over general news was trivial.

The most important variables for explaining both types of news interest were English fluency and education. However, the multiple regression analysis indicated that interest in ethnic news declines as the length of stay of immigrants increases, controlling for the relative effects of their basic demographic characteristics, but no such relationship was found for general news. Because the data were not collected longitudinally from the same or equivalent samples of immigrants, it is also possible that the more recent wave of immigrants arrived with a higher level of ethnic news interest than earlier immigrants. Although the change over time is a more plausible hypothesis, only a longitudinal design could confirm it.

To a certain extent the results of the analysis of Filipinos and Japanese provided support for the acculturation interpretation. Filipino and Japanese respondents in this study (mostly second and the third generation) did not show much difference from local Caucasian

Americans. For all three ethnic groups the same two patterns of news interest exist: local news events and distant news events. The fact that 93% of the Japanese respondents were born and raised in Hawaii indicates that they should be further acculturated than the Filipinos. The findings showed that the Japanese were indeed much more interested in local news items than they were in ethnic news items.

The news interest patterns exhibited by recent immigrants in our study indicate that mass media may not be mere vehicles for social learning and acculturation, they may also help new immigrants to preserve their ethnic identity by providing news about their own people and their country of origin. Cultural pluralism, therefore, seems to present a more realistic picture of the recent immigrants from Asia. But the striking similarity among the Filipino, the Japanese and the Caucasians news interest patterns suggest that over the long run homogenization does occur.

THE AMERICAN PRESS OMBUDSMAN

(Continued from page 553)

been established to raise the confidence of the public in America's preeminent institution of information; to help readers understand the intricacies involved in creating and maintaining that institution; to provide an avenue of access to that institution for readers' thoughts and views where all avenues had been closed before; to provide

the institution with a "lightning rod" to intercept and interpret the readers' concerns and to provide a method by which the institution could test its responsiveness—a method of holding itself accountable. "Is it worth a candle?" asked Thor Severson. "I think it is!" was his immediate response.

Copyright of Journalism Quarterly is the property of Association for Education in Journalism & Mass Communication and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.