

## Host Environment, Host Communication, and Satisfaction With Life

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# HOST ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATION AND LIFE SATISFACTION 1

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SATISFACTION

Host Environment, Communication, and Satisfaction with Life:  
A Study of Hong Kong Ethnic Minority Members

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### Abstract

This study, with two parts, investigated host environment and host communication factors in Hong Kong ethnic minority members' cross-cultural adaptation. Study I examined host receptivity, host conformity pressure, host communication competence and host communication satisfaction as predictors of satisfaction with life self-reported by Hongkongers of south/south-east Asian origin (N = 195). Results showed that host receptivity and host communication satisfaction contributed significantly to satisfaction with life. Study II was a partial replication of Study I with a broader sample (N = 140). Hierarchical multiple regressions replicated the earlier findings that host receptivity did and host conformity pressure did not predicted satisfaction with life in the same direction. MANOVA of high and low host communication competence groups yielded significant main effects on host receptivity, host conformity pressure, host communication satisfaction and life satisfaction. Implications of the findings are discussed.

**KEYWORDS:** cross-cultural adaptation, host environment, host communication competence, host communication satisfaction, Hong Kong ethnic minority

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Hong Kong, a self-proclaimed “world city,” has a very small ethnic minority population – 2.9% of the 6.81 million residents (Hong Kong SAR Census and Statistics Department, 2012) – including many non-Chinese ethnic groups. In relation to the general problem of the host socio-environment’s influence on cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001), the current study is to investigate, among non-Chinese residents of Hong Kong, host environment factors of host receptivity and host conformity pressure as perceived and reported in relation to their cross-cultural adaptation. Also informed by relevant works in interpersonal communication and attending to communication related elements, based on which ethnic minority members in social interactions with the ethnic majority members assess receptivity of the society and its conformity pressure on ethnic minority group members, we studied communication correlates of host communication competence and host communication satisfaction, as well as the satisfaction with life as a general outcome in the process of adaptation.

### **CROSS CULTURAL ADAPTATION**

Cross-cultural adaptation refers to the extent to which individuals manage to meet their needs in living in another culture and achieve proper functionality and wellbeing in a society with or without being assimilated. Adaptation in this sense involves a degree of acculturation into a nonnative culture, whereby individuals make adjustments in order to go about the day-to-day business of living in an unfamiliar culture, be it sojourners, immigrants, or

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ethnic minorities. A full spectrum of adjustment includes behaviors (e.g., proficiency in the host language, propriety in private and social behaviors, and adoption of host customs necessary to meet life's basic needs), psychological states (e.g., contentment, cultural attitude and identification), and social relationships as in intermarriage and inter-cultural friendship, as well as social institutional acceptance such as admittance to the "cliques, clubs, and institutions of host society" or to high positions of power (Gordon, 1964, p. 71). Behaviors and psychological states primarily have to do with adapting by individuals; whereas, acceptance of social institutions often goes beyond individual efforts.

While academic interest in adaptation, and the bulk of research, has focused largely on immigrants and sojourners to different countries, the process also describes ethnic minority groups undergoing similar adjustments, in behaviors, psychological states, and social relationships, etc. and adapting to the host society in which they were born or brought up. The cross-cultural adaptation of ethnic minority populations within a society has been gaining scholarly attention (e.g., Kim, Lujan, & Dixon, 1998; McKay-Semmler & Kim, 2014) as an integral part of cultural diversity. Ethnic minorities have their own distinct cultural heritage and often distinct way of life; their members to various degrees also adapt to the culture of the larger society.

### **Adaptation as an Interactive Process**

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From the communication perspective, adaptation is an interactive process, with the culture that individuals adapt to being part of the picture. The state of individual and socio-cultural situations may also be outcomes of communication with members of the host society<sup>1</sup>. The host members and social systems, with their dominance advantage, necessarily affect cross-cultural adaptation in some ways (e.g., Bourhis, Moise, Perrault, & Senecal, 1997). For example, host culture members' views and orientations toward immigrants or minorities' adaptation, along with intergroup dynamics, are associated with varied relational outcomes (e.g., Bourhis, Barrette, El-Geledi, & Schmidt, 2009; Bourhis, Montreuil, Barrette, & Montaruli, 2009). Also, through interaction and communication with host members, sojourners, immigrants, and ethnic minority members may engage in cultural learning and gain host cultural knowledge to facilitate adaptation (e.g., Chen, 1993; Chen & Isa, 2003; Nadamitsu, Chen, & Friedrich, 1999).

The integrative theory on cross-cultural adaptation first proposed in the late 1980s (Kim, 1988, 1995, 2001, 2005) specifies social environment as a major part of the process with three constructs: host receptivity, host conformity pressure, and ethnic group strength. The theory suggests that a given environment facilitates the adaptation process when the host population opens to and is

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<sup>1</sup> This term, originally derives from the relationship between natives of and newcomers to an immigrant receiving culture, is used also to refer to that between the majority, or dominant, ethnic culture relative to ethnic minorities, or non-dominant ethnic groups, of a society the latter has been living in. We use this term for lack of a better alternative and also to be consistent to the literature as a whole.

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accessible to the new comer, which describes host receptivity, while also encouraging them to conform to local social norms, which constitutes host conformity pressure<sup>2</sup>. Two host environment constructs—host receptivity and host conformity pressure—are key environmental conditions that influence (and are influenced by) the quantity (e.g., frequency, contexts, channels, media, interactive-ness, etc.) and quality (e.g., satisfaction, expected outcomes, related interpersonal relationships, etc.) of host communication activities of individual ethnic minority members. Cross-cultural adaptation, on the other hand, entails psychological health and intercultural identity as well as functional fitness.

To test this theory, a few studies have examined influences of the receiving society on the adaptation and experiences of relocated individuals. Maruyama (1998) studied the adaptation patterns of international students in Japan and found that, compared to Asian students, Western students were more actively involved in interpersonal communication with Japanese people and showed a higher level of psychological health with respect to the Japanese environment, which was partly due to the greater host receptivity they felt to have received from Japanese people as host members. Braun and Kim (2002) assessed Turkish workers' perceptions of the host receptivity, along with other factors, with respect to both US Americans and Germans—the two groups that constituted their host environment. The results indicated that Turkish workers perceived a

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<sup>2</sup> The third environment factor, ethnic group strength, was not utilized in this study.

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difference in the two groups: Americans were viewed as more receptive compared to the reception Turkish workers perceived they got from German host members. As a result, they reported greater overall satisfaction and comfort in their dealings with Americans than with Germans, indicating positive effects of host receptivity. Kim and Kim's (2004) study provided preliminary observations of the way individual sojourners' adaptation experiences were linked with conditions of the respective host environment-- South Korea (for American expatriates) and the United States (for Korean expatriates). Their comparison revealed that South Korean expatriates reported a higher host communication competence, which was positively associated with greater host conformity pressure on them.

### **Communication and Adaptation**

The role of communication has also been documented in other social scientific studies, albeit more implied than specified. Recent reviews, for example, of research in cross-cultural psychology (e.g., Zane & Mak, 2005) and among US Latino populations in public health over the past 30 years (e.g., Thompson & Hoffman-Goetz, 2009) recounted available acculturation enhancing measures to consist of a variety of life aspects including language use and preference, social affiliation, daily living habits, communication styles, cultural traditions, cultural identity and pride, perceived prejudice and discrimination, generational status, family socialization and cultural values, etc., some of which appear to be circumstances of rather than elements in the adaptation process or outcome. For



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those measures encouraging adaptation, a few are communication related, among which language competence was reportedly a better indicator of acculturation among Asian Americans (Kang, 2006); whereas, linguistic elements alone provided only limited understanding of the process (Thompson & Hoffman-Goetz, 2009).

In communication studies specifically, Kim and McKay-Semmler (2013) investigated communication among educated non-natives in the USA and found direct host interpersonal communication to be positively correlated with functional fitness and psychological health. Lee and Chen (2000) examined host communication competence, native communication competence (of original culture), and cross-cultural adaptation of Chinese immigrant adolescents in Canada. The home environments represented in parents' host and native communication competence (of original culture) were found to interact with that of adolescents' in exertion of influence on the latter's psychological adjustment, while adolescents' host communication competence had significant negative correlations with psychological problems. Host communication competence was interpreted to have positive effects on the psychological health of Chinese immigrant youth in Canada and may be indicative of proper adaptation. For a better understanding of the phenomenon from a communication perspective, more research is needed that focuses on the role of communication including interpersonal interaction in cross-cultural adaptation.

### **Hong Kong and its Ethnic Minorities**

Ethnic minority affairs, in spite of its presence throughout history, is an underdeveloped area of Hong Kong lagging far behind many other contemporary societies, probably attributable to its colonial legacy. The territory's Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) was set up in 1996, 30 years after the civil rights movement in the US and similar development that followed in many other developed societies. As recent as 2007, it was stipulated that "the Commission works towards the elimination of discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status, pregnancy, disability and family status" (EOC, 2007), excluding race or ethnicity related discriminations until July 2008. That year the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) passed laws in dealing with discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national, or social origin.

As a result, cross-cultural adaptation of immigrants and ethnic minority members is largely left to occur spontaneously, that is, without relevant social policy or systematic intervention and support. The situation of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong will, no doubt, benefit from more systematic studies. Such research can also contribute to the overall understanding of intercultural communication and cross-cultural adaptation with additional evidence from yet another society. Studying the role of a host society in Hong Kong may provide special insight, as ethnic minorities in Hong Kong are not often studied and the society as a whole

has low awareness of ethnic minority issues (e.g., Chan & Wong 2005; Ewing, 2008).

### **Hypotheses and Research Question**

Many studies across disciplines have contributed to the understanding of individual aspects of adaptation. By contrast, aside from attention on prejudice and hostility (e.g., Kosic, Mannetti, & Sam, 2005), the role of host environment, fundamental to the adaptation process, and how the environment interacts with adapting individuals has been understudied as a whole. The integrative theory (Kim, 2001, 2005) has established the importance of host environment to adaptation. Host receptivity and host conformity pressure are conditions of the host environment that implicate the institutional state (e.g., Safdar, Dupuis, Lewis, El-Geledi, & Bourhis, 2008). External conditions, according to cognitive theories (e.g., Bandura, 1986), may become symbolic stimuli that have an impact on and interact with individuals when attended to, perceived, and assessed. Hence, these also are integral to the adaptation process.

By definition high host receptivity, representing openness and accessibility, is conducive to the host communication of ethnic minorities. A truism in communication studies is that there is “a direct relationship between the quality of our communication and the quality of our lives” (Stewart, n.d.). Since host receptivity, when perceived as being highly receptive, communicates acceptance and support of ethnic minorities, it adds to host communication quality

both in content and relationship, likely making adjustment somewhat easier and the adaptation process smoother, thus, giving rise to pleasant feelings. In the same vein, cross-cultural adaptation has been broadly reported as relating to satisfaction with quality of life for different ethnic groups (e.g., Paterson & Hakim-Larson, 2012; Ying, 1992), where a well-adapted healthy psychological state is a key aspect of life quality. Satisfaction with life, as a person's global judgment of his/her own life circumstances based on his/her own criteria (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Pavot & Diener 1993), is considered in the current study as an indication of acculturation. A hypothesis is thus proposed.

H1. Host receptivity positively predicts satisfaction with life for Hong Kong ethnic minority members.

At the same time, host members also push and urge, and are perceived to be or are explicitly making clear the need to adjust toward main stream social norms. The pressure would ease with the conforming adjustment. In keeping with this reasoning, host conformity pressure would also be conducive to adaptation though in a different way. On the other hand, the opposite could also be true for host conformity pressure to those in the cross-cultural adaptation process. Given the general human tendency to dislike pressure, conformity pressure as perceived may differentially affect subjective assessment of happiness in and satisfaction with life as a result. Given the competing possibilities presented, a question is posed.

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RQ1. Does host conformity pressure predict satisfaction with life for Hong Kong ethnic minority members?

The integrative theory proffers a connection between intercultural transformation in cross-cultural adaptation and host communication competence (HCC) and that HCC results in, as well as develops through, engagement in host social communication of both interpersonal and mass varieties (e.g., Kim, 2001). From a relational perspective of communication, communication competence comes through in formation and maintenance of personal relationships as well as communication (e.g., Spitzberg, 1991). For example, individuals enjoying affinity with others reportedly are said to enjoy communication competence and life satisfaction (Bell & Daily, 1984; Rubin & Martin, 1994). By the same token, personal relationships with host members may be expected to involve HCC. On both counts, HCC is associated with satisfaction with life. A second hypothesis was formulated about this relationship.

H2. Host communication competence positively predicts satisfaction with life for Hong Kong ethnic minority members.

Competent communication (e.g., Spitzberg, 1991) is considered to generally be associated with communication satisfaction, the emotional reaction to communication that reflects the extent to which expectations are met in communication (Hecht, 1978). Studies of effective communication between communicators of different racial or cultural backgrounds have found it to be

related with communication satisfaction (e.g., Gudykunst, Nishida, & Chua, 1987; Hecht, Larkey, & Johnson, 1992; Hecht, Ribeau, & Alberts, 1989). It was also evidenced that satisfaction tended to be higher in encounters between communicators of a same cultural group than in intergroup encounters, largely due to smooth, relatively competent interaction of the former (e.g., Gudykunst & Shapiro, 1996; Neuliep, 2012) and that perceived competence in intercultural communication explained satisfaction with communication (Chen, 2002). These findings lead us to regard communication satisfaction with host members as a specific aspect reflective of HCC and as such we expect it to similarly contribute to satisfaction with life. Two more hypotheses are forwarded.

H3. Host communication satisfaction, for Hong Kong ethnic minority members, is correlated positively to host communication competence.

H4. Host communication satisfaction positively predicts satisfaction with life for Hong Kong ethnic minority members.

## STUDY I

### Method

*Respondents.* After approval by the university's human subjects committee, respondents ( $n = 195$ ) from the largest ethnic groups in Hong Kong, those of South-/Southeast-Asian origin, were recruited by stratified non-proportional sampling with help of local non-governmental organizations (NGO) that provided social services to non-Chinese, ethnic minorities and included Indians, Nepalese,

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Pakistanis, and others – a convenience sample, relatively representative of a sector of ethnic minorities with stratification. Of all the respondents, around 16% were born in Hong Kong and 70% had been in Hong Kong 5 or more up to over 15 years; most were 40 years old or younger (83%); 17% were above 40 years in age, with 5 missing; 37% were females and 52% were male, the rest were missing this information; individual income level of 10 thousand<sup>3</sup> per month or above was reported by 31.4%, 5-10 thousand reported by 37.9%. Table 7 provides more sample details.

*Instruments.* The questionnaires were printed in English, one of the two official languages in Hong Kong, and self-administered. The NGOs had reported, as instructed to ensure, that respondents were literate in English, which was also part of their day-to-day tasks since all service-related materials are in English. Most ethnic minority members are not literate in Chinese even though some are fluent in Cantonese, a dialect of Chinese. The questionnaire contained a total of 46 questions, 13 of which were of demographic and personal specifics and the rest were of 5 scales. Instruments were adapted from the relevant literature for the variables of satisfaction with life, communication satisfaction, HCC, perceived host receptivity, and perceived host conformity pressure. Item adaptation and number decision was made to limit the length of the questionnaire as well as for items to better fit the population under study. Differential anchors were employed

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<sup>3</sup> The median household income is HKD20,200 per month in 2011.

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across measures to counter possible common rater bias (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Except HCC, to be explained below, a 7-point Likert scale was used (e.g., 1 – strong confirmation/agreement/positivity; 7 – strong disconfirmation/disagreements/ negativity), the lower the number the higher the measured property. Host conformity pressure was an exception, lower rating denoting lower pressure. Scores of each variable were the sum of component items in the respective scale.

Satisfaction with Life Scale was adopted (Diener et al., 1985) with one modification to measure the global, subjective judgment of well-being and satisfaction with life (in Hong Kong). The 5-item scale has been widely used in social psychology and reported to be reliable and valid. Reliability coefficient was  $\alpha = .678$  and considered acceptable for the adapted use in this study. The slightly lower than common alpha was due to the adaptation of one item, from “I would not have changed anything” to “I would not have come to Hong Kong.”

Communication satisfaction was measured with 5 items, informed by research on communication satisfaction (Hecht, 1978) and perceptions of intercultural communication (Chen, 2002), and asked about satisfaction with communication and social relations in general, perceived hosts’ openness, responsiveness, and attentiveness in communication with them. Reliability alpha reached .868 and was acceptable.



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HCC was measured with 6 items selected from a Communication Competence sub-scale (Lee & Chen, 2000), including various interpersonal interactions<sup>4</sup>. Based on the relationship perspective of interpersonal communication where a personal relationship entails quality communication between partners involved (e.g., Wood & Duck, 2006), the items asked about existence and level of common social relationships (number of Hong Konger friends and acquaintances, extent of enjoying hanging out with Hong Kongers), and occurrence of related interaction occasions (joining Hong Kongers to eat in a Chinese restaurant, going out with Hong Konger friends or co-workers, being invited to Hong Kongers' social gathering, and participation in Hong Kongers' social activities). The measure was a 5-point ordinal scale anchored by general frequency of an activity (e.g., 1 – never to 5 – more than two times a month). One item, the number of friends, was an exception, which ranged from 1 – none to 6 – more than 15. A 7<sup>th</sup> item was added about Cantonese fluency (from 1 – none at all to 5 – fluent). These together indicate both communication quality and frequency. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .924.

For perceived host receptivity and perceived host conformity pressure, eight questions were adapted from the ten items used in Maruyama (1998) plus eight more. These items were used to tap into aspects of perceived communication-related behavior observed and associated attitude inferred of host

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<sup>4</sup> This scale, including the subscale, is conceptually similar to host interpersonal communication as defined in the integrative theory.

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members toward immigrants and newcomers, which have been reported in the literature and formed a base set of 8 items to cover the whole conceptual base about receptivity; the other 8 items were used as measures of perceived host conformity pressure, selected or added in reference to perceptions of respect and receptivity by host members and that of involuntary need to “follow the host cultural ways” reported in the literature. The 16 items were factor analyzed to reduce the data for further analysis, reported in the next section.

Last, individual information was collected along with demographics. Except for sex, marital status, and residence status, personal particulars were collected in ordinal levels including age, education, income, residence length, ever residing in another nonnative culture, age at arriving in Hong Kong, and reason for coming to Hong Kong. Additional items were also included for comparison: one item asked whether one’s spouse was Chinese or not, and two items asked about levels of Chinese reading and writing ability respectively. A final question asked about ethnicity or culture of origin.

*Factor Analysis.* For the host environment part of the data, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy yielded a coefficient of .845, considered a meritorious fit. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant, Chi-Square = 853.317,  $p < .001$ . Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation yielded two factors, which combined to explain 57.85% of total variance in the data. Careful examination of items loading on each of the components revealed the first factor

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to be about receptive attitudes or conducts, which had 6 acceptable items and was labeled "host receptivity." The reliability coefficient was good,  $\alpha = .898$ . The second factor included 5 items depicting unsympathetic attitude, unpleasant conduct, and normative expectation and was labeled "host conformity pressure." The reliability result was acceptable,  $\alpha = .711$ . Each factor had at least 4 items with loadings at or above the level of .6 (Stevens, 2002), and the gap to secondary loadings was  $> .35$  for all items. Five items had double loadings or low loadings and were excluded. The scale with 11 items (Table 1) was summed for respective sub-scale and used in subsequent analysis, with host conformity pressure items reversely coded, that is, the lower the number the less reported pressure.

### **Results**

*Descriptive analysis.* Satisfaction with life averaged 3.56 on 7, below mid-point in absolute value,  $M = 17.81$  (or)  $SD = 5.17$  (toward somewhat satisfied). Host receptivity averaged 3.28 on 7, below mid-point,  $M = 23.28$ ,  $SD = 7.12$  (toward somewhat receptive), and host conformity pressure averaged 3.9 on 7, almost at the mid-point,  $M = 19.68$ ,  $SD = 5.52$ . HCC score averaged 2.28 on 5, lower than mid-point,  $M = 15.99$ ,  $SD = 7.28$ , indicating infrequent, albeit regular, social contact with the locals aside from that for functional purposes. Host communication satisfaction score average was 3.8 on 7, barely below mid-point,  $M = 19.16$ ,  $SD = 5.76$ .

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*Main analysis.* Results showed significant positive correlations<sup>5</sup> between all variable pairs, except HCC and host conformity pressure (Table 2). The correlations were strong between satisfaction with life and host receptivity,  $r = .726$ , and between host communication satisfaction and host receptivity,  $r = .713$ ; moderate between host receptivity and host communication satisfaction,  $r = .642$ , and between host communication satisfaction and HCC,  $r = -.521$ ; weak between host conformity pressure and, respectively, satisfaction with life,  $r = -.214$  and host receptivity,  $r = -.269$ , between HCC and, respectively, satisfaction with life,  $r = -.284$  and host communication satisfaction,  $r = -.347$ , and between host communication satisfaction and host conformity pressure,  $r = -.254$ .

Hierarchical multiple regressions were performed to test the hypotheses with satisfaction with life as the criterion variable, separating host environment factors and communication factors in analysis as these factor sets were correlated. No violation was detected of basic assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity, independence of the error terms, and normality of error term distribution. The variance inflation factor,  $VIF < 3$ , and tolerance values,  $tolerance > .3$ , did not exceed the threshold value of 10 and were above the cut-off value of .3 respectively (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006); multicollinearity was not a point for concern. Predictor variables were entered in two blocks. First entered were demographic and individual features. These were followed in

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<sup>5</sup> Due to revert coding six correlations were shown as negative.

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separate analysis by host environment variables of receptivity and conformity pressure or by HCC and communication satisfaction.

H1 stated that host receptivity positively predicted ethnic minority members' satisfaction with life, and RQ1 asked if host conformity pressure predicted the same outcome variable. All predictors together accounted for 60.7% of the variance in the criterion variable, satisfaction with life, of which 24.6% were explained by host environment variables after taking into consideration the contribution of the prior block, demographics, and individual specifics (Table 3). While the two variables as a block made substantial contributions, most of that came from the perceived host receptivity that reached the significance level,  $p < .001$ . H1 was confirmed. In relation to RQ1, the contribution of the perceived host conformity pressure was not significant.

For hypotheses that HCC (H2) and host communication satisfaction (H4) positively predicted ethnic minority members' satisfaction with life, regression results showed the two variables as a block explained 19.5% of variance, with individual features controlled (Table 4), while both were significantly correlated with satisfaction with life. Host communication satisfaction was a significant factor,  $p < .001$ , in explanation of satisfaction with life while HCC was insignificant. H4 was confirmed; H2 was not. Interestingly although non-significant negative correlation was observed between HCC and life satisfaction, results pointed to a suppression effect as the multiple regression results indicated

that both HCC and communication satisfaction contributed positively to life satisfaction.

Regarding the correlation of host communication satisfaction and life satisfaction, the two were significantly correlated, and H3 was confirmed. The best individual explanatory factor was income, followed by education and years in residence in both analyses. All three were the only significant variables and contributed positively, shown as negative due to the opposite metric direction used: the higher the income and education, and the longer respondents had lived in Hong Kong, the more likely they reported feeling happy with life presumably in this society.

### **Preliminary Discussion**

Descriptive results provide the background that the sampled non-Chinese residents in Hong Kong were fairly happy with life, relatively lower in HCC, perceived the host to be somewhat receptive and gave mid-range pressure for conformity, and were not satisfied or dissatisfied with communication with host members. Ethnic minority members' satisfaction with life was explained by host receptivity and host communication satisfaction, in support of our reasoning based on relevant theorization. Host conformity pressure and HCC did not account for satisfaction with life. Although as expected, the higher HCC, the higher host communication satisfaction, in moderate magnitude, and the higher host receptivity, the higher host conformity pressure, in low magnitude;

correlations do not make causal prediction of satisfaction with life and, thus, the relationship would need further exploration.

## STUDY II

In light of the interactive nature of cross-cultural adaptation, Study II set out partially to replicate Study I, in particular the impact of perceptions of host environment on ethnic minority members' satisfaction with life, using a broader sample of non-Chinese ethnic groups in Hong Kong. To that end, we first worked to confirm the environmental and the host communication factors for adequate replication. We then focused on HCC to examine its possible effects on the adaptation process as reported by Hong Kong ethnic minority members, considering as a whole host receptivity, host conformity pressure, host communication satisfaction, and satisfaction with life. It is hypothesized that

H5. Difference in host communication competence of Hong Kong ethnic minority members results in difference in

- a. host receptivity,
- b. host conformity pressure,
- c. satisfaction with life, and
- d. communication satisfaction.

## Method

*Respondents.* Data collection was same as in Study I, but for a modified sampling method to cover the ethnic minorities in general. With approval of the

university human subjects committee, respondents who were non-Chinese residents in Hong Kong were recruited in a street survey ( $n = 140$ ) on multiple occasions and locations. The sample of Study II included major ethnic minorities of other than south- and south-east Asian origins, such as Whites<sup>6</sup> as well as Pakistanis, Indians, Indonesians and Filipinos; three did not report ethnicity (Table 7).

This was also a disproportional stratified convenience sample, the group distribution being higher on Asian ethnicities and lower in Whites compared to the recent census. Most respondents, 62.2% , had lived in the city for five or more up to over 15 years, were aged 40 years or younger (68.1%), married (77.9%), with secondary education or below (52.9%), monthly income above 10,000 HKD (43.7%; 29.3% missing); 26.4% were female, 65.7% were male.

*Instruments.* Instruments were the same as those used in Study I, including sub-/scales of host receptivity (6 items), host conformity pressure (5 items), HCC (7 items), host communication satisfaction (5 items) and satisfaction with life (5 items), as well as demographic and personal specifics.

*Analysis.* First, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted with Bayesian estimation, which is believed not to be influenced by the normality of data and sample size (see Gelman, Carlin, Stern, & Rubin, 2003; Rupp, Dey, & Zumbo, 2004) and suitable for this relatively small sample. Notwithstanding

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<sup>6</sup> This group included people of diverse regional origins, following the categorization of the government census.



variables with the 7-point scale are generally considered as continuous, their precision and reliability have been questioned (cf. Alwin, 1997). We decided to treat all the items as ordinal variables in CFA. Consequently, Bayesian rather than maximum likelihood estimation was adopted for model tests. Hierarchical regression was then employed to predict satisfaction with life by host receptivity and host conformity pressure.

To test effects of HCC, data were split into three groups based on the variable's median score and SD for group comparison of participants with different levels of HCC. A quasi-experiment study design excluded the group in the middle, which contained 58 cases within .5 SD from the median in each direction. Two distinct groups with respectively higher ( $n = 40$ ) and lower ( $n = 40$ ) scores in HCC were retained for analysis, with 2 cases randomly selected out of the high group to reach equal group size. The groups had ethnic composition roughly comparable to the whole sample. MANOVA was performed with dependent variables of host receptivity, host conformity pressure, host communication satisfaction, and life satisfaction; covariate was education<sup>7</sup>.

## Results

*Descriptive analysis.* Satisfaction with life score on average was well below mid-point in absolute value, or 2.71 on 7, that is, toward somewhat satisfied,  $M = 13.58$ ,  $SD = 3.97$ . Host receptivity on average was 2.93 on 7, much

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<sup>7</sup> Monthly income was not included due to missing values so as to retain sample size.

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below mid-point,  $M = 17.56$ ,  $SD = 4.93$ , toward somewhat receptive, and host conformity pressure averaged 4.04 on 7, slightly above mid-point,  $M = 20.18$ ,  $SD = 5.57$ , toward somewhat pressured. HCC scores averaged 3.49 on 5, slightly larger in magnitude and above mid-point,  $M = 24.40$ ,  $SD = 9.25$ , toward somewhat competent. Host communication satisfaction averaged 2.66 on 7, below mid-point toward some satisfaction,  $M = 13.35$ ,  $SD = 4.06$ .

*Confirmatory factor analysis.* Three Bayesian confirmatory factor analysis procedures with 50,000 iterations were performed. Model 1 included Host Receptivity and Host Conformity Pressure; Model 2 was for HCC and Host Communication Satisfaction, and Model 3 was for satisfaction with life. In the Bayesian CFA, cross loadings were explicitly specified and estimated, and their informative prior parameters were provided ( $M=0$ ,  $\sigma^2=.05$ ). A sensitivity analysis regarding the choice of other priors was conducted. The results showed that the choice of priors did not significantly affect the results of model estimation. The 95% probability intervals<sup>8</sup> for the difference between the observed and the replicated chi-square values contained zeros for all three models (Table 5), thus the effect can be considered as insignificant (Strauss & Sadler, 1989)--the model fits the data well in all cases. The factors were confirmed.

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<sup>8</sup> The probability interval, or credibility interval, the Bayesian counterpart to confidence intervals, is based on the percentiles of the posterior and gives a range for the unknown parameter at a certain level, usually 95%.

*Ordinal Cronbach's alpha*, introduced by Zumbo, Gadermann, and Zeisser (2007), was employed to estimate reliability of measurement scales, which is based on the polychoric correlation<sup>9</sup> matrix rather than the Pearson covariance matrix and, thus, more accurately estimates reliability for measurements involving ordinal data (Gadermann, Guhn, & Zumbo, 2012). We first estimated the polychoric correlation matrix for the ordinal variables involved using R, the open source statistics software. Cronbach's *alpha* was then derived based on the polychoric correlation matrix. Ordinal alpha for host receptivity, host conformity pressure, HCC<sup>10</sup>, host communication satisfaction, and satisfaction with life were .72, .69, .72, .75, and .65 respectively, and were considered acceptable for the adapted use in this study.

*Predicting satisfaction with life.* Hierarchical multiple regressions were performed to test if host environment factors predicting satisfaction with life would be replicated. Demographics were first entered as a block, and host receptivity and host conformity pressure as a block were entered second. No violation was detected of basic assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity, independence of the error terms, and normality of error term distribution. The variance inflation factor,  $VIF < 2$ , and tolerance values,  $tolerance > .3$ , did not

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<sup>9</sup> The polychoric correlation estimates the linear relationship between two unobserved continuous variables given only observed ordinal data.

<sup>10</sup> For host communication competence, one variable (number of friends) was removed; otherwise, the polychoric correlation matrix cannot be calculated.

exceed the threshold value of 10 and were above the cut-off value of .3 respectively (Hair et al, 2006); multicollinearity was not a point for concern.

All predictors together accounted for 16.4% of the variance in the criterion variable, satisfaction with life. As a block, perceived host environment variables accounted for 9.4% of the variance in criterion variable satisfaction with life (Table 3). Effects of host receptivity were positive and significant,  $p < .001$ , and that of host conformity pressure were not significant. The results had taken into consideration the 7% contribution of the prior block with demographics and individual specifics. There were four significant correlations: between life satisfaction and a) host receptivity and b) host communication satisfaction,  $r = .298$  and  $r = .19$  respectively, between HCC and host receptivity,  $r = -.186$ , and between HCC and host communication satisfaction,  $r = -.262$  (Table. 2). These replicated Study I results about the relationship between the host environment factors and satisfaction with life. Not replicated in this study were the correlations between host receptivity and host conformity pressure, not insignificant. Demographic features were not significant in explaining the outcome variable.

*Effects of host communication competence.* One-way MANOVA was carried out to examine the effect of HCC on satisfaction with life, host receptivity, host conformity pressure, and host communication satisfaction, as dependent variables, Box's  $M = 15.805$ ,  $p = .135$ . Levene's test results of dependent variables were not significant. MANOVA results indicated a significant

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multivariate main effect for HCC, Wilk's  $\lambda = .811$ ,  $F(8, 152) = 2.101$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .10$ . Power to detect the effect was observed as .829. Means of the higher HCC group (Table 6) indicated higher level reported for life satisfaction, host communication satisfaction, and host receptivity; the group mean showed lower host conformity pressure reported for this group.

Univariate analyses showed two variables contributed significantly to overall HCC effects: satisfaction with life,  $F(2, 79) = 3.266$ ,  $p = .043$ , partial eta square = .076, observed power = .606; host communication satisfaction,  $F(2, 79) = 6.169$ ,  $p = .003$ , partial eta square = .135, power = .880. H5c and H5d were confirmed. Group effect on the other two variables did not reach significance: Host receptivity,  $F(2, 79) = 2.58$ ,  $p = .082$ , partial eta square = .061, power = .501; conformity pressure,  $F(2, 79) = 1.776$ ,  $p = .176$ , partial eta square = .043, power = .361. H5a and H5b were not confirmed. Post hoc  $t$ -tests results produced significant group difference for host receptivity,  $t(78) = 1.966$ ,  $p = .026$  (one-tailed), but not host conformity pressure,  $t(78) = 1.581$ , ns.

### **Discussion**

Descriptive results of the two studies provide a glimpse of the state of ethnic minorities who are not Chinese and have made Hong Kong their home. Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) suggested scores of 15-19 to be slightly happy and 10-14 to be happy. Being slightly happy or happy describes the general state of self-reported happiness by the two samples of ethnic minority

members, who on average reached a score of just over 17 and 13 respectively. They are also somewhat satisfied with their communication with host members, perceived the latter to be somewhat accepting of them, and also felt somewhat pressured for conformity to host society. Respondents in Study II reported a level of HCC, on average at 3.49 on a scale of 5, indicating proficient interaction and being somewhat frequent and regular in social contact with the local Chinese aside from that for functional purposes, which is also much higher than that of Study I. Besides, Study II respondents have on average higher education levels, higher income, and longer residency. In this context, we interpret the findings next.

### **Host Environment, Host Communication and Cross Cultural Adaptation**

*Host environment factors.* In both studies, host receptivity explained satisfaction with life while host conformity pressure did not: the more respondents reported perceived receptivity from host society members the more likely they also reported being satisfied with their life. All in all, the impact of host receptivity is moderate to small, accounting for almost 25% and 10% of the variance. As one's life satisfaction is a global measurement, it would have been affected by many aspects other than host receptivity as perceived. Nevertheless, the findings show, albeit indirectly, that the factor of host receptivity matters in the process of cross-cultural adaptation and have again provided support to the theorization with evidence from Hong Kong. In this sense, intercultural

transformation as a result of cross-cultural adaptation may be to some extent indicated in reported life satisfaction, and future work could explore if, and to what extent, it is also related to host receptivity.

Host conformity pressure is shown not to matter that much in particular to the aspect of life satisfaction. While this could also be explained by the outcome variable being a global matter, two other explanations should be considered. One, it could be the stage of cross-cultural adaption. The participants in both studies were mostly long-term residents with considerably more familiarity of the host than recent new comers and, thus, no longer felt the intensity of conformity pressure given their acculturation partially seen in their HCC. Two, it could also be that the host society is a relatively tolerant one or more subtle in conformity demand, as seen in both studies, a possibility that would certainly need further investigation and comparison to other societies.

Future studies are needed to follow up and further demonstrate the connection between adaptation and host environment factors, especially host conformity pressure. A theoretical implication is the somewhat differentiated role as well as varied degree of influence by host receptivity and host conformity pressure in cross-cultural adaptation. For example, the role of host receptivity and host conformity pressure may both be a double-edged sword. The pressure may be overwhelming and become stressful, adding to the stress of inevitable adjustment demand in cross-cultural adaptation. High pressure could also induce

resentment and even resistance to adjustment. Similarly, unconditional receptivity may feel comfortable to the extent that it presents no need to adjust. Neither case would facilitate adaptation, for either is extreme, although high pressure seems more likely than high receptivity to require adjustment. More refined understanding is needed as to the actual conditions and related effects. Investigations about differential impacts of perceptions based on actual experience in comparison to that from inferred conclusions would be worthwhile.

*Host communication factors.* With respect to communication, the results are consistent with the theorization that greater host communication competence associates with greater host receptivity (Kim, 2001) and, specifically, have shown perceived host receptivity to also result from HCC. Interestingly, the high host communication competent group also had lower perceived host conformity pressure: it makes sense that achievement of higher HCC would in a way allow an ethnic minority member to communicate more effectively with host members, thus feeling less pressured to conform. Another explanation may be that operationalization in this study is from a relational view and closer toward an (end) state, high HCC pointing to ease and stability and not pressure in such a relationship. Also to be considered is that the overall host social environment in Hong Kong, based on the descriptive results here, is not perceived to be overly harsh and is relatively tolerant, making host conformity pressure less of an issue.



While corroborating the results of regression discussed above, this point definitely needs to be further studied both conceptually and empirically.

Regarding the communication competence-communication satisfaction link, host communication satisfaction too is affected by HCC. So is satisfaction with life in a positive relationship with HCC, while the effect is most pronounced on host communication satisfaction. The magnitude is smaller for effect on satisfaction with life, even smaller for host receptivity and smallest for conformity pressure. This is not too surprising given the close conceptual relationship of the two communication variables. Still such details are in need of further exploration in order to have a better understanding of their interconnections. Also important is that the four dependent variables combined to present an unmistakable picture of qualitative difference between high HCC group and low HCC group. This opens up new directions for future exploration, if we may investigate this part of the process in causal terms. The dependent variables could represent different stages of outcome leading from HCC to perceptions of host receptivity and conformity pressure, to communication satisfaction, and to satisfaction with life.

Lastly, the positive correlations between host communication satisfaction and satisfaction with life provide indirect support to the theorized contribution of host communication to intercultural transformation, which should be directly tested in the future. This is reasoned on the basis of the contribution of HCC to intercultural transformation (Kim, 2001) and the results here that HCC had effects

on life satisfaction and that there was a positive relationship between communication competence and communication satisfaction.

### **The Measurement**

While measurement per se is not an end here, related findings have implications for better understanding of the host environment concept and future research. The instruments reflect subjective perceptions based on communicative experience in general. The two dimensions of the perceived host environment with 11 items proved to be a useful measurement. Two items, perceived discrimination and host no-intent for friendship, were included as part of the receptivity indication, yet loaded in the conformity pressure factor instead, indicating a noteworthy possible conceptual relation of the two items to the factor they loaded on. It could be that respondents interpreted the discrimination they experienced and the perceived host members' lack of intent to become friends as attempts to push them to conform to the host practice. Along this line of thinking, respondents might perceive host conformity as opening doors for better relations such as to be friends with the host members and less as discrimination. With the understanding that scale development and validation is a long and accumulative process, the speculation here remains just that and serves to remind us of the work ahead to explore the conceptual-operational connection of host environment factors needed to build a measurement scale.

On the other hand, the CFA have confirmed the two host environment factors of host receptivity and host conformity pressure and demonstrated their utility in ascertaining respective association with ethnic minority respondents' satisfaction with life. Host receptivity and host conformity pressure, two key environment factors, are studied here as perceptions of ethnic minority members; perceptions are no replacement but present an additional link to objective factors. For that purpose, future work should employ study design to involve multiple ethnic groups or societies so as to better understand the influence of host environment.

Also of significance, the role of communication activities is brought to fore in formation of perception about the host environment. The measures describe impression from interactions with host society members: The firsthand information from direct contact and communication with the host help form impressions and perceptions about host members' receptivity and conformity expectation, including inferences about host intents and attitudes toward the non-Chinese residents.

### **Limitations and Conclusion**

While exciting, the findings are preliminary and far from conclusive, this being one of the first empirical communication projects on Hong Kong's ethnic minority members. Limitations of studies are to be noted, which point to future improvement as well as setting the condition for findings interpretation. First,

stratified convenience sampling disproportional to the subgroups and relatively small sample size introduced biases (e.g., skewed toward people more in the reach of social service by NGOs or self-selectivity in the street survey), limited generalizability, and should be addressed in the future. Second, the one item in the life satisfaction adapted for used in the investigation would need to be explored further. Although we had some confidence in the scale reliability, which reached a similar level by a different test for each study, adequacy of such scale adaption is to be scrutinized and confirmed.

Also of note, one important factor of the host environment – ethnic group strength (Kim, 2001) – was not included here, but most likely would have influenced other factors. Another integral contextual factor, ethnic group communication, should also be investigated. Future directions should also include differential host receptivity toward or host conformity pressure on different ethnic minority groups for more insight into the role of host environment. The studies here are only one beginning step for further investigation of this problem in Hong Kong. Continual endeavors including more factors are needed also to better understand cross-cultural adaptation as a communicative process.

In conclusion, the relationship between host receptivity and communication satisfaction and between HCC and communication satisfaction highlight the communicative base of cross-cultural adaptation. That these were relevant to respondents' reported satisfaction with life in a host society directly

connects communication with a global outcome of wellbeing reported by ethnic minority members and partly attributable to cross-cultural adaptation. Satisfaction of communication with the host members proves to be yet another correlate for additional consideration, which is helpful for a more refined understanding of actual interaction with the host environment in specific terms. Although the findings are preliminary and inconclusive about the state of Hong Kong ethnic minorities, our studies help establish a base line for future investigations of cross-cultural adaptation in Hong Kong.

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TABLE 1  
Factors of Perceived Host Receptivity and Perceived Host Pressure of Conformity

	Components	
	Host Receptivity	Host Conformity Pressure
Hong Kongers are genuinely interested in association with you	.877	
Hong Kongers generally accept you into their society	.861	
Hong Kongers mostly show positive attitude towards you	.804	
Hong Kongers judge you and your country fairly	.778	
Hong Kongers generally show interest in you and your culture	.769	
Hong Kongers show recognition of your hard work	.659	
Hong Kongers become annoyed when you do not understand their Cantonese		.724
You feel pressure to adopt some Chinese way of doing things		.713
Hong Kongers mostly have no intent to become your friend		.700
Hong Kongers generally discriminate against you		.691
Hong Kongers expect you to adopt Chinese life style		.496
Eigen values	4.332	2.032
Cronbach's Alpha	.898	.711

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TABLE 2  
Correlations among Host Environment and Communication Variables

Study I (n = 195)				
	Life Satisfaction	Host receptivity	Host conformity pressure <sup>a</sup>	Host communication competence <sup>a</sup>
Host receptivity	.726***			
Host conformity pressure <sup>a</sup>	-.214**	-.269***		
Host communication competence <sup>a</sup>	-.284***	-.347***	.047	
Host communication satisfaction	.642***	.713***	-.254***	-.521***
Study II (n = 140)				
	Life Satisfaction	Host receptivity	Host conformity pressure <sup>a</sup>	Host communication competence <sup>a</sup>
Host receptivity	.298**			
Host conformity pressure <sup>a</sup>	.161	.074		
Host communication competence <sup>a</sup>	-.128	-.186*	-.165	
Host communication satisfaction	.190*	.435**	.162	-.262**

\*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ ;

<sup>a</sup> Scaled in reverse direction

TABLE 3  
Host Environment Factors Predicting satisfaction with life

Study I <sup>a</sup>	Model 1			Model 2		
	<b>B</b>	<i>t</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<b>B</b>	<i>t</i>	<i>Beta</i>
Age	.513	1.617	.142	.056	.217	.015
Gender	-.748	-.908	-.072	-.815	-1.229	-.078
Education <sup>b</sup>	-1.974	-4.758***	-.350	-.851	-2.404*	-.151
Monthly income <sup>b</sup>	-1.032	-5.538***	-.459	-.594	-3.669*	-.264
Hong Kong Spouse	1.261	1.258	.111	.862	1.085	.076
Years in Hong Kong <sup>b</sup>	-1.159	-3.808	-.286	-.513	-2.037*	-.126
Host receptivity				.430	8.752***	.593
Host conformity pressure <sup>b</sup>				.033	.551	.035
Cumulative <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.361			.607	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> Change		.361			.246	
<i>F</i> Change		10.07***			21.09***	

  

Study II <sup>a</sup>	Model 1			Model 2		
	<b>B</b>	<i>t</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<b>B</b>	<i>t</i>	<i>Beta</i>
Age	-.416	-2.035	-.171	-.348	-1.760	-.143
Gender	.438	.535*	.047	.312	.398	.033
Education <sup>b</sup>	-.692	-1.648	-.145	-.735	-1.662	-.155
Monthly income <sup>b</sup>	-.128	-.725	-.065	-.044	-.255	-.022
Years in Hong Kong <sup>b</sup>	-.475	-1.447	-.126	-.610	-1.925	-.162
Host receptivity				.249	3.712***	.303
Host conformity pressure <sup>b</sup>				.044	.673	.061
Cumulative <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.070			.164	
$\Delta R^2$		.070			.094	
$\Delta F$		2.028			7.417***	

<sup>a</sup>Dependent variable: Life satisfaction; <sup>b</sup>Variable in reverse scaling; \*\*\**p* < .001; \*\**p* < .01; \**p* < .05



TABLE 4  
Host Communication Factors Predicting Satisfaction with Life (Study I)

	Model 1			Model 2		
	<b>B</b>	<i>t</i>	Beta	<b>B</b>	<i>t</i>	Beta
Age	.687	2.400**	.190	.395	1.608	.110
Gender	-.654	-.796	-.063	-1.129	-1.619	-.108
Education <sup>b</sup>	-2.023	-4.888***	-.359	-1.466	-3.744***	-.260
Monthly income <sup>b</sup>	-.985	-5.382***	-.438	-.701	-4.408***	-.312
Hong Kong spouse	.021	.093	.007	-.079	-.409	-.026
Years in Hong Kong <sup>b</sup>	-1.243	-4.177***	-.307	-.745	-2.769**	-.184
Host communication competence <sup>b</sup>				.110	1.911#	.148
Communication satisfaction				.492	7.224***	.549
Cumulative $R^2$		.352			.548	
$\Delta R^2$		.352			.195	
$\Delta F$		11.43***			26.78***	

\*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; #  $p < .058$

<sup>b</sup>Variable in reverse scaling

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TABLE 5  
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Model Fits

Model	Sample size	Parameters	95CI LB	95CI UB
1	140.00	87.00	-9.81	54.80
2	140.00	65.00	-0.21	78.59
3	140.00	33.00	-20.14	18.36

95CI LB = lower bound (lower 2.5%) and 95CI UB = upper bound (upper 2.5%) 95% confidence intervals.

TABLE 6.

Mean (SD) of Host Acceptance, Conformity Pressure, Host Communication Satisfaction, and Satisfaction with Life of High and Low Host Communication Competence Groups (Study II)

Dependent Variable	Host Communication Competence	
	Low <i>n</i> = 40	High <i>n</i> = 40
Host receptivity	18.38 (5.61)	15.95 (4.73)
Host conformity pressure <sup>a</sup>	21.48 (5.24)	19.38 (5.70)
Host communication satisfaction	14.65 (3.87)	11.76 (3.92)
Satisfaction with life	14.05 (3.28)	12.08 (4.03)

<sup>a</sup> Scaled in reverse direction

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TABLE 7.

Sample Description<sup>a</sup>

Variable	Study I		Study II	
	Level	%	Level	%
Ethnic Origin	S-/S-E Asian	99	S-/S-E Asian	79.9
	Other Asians	1	Other Asians	1.4
			White	14.2
Education	Primary	4.1	Primary	4.3
	Secondary	45.1	Secondary	48.6
	College	20.5	College	19.3
	Graduate	26.2	Graduate	20.7
Monthly income (10,00)	5-10	37.9	5-10	19.3
	11-20	22.1	11-20	24.3
	21-30	3.1	21-30	7.9
	31-45	3.1	31-45	3.6
	Over 46	3.1	Over 46	7.9
	No Income	6.7	No Income	7.9
Marital status	No	29.2	No	22.9
	Yes	70.8	Yes	74.3
Years living in Hong Kong	1-4	12.8	1-4	5.0
	5-9	26.2	5-9	8.6
	10-15	25.1	10-15	15.0
	Over 15	19.0	Over 15	38.6
	Born in Hong Kong	15.9	Born in Hong Kong	25.7

<sup>a</sup> The percentage of missing values is not shown.