

EXPLORATORY EXAMINATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACCULTURATION AND PERSONAL GROWTH AMONG KOREAN IMMIGRANTS^{1,2}

JUNHYOUNG KIM AND EILEEN MALONEBEACH

College of Education and Human Services, Central Michigan University

JINMOO HEO

Texas A&M University

JUN KIM

Physical Education, Pusan National University

MAY KIM

Korea University, South Korea

Summary.—Korean immigrants are motivated to accept new cultural perspectives and/or transform their own cultural values into those of their new country. During this acculturation process, they encounter cultural differences, make adaptations, and thus may experience positive changes in social relationships, coping resources, personal strength, and cultural knowledge. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the dimensions of acculturation and personal growth. The results indicated that two dimensions of acculturation (e.g., self-control and collectivism), age, and length of stay were predictors of personal growth that involves social relationships, personal resources, life philosophy, and coping skills. This study suggests that high scores on two acculturation dimensions indicated lower acculturation, which predicts personal growth.

Acculturation is a multifaceted and continuous process in which immigrants navigate new cultural perspectives such as language, values, beliefs, and social settings and attain cultural knowledge that fosters interaction and communication with the host culture (Berry, Trimble, & Olmedo, 1986; Berry, 1997; Gibson, 2001). During the acculturation process, immigrants incorporate behaviors, values, and beliefs in a selective manner and exhibit different levels of attachment to the mainstream culture as well as to their own culture. To integrate into the host cultures, immigrants must undertake a wide spectrum of adaptations including a social component (e.g., social norms, social and political systems, social support), a cultural

¹Address correspondence to May Kim, Associate Professor, Department of Physical Education, College of Education, Korea University, Anam-dong, Seongbuk-gu, Seoul, 136-701 South Korea or e-mail (kimmay@korea.ac.kr).

²This work was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea Grant funded by the Korean Government (NRF-2014S1A2A2027833).



component (e.g., cultural values and beliefs, customs, language), and/or a functional component (e.g., transportation, finance, family structure; Church, 1982; Ying, 1996, 2005; Berry, 1997; Ryan & Twibell, 2000; Ying & Han, 2006).

Conceptually, the acculturation process demands an expansion of immigrants' worldviews, development of coping skills, and the use of personal resources for adaptation (e.g., Adler, 1975; Montuori & Fahim, 2004). Adler suggested that by interacting with other ethnic groups, immigrants gain cultural knowledge and begin to understand new cultural perspectives. Montuori and Fahim (2004) support Adler's idea that exposure to a new society enables immigrants to accept different ways of interacting and communicating with host communities and expanding their worldview, which result in personal growth.

Multiple studies support Adler's contention that immigrants gain social and psychological benefits during the acculturation process (Kashima & Loh, 2006; Barratt & Huba, 1994). These studies provide evidence that immigrants, who experienced cultural transitions, gained greater knowledge of the host culture, enhanced self-esteem, and fostered cross-cultural contact and interactions with other ethnic groups. From a perspective of cross-cultural contact and interactions, the acculturation process can create an environment in which immigrants experience positive outcomes including multi-ethnic friendships, expanded worldviews, and a reduction in negative stereotypes (Dixon & Rosenbaum, 2004; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2008).

A less optimistic perspective of acculturation emphasizes that immigrants are likely to experience acculturative stress and encounter adaptation challenges that negatively influence their health and well-being (e.g., Lai, 2004; Mui & Kang, 2006). For example, Asian immigrants reported that they experienced psychological distress including depression, social isolation, and loneliness during acculturation (Nicassio, 1983; Lai, 2004; Weisman, Feldman, Gruman, Rosenberg, Chamorro, & Belozersky, 2005). To deal with various adaptation challenges, immigrants can develop their own coping strategies and strive to use available coping resources. The major coping strategies identified by adolescent Korean immigrants were the development of cultural understandings and positive social relationships (Kim, Suh, & Heo, 2012).

Some scholars proposed the idea that adaptation challenges enabled immigrants to experience positive outcomes (Kim, *et al.*, 2012; Kim & Kim, 2013). Kim and colleagues have conducted qualitative research to capture the positive outcomes associated with acculturative stress among Korean older adult and adolescent immigrants. These studies concluded that Korean immigrants experience personal growth following stressful interracial contact and adaptation challenges.

While it appears that acculturation may serve as an important factor that facilitates personal growth among immigrants, quantitative examination of the relationship between acculturation and personal growth is needed to address this gap in the literature. Therefore, to expand the previous studies, the current study is an exploratory analysis of the relationship between acculturation and personal growth among Korean immigrants.

The current paper provides two conceptual frameworks: (a) acculturation constructs and (b) acculturation and personal growth. The background of each framework will be addressed below.

Acculturation Constructs

Multiple acculturation constructs influence personal growth among immigrants. Rudmin (2009) established acculturation constructs by considering motivations for acculturation, acquisition of cultural knowledge, changes in skills and behaviors, cultural identification, social relations, and beliefs and values. In addition, Kim and Abreu (2001) applied behavioral, cognitive, and affective perspectives to acculturation constructs. In particular, Lee (2004, 2007) focused on acculturation constructs among Korean immigrants. She categorized acculturation into behavioral acculturation such as language and social context, and cultural value acculturation including self-control, success, and collectivism. The current study incorporated Lee's acculturation perspectives to understand the acculturation process among Korean immigrants.

Behavioral acculturation.—Learning a new language becomes a critical part in behavioral acculturation. Several researchers have identified English proficiency as an essential component of acculturation since it affects health and well-being among immigrants (Nicassio, 1983; Tran, 1990; Kim, 1999; Lai, 2004; Weisman *et al.*, 2005). According to Golden (1987), Korean immigrants who were bilingual had more positive self-image, stronger self-concept, and better adjustment to their new culture. In a social context, Korean immigrants understand different ways of interaction and communication when they interact with a host society. A new cultural and social environment provides rich opportunities for Korean immigrants to establish a sense of friendships with other ethnic groups (Kim, 2012). By acquiring new language skills and acknowledging differences in behavior and interpersonal relationships, Korean immigrants may experience personal growth.

Cultural value acculturation.—Confucian values play an important part in Korean culture and influence Korean immigrants' behaviors and interpersonal relationships (i.e., Yeh & Bedford, 2003, Leung, Wong, Wong, & McBride-Chang, 2010). Confucianism emphasizes hierarchical relationships, collectivism, obedience to authority, and emotional control (Lee & Rong, 1988; Mizokawa & Ryckman, 1988; Maker & Schiever, 1989). Collectivism is also regarded as one of the main cultural characteristics of Ko-

rean culture (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). From the collectivistic perspectives, individuals regard themselves with an interdependent view of the self, suggesting that they believe they are automatically connected with others (Uchida, Norasakkunkit, & Kitayama, 2004). Rather than focusing on personal achievements and interests, Korean immigrants may emphasize group decision making and group harmony (Oyserman, 1993; Triandis, 1995). In general, Korean immigrants approach interpersonal relationships from a collectivist perspective and with cultural values distinct from the individualism and independence more typical of Western cultures.

Furthermore, Korean immigrants believe that education is a vehicle for emerging themselves into the mainstream of society; thus, educational achievement is an important cultural value (Pang, 1990, 1995; Sue & Okazaki, 1990; Lee & Cynn, 1991; Ho, 1994; Park, 1998). Korean parents, including Korean immigrants to the U.S., want their children to have a good education and to attain significant academic achievement. They willingly sacrifice their time and energy for their children's education (Lee, 1989; Maker & Schiever, 1989; Sue, 1989; Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore, 1992; Yagi & Oh, 1995). The educational achievement of Korean immigrants can be attributed to family commitment to the education of the children (Sue, 1989; Yagi & Oh, 1995). Such an emphasis on education for their children is one of the cultural characteristics that Korean immigrants may maintain in a process of adapting to a new culture.

Acculturation and Personal Growth

During acculturation, immigrants perceive and deal with adaptation challenges because of differences in language, culture, and social norms (Yu, 1997; Diwan, Jonnalagadda, & Balaswamy, 2004; Hsu, Davies, & Hansen, 2004; Hwang & Ting, 2008). In response to adaptation challenges, Asian immigrants reported that they experienced psychological distress including depression, social isolation, and loneliness (Nicassio, 1983; Lai, 2004; Weisman, *et al.*, 2005). In spite of these negative consequences of acculturation, some studies have suggested that immigrants also experience acculturative stress-related growth (Kim, *et al.*, 2012; Kim & Kim, 2013). Adolescent Korean immigrants appear to develop a sense of perseverance and mental strength, expanded worldviews and cultural understandings, and improved close and meaningful relationships with others. Such positive changes serve as important coping strategies to deal with acculturative stress. Kim and Kim (2013) explored positive changes following the acculturation process among older Korean immigrants. They found that in spite of adaptation challenges older immigrants developed mental strength, engaged in meaningful activities, and promoted cultural and ethnic understanding. They also introduced a term, acculturative stress-related growth, to describe positive changes as a result of negative adaptation challenges associated with acculturation.

Conceptually, Adler (1975) suggested that interaction among individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds facilitates personal growth, stating “paradoxically, the more one is capable of experiencing new and different dimensions of human diversity, the more one learns of oneself” (p. 22). He claimed that cross-cultural interactions in the context of acculturation lead to personal growth among immigrants. Through acculturation, individuals may experience positive cultural integration and establish a new cultural identity that facilitates their acculturation process into the host society. Moores and Popadiuk (2011) supported Adler's claim by identifying the positive outcomes of cultural transitions among international students. They found that during acculturation international students gained benefits such as personal growth, discovery of their strength, a sense of perseverance, engagement in meaningful activities, social support, and social relationships.

Therefore, acculturation may provide rich opportunities for Korean immigrants to experience positive cultural integration and to gain social and psychological benefits. Even though Korean immigrants experience adaptation challenges, they develop the ability to deal with these changes and cultivate coping strategies and personal strength, which may contribute to personal growth.

Unfortunately, no prior research has used quantitative methods to examine the contribution of acculturation to personal growth. Conceptual papers (e.g., Adler, 1975; Montuori & Fahim, 2004) have suggested that acculturation may be an opportunity for immigrants to experience personal growth. Even though qualitative studies captured some positive benefits that occurred during acculturation (e.g., Moores & Podaiuk, 2011; Kim, *et al.*, 2012), this study assumed a quantitative perspective to examine the relationship between acculturation and personal growth among Korean immigrants.

Research goal. To examine the relationship between behavioral and cultural value acculturation and personal growth among Korean immigrants.

METHOD

Participants

The participants in the current study consisted of Korean immigrants who resided in the United States. Data were collected from midwestern metropolitan areas of the U.S. In each location, participants were recruited from universities and other local facilities that served Korean immigrants, such as churches and sports clubs. During the 4 mo. of data collection (January through May 2013), the investigators posted flyers and contacted directors of local facilities. Participants completed self-administered questionnaires on a

voluntary basis, taking approximately 15–20 min. to complete the questionnaire, which was returned immediately to the investigators. The participants were at least 18 years old ($M=32.75$, $SD=11.58$) and had resided in the U.S. for at least 3 mo. (average length of stay was 8 yr. and 6 mo.) following their immigration to the U.S. from Korea. The participants immigrated to obtain academic degrees, work, and/or support their family members. To protect anonymity, they were asked not to identify themselves on the questionnaire. Of the 449 collected, 443 completed questionnaires were used in data analysis.

Table 1 presents the demographic profiles of the participants. Of the 443 participants, 224 (50.6%) were men and 219 (65.9%) were women. A majority of participants fell into two age groups of 20–29 years ($n=166$) and 30–39 years ($n=126$). Of all participants, 80 (18%) had a high school education and 243 (54%) had some college (i.e., undergraduate, masters,

TABLE 1
FREQUENCIES OF RESPONDENTS' CHARACTERISTICS

| Sample Characteristic | <i>n</i> | % |
|-----------------------|----------|-------|
| Total | 443 | 100.0 |
| Sex | | |
| Men | 224 | 50.6 |
| Women | 219 | 49.4 |
| Age, yr. | | |
| 18–19 | 37 | 8.4 |
| 20–29 | 166 | 37.5 |
| 30–39 | 126 | 28.4 |
| 40–49 | 70 | 15.8 |
| 50–59 | 34 | 7.7 |
| 60–69 | 7 | 1.6 |
| 70–79 | 3 | 0.7 |
| Education level | | |
| Some high school | 10 | 2.3 |
| High school graduate | 80 | 18.1 |
| Some college | 102 | 23.0 |
| College graduate | 119 | 26.9 |
| Graduate school | 124 | 28.0 |
| Other | 8 | 1.8 |
| Marital status | | |
| Married or partnered | 231 | 52.1 |
| Divorced | 4 | 0.9 |
| Single | 205 | 46.3 |
| Widowed | 3 | 0.7 |

professional) degrees. Fifty-two percent of the participants were married or had partners, 0.9% were divorced, and 46% were classified as single.

Measures

Acculturation.—To measure acculturation, the 33-item Korean American Acculturation Scale (KAAS, Lee (2004, 2007) was used. The Korean American Acculturation Scale was originally developed through the review of literature, an expert panel revision, and a pilot study, and then was used for another study on culture of Korean American students (Lee, 2007). These items measure the cultural behavioral orientation and cultural value orientation derived from the acculturation characteristics and patterns of Korean Americans. Responses were indicated on a 5-point Likert-type scale with anchors 1: Never and 5: Always. In the Korean American Acculturation Scale, cultural behavioral orientation (18 items) was measured by two sub-dimensions, usage and social contact, while cultural value acculturation (15 items) consisted of three dimensions, collectivism, success, and self-control. Sample questions from the Korean American Acculturation Scale included “I use a Korean name instead of an English name” (usage), “It is easier to make friends with Koreans than Americans” (social contact), “One should think about one’s social group before oneself” (collectivism), “Educational failure brings shame to the family” (success), and “One should not boast” (self-control). The score of these items was used as an indicator of the level of acculturation, with higher scores indicating lower acculturation. In this study, the behavioral acculturation scale had a standardized Cronbach’s α of .88, and the split-half reliability (corrected by the Spearman-Brown formula) was .81. Cronbach’s α of the cultural value acculturation for the current study was .82, and the split-half reliability (corrected by the Spearman-Brown formula) was .75. The standard Cronbach’s coefficient α reliability for the two dimensions of behavioral orientation were .82 for usage and 0.80 for social contact, while those for three dimensions of value orientation were .68 for the factor of collectivism, .74 for success, and .68 for self-control.

Personal growth.—To measure personal growth, a previously developed stress-related growth scale was slightly modified (Park, Cohen, & Murch, 1996; Cohen, Hettler, & Pane, 1998). This scale measures positive outcomes as a result of stressful life events. To preserve the original validity of the scale, “As a result of my immigration” was added to each item. To limit stress-related growth based on acculturation but not to change the original validity of the scale, “As a result of my immigration” was added to each item. For example, in a similar manner, Kim, Heo, and Lee (2014) modified the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory to measure personal growth as a result of Taekwondo participation. The scale consists of 15

Likert scale items that include four dimensions of change associated with acculturation: social relationships, personal resources, life philosophy, and coping skills. Examples from the personal growth scale include, "As a result of my immigration, I learned to be open to new information and ideas" and "As a result of my immigration, I learned to find more meaning in life." The subjects were asked to rate aspects of each domain on a 5-point scale with anchors 1: Not at all and 5: A great deal. In the current sample, Cronbach's α was .92, and the split-half reliability (corrected by the Spearman-Brown formula) was .89, which is higher than the reliability obtained in other studies (Caserta, Lund, Utz, & de Vries, 2009; Chun, Lee, Kim, & Heo, 2012).

Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0 was used to analyze the data. Exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation was used to test the validity of the Korean American Acculturation Scale (Table 2) and personal growth scale (Table 3). Prior to the extraction of the factors, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett's test were conducted to assess the suitability of the respondent data for factor analysis (Williams, Brown, & Onsmann, 2012). The KMO index of acculturation scale was 0.85, and Bartlett's test was significant ($\chi^2=4312.061$, $p<.001$) for the factor analysis to be suitable. For the personal growth scale, the KMO index was 0.95, and Bartlett's test was also significant ($\chi^2=4000.256$, $p<.001$). The primary reason for using exploratory factor analysis was to identify factors that explained most of the variances among the items of acculturation and personal growth. Based on the factor loadings, eigenvalues, and the percentage of variance, the factors were determined (Hair, Anderson, & Black, 1995). Following the factor analysis, the seven items of the acculturation scale that had high multicollinearity were eliminated; all remaining items loaded on the factors of the original scales. In the final analysis, a total of 26 items of acculturation and 15 items of personal growth were used in this study. Pearson correlations were used to investigate the relationships among the study variables.

Finally, a hierarchical multiple-regression analysis was used to examine the contribution of predictor variables to personal growth. The order of entry was as follows: demographic variables (sex, age, length of stay, and education level) followed by the variables of acculturation. According to logical or theoretical importance, in a hierarchical regression researchers determine the order of entry of variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006). The two blocks of independent variables, demographic variables and the variables of acculturation, were sequentially entered into the regression model to explore the contribution of each block in explaining variance on

TABLE 2
EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS OF ACCULTURATION

| Acculturation | Factor Loading | Loading Squared | Eigen-value | % Variance | h^2 | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------|------------|-------|----------|----------|
| Behavioral acculturation | | | | | | | |
| Factor 1: Language usage | | | 5.8 | 41.9 | | | |
| Item 12 | .83 | .69 | | | 0.77 | -0.74 | -0.66 |
| Item 13 | .82 | .67 | | | 0.77 | -0.68 | -0.75 |
| Item 11 | .65 | .42 | | | 0.57 | -1.01 | 0.10 |
| Item 14 | .58 | .33 | | | 0.40 | -2.51 | 5.87 |
| Item 15 | .58 | .33 | | | 0.58 | -1.24 | 0.64 |
| Item 5 | .46 | .21 | | | 0.31 | -0.95 | -0.40 |
| Factor 2: Social contact | | | 1.1 | 8.4 | | | |
| Item 10 | .74 | .55 | | | 0.65 | -1.46 | 1.45 |
| Item 8 | .72 | .52 | | | 0.64 | -2.97 | 6.83 |
| Item 9 | .65 | .41 | | | 0.66 | -1.19 | 0.52 |
| Item 4 | .63 | .39 | | | 0.55 | -1.77 | 2.73 |
| Item 7 | .55 | .29 | | | 0.60 | -2.35 | 5.67 |
| Cultural value acculturation | | | | | | | |
| Factor 3: Collectivism | | | 4.8 | 26.7 | | | |
| Item 14 | .75 | .56 | | | 0.60 | -1.02 | 1.50 |
| Item 13 | .69 | .48 | | | 0.54 | -1.30 | 2.44 |
| Item 16 | .69 | .47 | | | 0.55 | -0.97 | 1.41 |
| Item 15 | .65 | .41 | | | 0.48 | -1.01 | 1.16 |
| Item 9 | .58 | .33 | | | 0.50 | -0.92 | 1.47 |
| Item 10 | .56 | .31 | | | 0.46 | -0.59 | 0.40 |
| Item 1 | .48 | .22 | | | 0.42 | -1.71 | 3.88 |
| Item 17 | .46 | .21 | | | | -0.84 | 0.44 |
| Factor 4: Success | | | 2.2 | 12.6% | | | |
| Item 18 | .83 | .68 | | | 0.69 | 0.35 | 0.23 |
| Item 8 | .78 | .60 | | | 0.64 | 0.18 | -1.06 |
| Item 12 | .71 | .49 | | | 0.60 | -0.26 | -0.85 |
| Factor 5: Self-control | | | 1.3 | 7.2% | | | |
| Item 2 | .69 | .48 | | | 0.51 | -0.50 | -0.10 |
| Item 3 | .65 | .41 | | | 0.47 | -0.44 | -0.42 |
| Item 11 | .60 | .36 | | | 0.56 | -0.84 | 0.69 |
| Item 4 | .51 | .25 | | | 0.57 | -0.57 | -0.64 |

TABLE 3
EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS OF PERSONAL GROWTH

| Personal Growth | Factor Loading | Loading Squared | h^2 | Skewness | Kurtosis |
|--|----------------|-----------------|-------|----------|----------|
| Factor 1: eigenvalue = 8.1 % variance explained = 54.6 | | | | | |
| Item 10 | .82 | .67 | 0.67 | -0.79 | -0.08 |
| Item 11 | .80 | .64 | 0.65 | -0.67 | -0.30 |
| Item 7 | .79 | .62 | 0.64 | -0.45 | -0.32 |
| Item 9 | .79 | .62 | 0.63 | -0.73 | -0.11 |
| Item 6 | .79 | .62 | 0.63 | -0.64 | -0.21 |
| Item 13 | .76 | .57 | 0.59 | -0.35 | -0.45 |
| Item 5 | .73 | .53 | 0.55 | -0.61 | -0.21 |
| Item 8 | .73 | .53 | 0.54 | -0.71 | -0.05 |
| Item 14 | .70 | .49 | 0.50 | -0.51 | -0.33 |
| Item 12 | .70 | .49 | 0.50 | -0.44 | -0.54 |
| Item 3 | .69 | .47 | 0.48 | -0.33 | -0.50 |
| Item 2 | .68 | .46 | 0.47 | -0.51 | -0.36 |
| Item 15 | .68 | .46 | 0.47 | -0.51 | -0.28 |
| Item 1 | .66 | .43 | 0.44 | -0.56 | -0.36 |
| Item 4 | .64 | .40 | 0.42 | -0.57 | -0.36 |

personal growth. This two-block analysis was used to examine the contribution of the acculturation variables on personal growth controlling for the effects of demographic variables.

RESULTS

The means and standard deviations for all independent and dependent variables were as follows (Table 4): the usage ($M=4.14$, $SD=0.81$) and social contact ($M=4.49$, $SD=0.65$); cultural behavior orientation and the collectivism ($M=3.78$, $SD=0.63$); success ($M=2.84$, $SD=0.94$); and self-control ($M=4.28$, $SD=0.47$), cultural value orientation, and acculturation-related growth ($M=3.86$, $SD=0.78$). The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients between the variables are presented in Table 5. The results showed a number of statistically significant relationships among variables. With the outcome variable (personal growth), self-control ($r=.31$, $p<.01$), collectivism ($r=.26$, $p<.01$), and success ($r=.18$, $p<.01$) and cultural value orientation were significantly related but the behavior orientation variables, usage and social contact, were not significantly related to the outcome variable.

To examine the proportion of observed variance in personal growth explained by the demographic variables and the acculturation variables,

TABLE 4
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS FOR THE STUDY VARIABLES

| Variable | <i>N</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> |
|---|----------|----------|-----------|
| Behavior acculturation usage | 443 | 4.14 | 0.81 |
| Behavior acculturation social contact | 443 | 4.49 | 0.65 |
| Cultural value acculturation collectivism | 443 | 3.78 | 0.63 |
| Cultural value acculturation success | 443 | 2.84 | 0.94 |
| Cultural value acculturation self-control | 443 | 4.28 | 0.47 |
| Personal growth | 443 | 3.86 | 0.78 |

hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted (Table 6). Age, length of stay, collectivism, and self-control were statistically significant predictors of personal growth ($R^2_{\text{change}} = .13, p < .001$). This result indicated that approximately 13% of the variance in predicting personal growth was explained by collectivism and self-control after controlling for demographic variables. Self-control ($\beta = 0.28, p < .001$) had a positive effect on personal growth. In addition, length of stay ($\beta = 0.28, p < .001$) and collectivism ($\beta = 0.13, p < .01$) were significant and positive predictors of personal growth. Conversely, age ($\beta = -0.29, p < .001$) was a negative predictor of personal growth among independent variables. The explained variance of the final model was approximately 20% in predicting self-reported personal growth ($R^2 = .20, p < .001$).

TABLE 5
CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR CONSTRUCTS

| Variable | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| 1. Behavior acculturation usage, BAU | .68† | .12† | .01 | .24† | -.04 |
| 2. Behavior acculturation social contact, BASC | | .09 | .02 | .24† | -.01 |
| 3. Cultural value acculturation collectivism, CVAC | | | .41† | .34† | .26† |
| 4. Cultural value acculturation success, CVAS | | | | .22† | .18† |
| 5. Cultural value acculturation self-control, CVASC | | | | | .31† |
| 6. Personal growth, PG | | | | | |

† $p < .01$.

DISCUSSION

This study was an initial exploration of the relationship between acculturation and personal growth among Korean immigrants. The findings of this study show that behavioral acculturation did not predict personal growth associated with acculturation. However, cultural value acculturation constructs such as self-control and collectivism predicted self-reports

TABLE 6
HIERARCHICAL MULTIPLE-REGRESSION ANALYSIS IN PREDICTING PERSONAL GROWTH

| Demographic Variable | Personal Growth | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---------|----------|----------|---------|----------|
| | Step 1 | | | Step 2 | | |
| | <i>B</i> | β | <i>t</i> | <i>B</i> | β | <i>t</i> |
| Sex | -0.13 | -0.08 | -1.74 | -0.08 | -0.05 | -1.20 |
| Age | -0.01 | -0.21 | -3.14* | -0.02 | -0.29 | -4.27† |
| Length of stay in the U.S. | 0.03 | 0.26 | 4.36† | 0.03 | 0.28 | 4.63† |
| Education level | -0.12 | -0.08 | -1.43 | 0.01 | 0.003 | 0.06 |
| Acculturation | | | | | | |
| Behavior acculturation usage | | | | 0.000 | 0.00 | 0.01 |
| Behavior acculturation social contact | | | | -0.05 | -0.04 | -0.63 |
| Cultural value acculturation collectivism | | | | 0.16 | 0.13 | 2.60* |
| Cultural value acculturation success | | | | 0.05 | 0.06 | 1.14 |
| Cultural value acculturation self-control | | | | 0.46 | 0.28 | 5.90† |
| <i>F</i> | | 8.53† | | | 11.79† | |
| <i>R</i> ² | | .07 | | | .20 | |
| <i>R</i> ² _{Change} | | .07 | | | .13 | |

* $p < .01$. † $p < .001$.

of personal growth. In addition, Korean immigrant participants who were younger and stayed longer reported that they experienced more personal growth—specifically in social relationships, personal resources, life philosophy, and coping skills. This study suggested that the acculturation process provides rich opportunities for Korean immigrants to experience personal growth.

A body of literature suggests that Asian immigrants who had low acculturation encountered more adaptation challenges associated with acculturation (Tran, 1990; Mui & Kang, 2006; Hwang, Wood, & Fujimoto, 2010). However, adaptation challenges can be an opportunity for immigrants to enhance their sense of mental strength, develop strong ethnic connections with others, and facilitate cultural sensitivity (Kim & Kim, 2013). For example, Kim, *et al.* (2012) observed positive changes related to adaptation difficulties and suggested that acculturation is an opportunity for adolescent Korean immigrants to experience personal growth. This study supported the idea that adult Korean immigrants who face adaptation challenges may experience personal growth. The explanation of this finding is related to the idea that low acculturation may produce more

adaptation challenges for Korean immigrants, but in spite of adaptation challenges they experienced personal growth such as finding personal resources, life philosophy, coping strategies, and social support.

This study found that the cultural value of self-control appears to be critical in facilitating personal growth. Prior studies suggested that emotional self-control such as humility and modesty was considered one of the distinct and valuable cultural values in Korea (Kim, 1999; Ting-Toomey, 1999). Kim (1999) emphasized the role of self-control as a means of establishing and developing group interest and group control in Korean culture, whereas this study indicated that individuals who are less acculturated in relation to self-control reported experiencing more personal growth.

The interesting feature of this study is that high cultural attachment to collectivism leads to personal growth among Korean immigrants. If Korean immigrants are willing to maintain their cultural values and beliefs, they may be less acculturated to a new society, which negatively affects health and well-being and generates more acculturative stress. However, the results suggested that Korean immigrants who were more collectivistic experienced personal growth. The authors' interpretation of this result is based on stress-related growth theory proposed by Park, *et al.* (1996). Stress-related growth claims that individuals facing stressful life events may engage in efforts to deal with various stressors and to develop their own coping strategies, which leads to positive outcomes such as enhanced self-esteem, spiritual changes, personal strength, and social support (e.g., Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996; Linley & Joseph, 2004; Helgeson, Reynolds, & Tomich, 2006). Therefore, this study extends the body of knowledge related to stress-related growth by confirming via quantitative methods that acculturation difficulties and acculturative stress are factors that predict personal growth.

Much of the literature on acculturation emphasizes that acculturated individuals report better health (Franzini & Fernandez-Esquer, 2004; Kimbro, 2009). In a study examining the effects of acculturation on well-being among Asian Americans, Lee and Yoon (2011) reported that lack of English proficiency and length of residence were significant predictors of lower well-being, such as higher anxiety, higher depression, lower self-control, and lower general health. However, this study suggests that low cultural value acculturation leads to positive changes related to acculturation.

The age differences noted here merit further investigation. It may be that social structures, family functions, and cultural norms keep older immigrants more home-focused while the younger immigrants are going to school, working, or looking for work. As a result, the older adults have fewer opportunities for interaction with the new culture and for accul-

turation. Moreover, to the extent that immigrants live in cultural enclaves, the motivation to acculturate may be less for older adults who contribute to the economic well-being of their families within the enclave rather than in the greater milieu.

Conversely, developmental agendas may be at play. In Western society, the intergenerational solidarity perspective posits that young adults seek to distinguish themselves from their families, whereas older adults emphasize closeness and continuity between generations (Bengtson & Kuypers, 1971; Lynott & Roberts, 1997). The differences in acculturation evident in this study deserve further investigation from the perspective of intergenerational solidarity and developmental stake.

Limitations and Conclusion

This study has several limitations. First, the authors mainly examined the relationship between acculturation and personal growth. Prior research indicates that acculturation is an important construct that influences health and well-being among immigrants (e.g., Mak, Chen, Wong, & Zane, 2005; Wu & Mak, 2012). Future research is needed to examine how behavioral acculturation and cultural value acculturation are associated with health and well-being among Korean immigrants.

Second, the present study assumed but does not directly measure acculturative stress among Korean immigrants. If this study measured acculturative stress and examined the relationship between acculturative stress and stress-related growth, the results would be richer and more comprehensive. In addition, this study used the Korean American Acculturation Scale which has not been applied to other studies. For future studies, it may be important to incorporate other instruments designed to measure acculturation constructs.

A third limitation is generalizability. Other ethnic minorities are likely to have different levels of acculturation and immigration experiences. Future researchers may examine how other ethnic groups experience acculturation and its effect on personal growth, and contribute to understanding the similarities and differences of the acculturation process and its effects on personal growth. This would be particularly interesting in examining immigrants from collectivist cultures and those from more individualistic societies.

In spite of these limitations, this study is the initial empirical exploration of the relationship between acculturation and personal growth. The results found that two dimensions of acculturation (e.g., collectivism and self-control) predict personal growth among Korean immigrants. This suggests that Korean immigrants develop personal resources, life philosophies, coping strategies, and social relationships as they navigate the acculturation process. This study also expands the body of literature on

acculturation and stress-related growth theory and confirms that acculturation serves as a catalyst for facilitating personal growth experience.

REFERENCES

- ADLER, P. S. (1975) The transitional experience: an alternative view of culture shock. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 15, 13-23.
- BARRATT, M. F., & HUBA, M. E. (1994) Factors related to international undergraduate student adjustment in an American community. *College Student Journal*, 28, 422-436.
- BENGTSON, V. L., & KUYPERS, J. A. (1971) Generational difference and the developmental stake. *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 2(4), 249-260.
- BERRY, J. W. (1997) Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 46, 5-68.
- BERRY, J. W., TRIMBLE, J. E., & OLMEDO, E. L. (1986) Assessment of acculturation. In W. J. Lonner & J. W. Berry (Eds.), *Field methods in cross-cultural psychology*. London, UK: Sage. Pp. 291-324.
- CAPLAN, N., CHOY, M. H., & WHITMORE, J. K. (1992) Indochinese refugee families and academic achievement. *Scientific American*, 266, 36-42.
- CASERTA, M., LUND, D., UTZ, R., & DE VRIES, B. (2009) Stress-related growth among the recently bereaved. *Aging & Mental Health*, 13(3), 463-476.
- CHUN, S. H., LEE, Y. K., KIM, B. G., & HEO, J. M. (2012) The contribution of leisure participation and leisure satisfaction to stress-related growth. *Leisure Science*, 34, 436-449.
- CHURCH, A. (1982) Sojourner adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 91, 540-572.
- COHEN, L., HETTLER, T., & PANE, N. (1998) Assessment of posttraumatic growth. In R. Tedeschi, C. Park, & L. Calhoun (Eds.), *Posttraumatic growth: positive changes in the aftermath of crisis*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. Pp. 23-42.
- DIWAN, S., JONNALAGADDA, S. S., & BALASWAMY, S. (2004) Resources predicting positive and negative affect during the experience of stress: a study of older Asian Indian immigrants in the United States. *The Gerontologist*, 44(5), 605-614.
- DIXON, J. C., & ROSENBAUM, M. S. (2004) Nice to know you? Testing contact, cultural, and group threat theories of anti-Black and anti-Hispanic stereotypes. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85(2), 257-280.
- FRANZINI, L., & FERNANDEZ-ESQUER, M. E. (2004) Socioeconomic, cultural, and personal influences on health outcomes in low income Mexican-origin individuals in Texas. *Social Science & Medicine*, 59(8), 1629-1646.
- GIBSON, M. A. (2001) Immigrant adaptation and patterns of acculturation. *Human Development*, 44, 19-23.
- GOLDEN, J. G. (1987) Acculturation, biculturalism, and marginality: study of Korean-American high school students. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 48, 1135A. University Microfilms No. DA8716257.
- HAIR, J. F., ANDERSON, R., & BLACK, W. C. (1995) *Multivariate data analysis with readings*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- HELGESON, V. S., REYNOLDS, K. A., & TOMICH, P. L. (2006) A meta-analytic review of benefit finding and growth. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 74, 797-816.
- HO, D. Y. (1994) Cognitive socialization in Confucian heritage cultures. In P. M. Greenfield & R. R. Cocking (Eds.), *Cross-cultural roots of minority child development*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum. Pp. 285-313.

- HSU, E., DAVIES, C. A., & HANSEN, D. J. (2004) Understanding mental health needs of Southeast Asian refugees: historical, cultural, and contextual challenges. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 24(2), 193-213.
- HWANG, W. C., & TING, J. Y. (2008) Disaggregating the effects of acculturation and acculturative stress on the mental health of Asian Americans. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 14(2), 147-154.
- HWANG, W. C., WOOD, J. J., & FUJIMOTO, K. (2010) Acculturative family distancing and depression in Chinese American families. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 78(5), 655-667.
- KASHIMA, E. S., & LOH, E. (2006) International students' acculturation: effects of international, conational, and local ties and need for closure. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 30, 471-485.
- KIM, B. S. K. (1999) Asian American client adherence to Asian cultural values, counselor ethnicity, counselor expression of cultural values, and career counseling process and outcome. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Univer. of California, Santa Barbara, CA.
- KIM, B. S. K., & ABREU, J. M. (2001) Acculturation measurement: theory, current instruments, and future directions. In J. G. Ponterotto, J. M. Casas, L. A. Suzuki, & C. M. Alexander (Eds.), *Handbook of multicultural counseling*. (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Pp. 394-424.
- KIM, J. (2012) Exploring the experience of intergroup contact and the value of recreation activities in facilitating positive intergroup interactions of immigrants. *Leisure Sciences*, 34(1), 72-87.
- KIM, J., HEO, J., & LEE, I. (2014) Predicting personal growth and happiness by using serious leisure model. *Social Indicators Research*. DOI: 10.1007/s11205-014-0680-0
- KIM, J., & KIM, H. (2013) The experience of acculturative stress-related growth from immigrants' perspectives. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 8. DOI: /10.3402/qwh.v8i0.21355
- KIM, J., SUH, W., & HEO, J. (2012) Do Korean immigrant adolescents experience stress-related growth during stressful intergroup contact and acculturation? *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 54(1), 3-27.
- KIMBRO, R. T. (2009) Acculturation in context: gender, age at migration, neighborhood ethnicity, and health behaviors. *Social Science Quarterly*, 90(5), 1145-1166.
- LAI, D. W. (2004) Impact of culture on depressive symptoms of elderly Chinese immigrants. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 49(12), 820-827.
- LEE, A. (1989) A socio-cultural framework for the assessment of Chinese children with special needs. *Topics in Language Disorders*, 9, 38-44.
- LEE, E. S., & RONG, X. L. (1988) The educational and economic achievement of Asian Americans. *Elementary School Journal*, 88, 545-560.
- LEE, J. C., & CYN, V. E. (1991) Issues in counseling 1.5 generation Korean Americans. In C. C. Lee & B. L. Richardson (Eds.), *Multi-cultural issues in counseling: new approaches to diversity*. Alexandria, VA: American Association for Counseling and Development. Pp. 127-140.
- LEE, K. H., & YOON, D. P. (2011) Factors influencing the general well-being of low-income Korean immigrant elders. *Social Work*, 56(3), 269-279.
- LEE, M-S. (2004) Acculturative experiences of Korean-Americans: exploring self-concept, learning style, and the identification of giftedness at the microlevel and the macrolevel contexts (Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Univer. of Connecticut, Storrs, CT). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 65(6-A), 2088.

- LEE, M-S. (2007) The awareness of cultural orientations in culturally responsive education for Korean American students. *Journal of Praxis in Multicultural Education*, 2(1), 42-60.
- LEUNG, A. N. M., WONG, S. S. F., WONG, I. W. Y., & MCBRIDE-CHANG, C. (2010) Filial piety and psychosocial adjustment in Hong Kong Chinese early adolescents. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 30(5), 651-667.
- LINLEY, P., & JOSEPH, S. (2004) Positive change following trauma and adversity: a review. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 17, 11-21.
- LYNOTT, P. P., & ROBERTS, R. E. (1997) The developmental stake hypothesis and changing perceptions of intergenerational relations, 1971-1985. *The Gerontologist*, 37(3), 394-405.
- MAK, W. W. S., CHEN, S. X., WONG, E., & ZANE, N. S. (2005) A psychosocial model of stress-distress relationship among Chinese Americans. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 24, 422-444.
- MAKER, C. J., & SCHIEVER, S. W. (1989) *Critical issues in gifted education: defensible programs for cultural and ethnic minorities*. Vol. II. Austin, TX: PRO-ED.
- MARKUS, H. R., & KITAYAMA, S. (1991) Culture and the self: implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, 98, 224-253.
- MIZOKAWA, D. T., & RYCKMAN, D. B. (1988) Attributions of academic success and failure to effort or ability: a comparison of six Asian American ethnic groups. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA, April 5-9.
- MONTUORI, A., & FAHIM, U. (2004) Cross-cultural encounter as an opportunity for personal growth. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 44(2), 243-265.
- MOORES, L., & POPADIUK, N. (2011) Positive aspects of international student transitions: a qualitative inquiry. *Journal of College Student Development*, 52(3), 291-306.
- MUI, A. C., & KANG, S. Y. (2006) Acculturation stress and depression among Asian immigrant elders. *Social Work*, 51(3), 243-255.
- NICASSIO, P. M. (1983) Psychosocial correlates of alienation: study of a sample of Indo-chinese refugees. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 14, 337-351.
- OYSERMAN, D. (1993) The lens of personhood: viewing the self and others in a multicultural society. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65(5), 993-1009.
- PANG, K. Y. C. (1990) Hwabyung: the construction of a Korean popular illness among Korean elderly immigrant women in the United States. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, 14(4), 495-512.
- PANG, K. Y. (1995) A cross-cultural understanding of depression among elderly Korean immigrants: prevalence, symptoms and diagnosis. *Clinical Gerontologist*, 15(4), 3-20.
- PARK, C. C. (1998) Educational and occupational aspirations of Korean youth in Los Angeles. In R. Endo, C. C. Park, & J. N. Tsuchida (Eds.), *Current issues in Asian and Pacific American education*. West Covina, CA: Pacific Asia Press. Pp. 65-76.
- PARK, C. L., COHEN, L. H., & MURCH, R. L. (1996) Assessment and prediction of stress-related growth. *Journal of Personality*, 64, 71-105.
- PETTIGREW, T. F., & TROPP, L. R. (2006) A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 90, 751-783.
- PETTIGREW, T. F., & TROPP, L. R. (2008) How does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Meta-analytic tests of three mediators. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 38, 922-934.

- RUDMIN, F. W. (2009) Constructs, measurements and models of acculturation and acculturative stress. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 33, 106-123.
- RYAN, M. E., & TWIBELL, R. S. (2000) Concerns, values, stress, coping, health and educational outcomes of college students who studied abroad. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 24, 409-435.
- SUE, D. W. (1989) Ethnic identity: the impact of two cultures on the psychological development of Asians in America. In D. R. Atkinson, G. Morten, & D. W. Sue (Eds.), *Counseling American minorities: a cross-cultural perspective*. (3rd ed.) Dubuque, IA: William C. Brown. Pp. 103-115.
- SUE, S., & OKAZAKI, S. (1990) Asian American educational achievements: a phenomenon in search of an explanation. *American Psychologist*, 45, 913-920.
- TABACHNICK, B. G., & FIDELL, L. S. (2006) *Using multivariate statistics*. (5th ed.) Needham Heights, MA: Pearson Education.
- TEDESCHI, R. G., & CALHOUN, L. G. (1996) The Posttraumatic Growth Inventory: measuring the positive legacy of trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 9, 455-471.
- TING-TOOMEY, S. (1999) *Communicating across cultures*. New York: Guilford Press.
- TRAN, T. V. (1990) Language acculturation among older Vietnamese refugee adults. *Gerontologist*, 30(1), 94-99.
- TRIANDIS, H. C. (1995) *Individualism & collectivism*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- UCHIDA, Y., NORASAKKUNKIT, V., & KITAYAMA, S. (2004) Cultural constructions of happiness: theory and empirical evidence. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 5(3), 223-239.
- WEISMAN, A., FELDMAN, G., GRUMAN, C., ROSENBERG, R., CHAMORRO, R., & BELOZERSKY, I. (2005) Improving mental health services for Latino and Asian immigrant elders. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 36(6), 642-648.
- WILLIAMS, B., BROWN, T., & ONSMAN, A. (2012) Exploratory factor analysis: a five-step guide for novices. *Australasian Journal of Paramedicine*, 8(3), 1-12.
- WU, E. K., & MAK, W. W. (2012) Acculturation process and distress mediating roles of sociocultural adaptation and acculturative stress. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 40(1), 66-92.
- YAGI, D. T., & OH, M. Y. (1995) Counseling Asian American students. In C. C. Lee (Ed.), *Counseling for diversity: a guide for school counselors and related professionals*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Pp. 61-83.
- YEH, K. H., & BEDFORD, O. (2003) A test of the Dual Filial Piety model. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 6(3), 215-228.
- YING, Y. W. (1996) Immigration satisfaction of Chinese Americans: an empirical examination. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 24, 3-16.
- YING, Y. W. (2005) Variation in acculturative stressors over time: a study of Taiwanese students in the United States. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29, 59-71.
- YING, Y. W., & HAN, M. (2006) The contribution of personality, acculturative stressors, and social affiliation to adjustment: a longitudinal study of Taiwanese students in the United States. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 30, 623-635.
- YU, M. (1997) Mental health services to immigrants and refugees. In T. R. Watkins & J. W. Callicut (Eds.), *Mental health policy and practice today*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Pp. 164-181.

Accepted January 29, 2015.



Copyright of Psychological Reports is the property of Ammons Scientific, Ltd. 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.