

Socio-cultural Readjustment of Korean Students Returning from Overseas[†]

This study examines the socio-cultural readjustment of the Korean students returning from overseas study at an early age. For this study 259 returnee students from elementary through high school completed a questionnaire which covered aspects such as school adjustment and re-acculturative stress in relationship to gender, grade, number of parents accompanying the students overseas, length of overseas stay, age of return, length of stay in Korea, and the acculturative stress experienced in a host culture. The findings indicate that re-acculturative stress level of returnee students is higher than the level of the acculturative stress, and that the two are positively related. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses reveal the grade and acculturative stress of returnee students as a significant predictor of school adjustment. The length of overseas stay and acculturative stress significantly predicted the re-acculturative stress level. The acculturative stress significantly affected both school adjustment and re-acculturative stress of returnee students back in Korea.

The growing trend of students going overseas for study at an early age is one of the remarkable phenomena of Korea and is impossible to ignore. With the ascendancy of Korea into the international market place, the number of people who leave the country for various business reasons is growing and the number of children who accompany parents to a foreign country is also growing. The number of parents who raise children while pursuing a graduate-level degree in a foreign country is also increasing. In addition, many Korean students are going abroad at a relatively early age either with or without parent to enhance English skills or to obtain “better” education (Ministry of Strategy and Finance 2006). As of 2006, nearly 30,000 Korean school-aged students were reported to be studying abroad, a number that is 20 times higher than that 10 years ago. Along with the increase of those who study abroad at an early age, there are also more students returning to Korea after study. In 2006, about 18,500 students came back to Korea, the majority of which were elementary school children (57.4%), followed by middle school students (26.4%), and then high school students (16.2%).

A considerable body of research focusing on international students in western countries (Berry & Sam, 1997; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Gerner, Perry, Moselle, & Archbold, 1992; Hanningan 1990; Jung, Hecht, & Wadsworth, 2007; Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward, 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1993) and

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Korean students (Han, Ki, Kang, Park, & Mariam 2002; Kwon & Yi 2007) who have stayed outside their "home" country during part or all of their developmental years indicates that most experience difficulties in living in a foreign country. As they try to adapt to the new foreign cultures they could experience various acculturative stresses due to changes in cultural environment. Acculturative stress can prevent students studying abroad from adapting adequately to their host culture (Sam, 2001). This can add further complications to the already difficult process of transition from the home culture to the new one of the host country. Until the students develop a new set of socio-cultural skills that will enable them to deal with the new cultural situation of the host culture, they may experience a sense of loss and deprivation in peer relationships, confusion about roles, values, feelings, and self-identity (Bochner, 2003; Zapf, 1991). Being unable to cope with the new environment, they may feel helpless, and may develop such symptoms as anxiety, depression, homesickness, loneliness, disorientation, and frustration (Dodd, 1998; Jung *et al.*, 2007).

In most cases, the problem does not end there. Many students who return home after studying abroad are likely to go through hard times readjusting to the home culture. Namely, they may experience re-acculturative stress also known as reverse culture shock (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Gaw, 2000; Martin, 1986; Sussman, 1986; Thompson & Christofi, 2006). Re-acculturative stress is the stress experienced in the process of readapting to the home culture after an extended stay abroad (Martin, 1984, 1986). Also known as reentry shock, it refers to the case when a returnee student learns that their self-concept or cultural identity is not the same as it used to be when they left the country. This experience can cause psychological stress to those returnees (Sussman, 2002). Back in the home culture, returnee students can suffer from depression, grief, identity-confusion, frustration, and restlessness (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006; Kanno, 2000). Korean returnee students were also reported to experience stress back home such as reverse homesickness for the host country they left behind and want eagerly to get away again (Choi & Han, 2008; Kang, 2001; Kim, 1999; Lee, 1997). Some

Korean returnee students also tend to have negative feelings toward family and friends (Kim, 2000). In most cases, returnee students have been inevitably affected by the experiences of a foreign culture and thereby become a rather different person (Schaetti, 1996), while friends and family back home expect them to behave as before (Sussman, 1986). Family and friends who have no such experience are not likely to be as interested in sharing the experiences abroad as the returnee student wish. In many cases, friendships probably have changed, too. Since old friends are not as willing to listen to the returnee student's experience outside, developing new friendships seems more important. For Korean middle school students returned from study overseas, an important part of adjusting back to school is being accepted, or reaccepted, into a personal peer group (Jeong & Joo, 2003). Research indicates that a majority of Japanese (Enloe & Lewin, 1987) and Korean (An, 1985) returnee students who have difficulties in making new friends experiences readjustment problems in schools. Very often, the Korean returnee students are ostracized, and in some extreme cases, even bullied (Kwon, 1997). The returnee students' overseas, cross-cultural, experience can become a source of frustration and stress in the re-acculturation of home. They suffer from loneliness and from feeling that they have lost their identity (Tamura & Furnham, 1993). In fact, about 10% of Korean returnee students fail to readjust to school and leave the country again (Korea Youth Counseling Institute, 2006).

Compared to the reasonably low level of re-acculturative stress for adults, the readjustment process for younger students poses much greater challenges (Cox, 2004). For young students, the problem of reentry may be exacerbated when they return while they are still in the process of developing a sense of identity. Since they have stayed out of the country during the critical period in which they are to acquire those socio-cultural skills specific to the home culture, they only naturally experience more re-acculturative stress back home. They may also have fallen behind in acquiring the language of the home country and other related subjects. This can pose a significant challenge for Korean returnee students in adapting to the school

system (Kim, 1996). Other research on Japanese (Furukawa, 1997) and American students (Werkman, 1983) indicate that a majority of returnee students have some sort of readjustment problems, ranging from minor problems, including different rules in school, anxieties over making new friends, concerns about home language proficiency, to more serious ones like "school phobia."

As described above, research shows that students studying abroad often experience certain types of cultural adjustment problems and acculturative stress in a foreign culture. Researches also suggest that returning from a foreign country can cause equally a strong re-acculturative stress upon the returnee students. As acculturative stress can complicate returnee students' adjustment process in the host country, re-acculturative stress may negatively affect the readjustment process in the home country. Some researchers (Chamove & Soeterik, 2006; Westwood, Lawrence, & Paul, 1986) suggest that re-acculturative stress is more severe than the initial acculturative stress. However, the literature is not consistent with regard to the relationship between the returnee student's acculturative stress in overseas and the re-acculturative stress they experience back home. However, some research focused on Japanese returnee students argue that individuals who have adapted well to the host culture tend to have a severer reentry stress than those individuals who have not adapted well overseas (Sussman, 1986). If this is the case, students going abroad for study and planning to come back should be discouraged from adapting well to the host culture. In opposition to that finding, Adler (1981) claims that Canadians who have adapted well to the host cultures have a smoother reentry than those who have not. If her claim is right, students planning to study abroad should prepared for a smooth adaptation to the new culture in the host country. Although the acculturative stress of the Korean returnee students experienced in the host country can affect re-acculturative stress back in Korea, the relationship between them and the scope of impact the acculturative stress has on the re-acculturative stress is limited. The current study contributes to the ongoing research on the impact of acculturative stress on the returnee students' readjustment.

In the process of readjustment to the home country, returnee students have to take on not only the role of a student in the same age group, but also the role of a person who has returned from a different culture (Furnhan & Bochner, 1986). In order to evaluate returnee students' readjustment to the home country, it is vital to consider both the social and cultural aspects of adjustment. However, there is limited research aimed at the readjustment of Korean students returning from overseas study, and a majority has focused on school adjustment without paying adequate attention to the cultural aspect of readjustment. The present study evaluates the Korean returnee students' socio-cultural readjustments through school adjustment and re-acculturative stress. Previous research on Korean returnee students' readjustment focus on the returnee students' individual variables such as gender, grade, personality, and length of stay in the host country and the relationship with school adjustments (Jeong & Joo, 2003; Kang & Lee, 2005; Kim, 1999; Kwon, 1997). As we have described, more Korean students go overseas at an early age unaccompanied by parents and return home in the various developmental stage. This in turn may affect the level of the acculturative stress they experience in the host country but also a later readjustment back home. In the present study, variables such as the number of parents accompanying them overseas, age of returning, and acculturative stress they experience in the host country will be considered along with the returnee students' individual variables to predict the socio-cultural readjustment back home. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the levels of returnee student's acculturative stress in the host country and the re-acculturative stress back home?
2. What variables affect the returnee student's school adjustment and the re-acculturative stress back home?

METHODS

Participants

Data were collected from 259 Korean returnee

Table 1. *Characteristics of Participants*

Variables	Groups	N (%)
Gender (N = 259)	Boys	135 (52.1)
	Girls	124 (47.9)
Grade (N = 259)	Lower elementary (grades 1-3)	52 (20.1)
	Higher elementary (grades 4-6)	85 (32.8)
	Middle school	70 (27.0)
	High school	52 (20.1)
Number of Parent Accompanying (N = 254)	0 (study alone)	48 (18.4)
	1 (one parent)	43 (16.5)
	2 (both parents)	163 (62.5)
Country of Stay (N = 259)	USA	124 (47.8)
	Canada	29 (11.2)
	Australia & New Zealand	26 (10.0)
	China	36 (13.9)
	Europe	33 (12.7)
	Japan	3 (0.1)
	Others	8 (0.3)
Length of Overseas Stay (N = 248)	Less than 1 yr	43 (16.5)
	1yr -less than 2yrs	56 (21.5)
	2yrs -less than 3yrs	49 (18.8)
	3yrs -less than 4yrs	29 (11.1)
	4yrs -less than 5yrs	21 (8.0)
	More than 5yrs	50 (19.2)
Age of Return (N = 252)	Younger than 6yrs (preschool)	9 (3.6)
	6-8yrs (lower elementary)	68 (27.0)
	9-11yrs (higher elementary)	46 (18.3)
	12-14yrs (middle school)	83 (32.9)
Length of Stay in Korea (N = 256)	15-17yrs (high school)	46 (18.2)
	Less than 1 yr	125 (48.8)
	1yr-less than 2yrs	54 (21.1)
	2yrs-less than 3yrs	39 (15.2)
	3yrs-less than 4yrs	14 (5.5)
Father's Education Level (N = 257)	4yrs-less than 5yrs	11(4.3)
	More than 5yrs	13 (5.1)
	High School or Lower	6 (2.3)
Mother's Education Level (N = 255)	College or Higher	119 (46.3)
	Graduate School or Higher	132 (51.4)
	High School or Lower	27 (10.6)
Mother's Education Level (N = 255)	College or Higher	167 (65.5)
	Graduate School or Higher	61 (23.9)

students (135 boys: 52.1%, 124 girls: 47.9%) from Seoul and the Kyonggi region in Korea. In general, Korean students studying abroad at an early age are students who resided outside the territory of Korea for more than six months for the purpose of

academic performance (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2006). In this study, participants are those who have studied more than 6 months in overseas schools and returned Korea. The participants consist of 52 lower elementary graders (1-3 grades), 85 higher elementary graders (4-6 grades), 70 middle school students, and 52 high school ones. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the participants.

Measures

Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire measuring both the experience of living abroad, as well as the experience of returning home. The questionnaire included measures of acculturative stress in foreign country, school adjustment and re-acculturative stress at home, as well as demographic items. In this study, returnee students' socio-cultural readjustment is assessed with school adjustment and re-acculturative stress. It represents the ability to overcome the re-acculturative stress they experience back in home culture and establish a close relationship with friends and teachers, as well as satisfied with academic achievement.

School Adjustment Scale This is a self-report measure used in the Korea Youth Panel Survey (2006) to assess student's school adjustment. It consists of 9 items reflecting students' perceived pressure of academic achievement (e.g. "I am very worried about my performance at school."), their relationship with school friends (e.g. "I am getting along well with my school friends.") and teachers (e.g. "My teacher cares about me."). It uses a 5-point Likert-scale response format, ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much), with higher scores reflecting greater school adjustment. Among the 9 items, 3 items were coded in reverse. This scale was used with Korean students studying abroad at an early age (Son & Kwon, 2008) and there Cronbach's alpha was .90. In this study, Cronbach's alpha of this scale was .78.

The Acculturative Stress Scale In the present study, acculturative stress is defined as the various kinds of stresses returnee students have experienced in the host country due to changes in cultural environ-

ment. The Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS) was developed to measure the acculturative stress of international students (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). The original ASSIS was translated into Korean in a shortened form in the previous study with Korean students studying abroad at an early age (Son & Kwon, 2008). This scale consists of 14 items dealing with perceived discrimination (e.g. "I was treated differently because of my appearance."), homesickness (e.g. "I missed my country and people I used to live with."), perceived hate (e.g. "People made fun of my cultural background."), fear (e.g. "I felt that my country was safer."), stress due to cultural shock (e.g. "I felt uncomfortable adjusting to new cultural values."), and nonspecific (e.g. "It was difficult to communicate in the host country's language."). Participants reported on a 5-point Likert-scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating greater acculturative stress. The authors reported Cronbach's alpha to be .90. This scale was also used with Korean elementary school students studying abroad and the Cronbach's alpha was .88 (Bang, 2008). The Cronbach's alpha of this scale was .88 in this study.

The Re-acculturative Stress Scale The re-acculturative stress in the present study is defined as various kinds of stresses returnee students have experienced back home as they try to readjust to the home cultures. The acculturative stress scale (ASSIS) was modified to measure the participant's re-acculturative stress upon returning home. This consists of 14 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), with higher scores reflecting greater re-acculturative stress. Due to the modification of the scale, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted to establish the construct validity of this scale, utilizing a Principal Component Analysis. Following varimax rotation, two factors were extracted at the eigenvalue one or greater. All items except one load .55 or more on at least one factor. One item loads on both factors and only the highest factor loading was considered. A first factor contained 11 items and the range of factor loadings of the eleven-items was .59-.79. The items include, for example, "I

was treated differently because of my overseas experience", "People made fun of me because I am a returnee", "I felt uncomfortable adjusting to Korean cultural values", and "It was difficult to communicate in Korean." A second factor consisted of 3 items and the range of factor loadings of the three-items was .55-.73. Example items of this factor are "I missed the country I used to live in and people in it" and "I felt that the country I used to live in is safer than our country". The Cronbach's alpha for factor 1 was .92 and factor 2 was .41. Factor 1 was associated with intrapersonal stressors and factor 2 was related to the environmental aspect. According to Sandhu (1994), students from different cultures experience distress, and such distress can include factors involving both intrapersonal problems and environmental and cultural matters, which, in general, interact and combine with each other. A Pearson correlation analysis between each item and all others was conducted to investigate if the items within the identified factors should correlate more closely with one another. The result showed that items of the factor 2 were closely correlated with the items of factor 1, so the factor analysis was repeated with a forced one-factor solution. This solution explained 46.93% of the variance and the range of factor loadings of all the items except one was .46-.82. The Cronbach's alpha for the entire re-acculturative stress scale was .90.

Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed with a Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 12.0). Simple descriptive analyses (e.g. frequencies, measures of central tendency and distribution) provide a demographic segmentation of the participants and the level of cultural stresses they experienced both in host and home cultures. A correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between the variables in the study and to avoid potential problems of multi-collinearity within multiple regression analysis. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to examine variables that affect the returnee students' school adjustment and re-acculturative stress at home.

Table 2. Bivariate Correlations among Variables

	N=248								
Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	1								
2. Grade	-.01	1							
3. No of Parent Accompanying	-.08	-.24**	1						
4. Length of Overseas stay	-.08	-.17**	.53**	1					
5. Age of Return	-.08	.78**	-.36**	-.14*	1				
6. Length of Stay in Korea	.01	.28**	.21**	-.01	-.20**	1			
7. Acculturative Stress	-.09	.28**	-.15**	-.08	.31**	-.04	1		
8. School Adjustment	.07	-.42**	.17**	.05	-.38**	-.07	-.27**	1	
9. Re-acculturative Stress	-.01	-.03	-.03	.20**	.03	-.07	.30**	-.24**	1

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

RESULTS

Returnee Student's Acculturative and the Re-acculturative Stress

Most participants reported a low level of acculturative stress in adjusting to the culture of the host country while studying abroad in the past ($M = 1.85$, $SD = .63$, where 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). During the stay abroad, the greatest cause of acculturative stress was homesickness ($M = 2.6$, $SD = 1.24$), followed by communication difficulty ($M = 2.3$, $SD = 1.07$).

The re-acculturative stress of participants upon returning to life in Korea was fairly low ($M = 1.93$, $SD = .65$), but higher than the acculturative stress. Even though for the participants readjustment to home culture does not seem to have been a serious problem, the re-acculturative stress due to the reverse homesickness for the host country ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.25$) was higher than the average on the 5-point scale.

Variables Relating to School Adjustment and the Re-acculturative Stress

Pearson correlation analysis for the variables was performed to examine the relation between variables in the study while avoiding potential problems of multi-collinearity within multiple regression analysis. The results are presented in Table 2. Regarding school adjustment, 4 of the 7 variables emerged as

significant ($p < .01$). The number of parents accompanying overseas was positively correlated with returnee students' school adjustment ($r = .17$, $p < .01$). Returnee students' grade ($r = -.42$, $p < .01$), age of return ($r = -.38$, $p < .01$), and acculturative stress they experienced in the foreign country ($r = -.27$, $p < .01$) were negatively correlated with the school adjustment. Length of overseas stay ($r = .20$, $p < .01$) and acculturative stress ($r = .30$, $p < .01$) were positively correlated with re-acculturative stress. In addition, two-way multivariate analysis of variance was performed to investigate whether there were any differences in school adjustment and re-acculturative stress by gender and grade. The results revealed no gender differences in school adjustment ($F = -1.73$, $p > .05$) and re-acculturative stress ($F = -.02$, $p > .05$). There was a significant main effects of the grade on the school adjustment ($F = -21.31$, $p < .001$) but not on re-acculturative stress ($F = -.51$, $p > .05$). There was no significant interaction effect between gender and grade on the school adjustment and re-acculturative stress. In post hoc analyses, school adjustment scores of lower elementary graders ($M = 3.70$, $SD = .51$) and higher elementary graders ($M = 3.51$, $SD = .58$) were significantly higher than middle school ($M = 3.07$, $SD = .49$) and high school ($M = 3.08$, $SD = .49$) students.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis for School Adjustment and Re-acculturative Stress

As the final analysis, hierarchical multiple regression

Table 3. Hierarchical Multiple Regressions for School Adjustment and Re-aculturative Stress

Variables	School Adjustment (N= 236)		Re-aculturative Stress (N= 239)	
	B	B	B	B
STEP 1				
Gender	.04	.04	.05	.04
Grade	-.21	-.38**	-.02	-.03
No of Parents Accompanying	.08	.11	-.10	-.12
Length of Overseas Stay	-.03	-.09	.11	.29***
Age of Return	-.03	-.06	.02	.04
Length of Stay in Korea	-.02	-.01	-.06	-.01
R ² (Adj. R ²)	.20 (.18)		.07 (.06)	
F value	9.63***		2.72**	
STEP 2				
Gender	.03	.02	.08	.06
Grade	-.20	-.35**	-.06	-.09
No of Parents Accompanying	.07	.10	-.09	-.10
Length of Overseas Stay	-.02	-.05	.11	.29***
Age of Return	-.02	-.03	-.03	-.01
Length of Stay in Korea	-.05	-.01	.04	.01
Acculturative Stress	-.14	-.18*	.29	.32***
R ² (Adj. R ²)	.22 (.20)		.15 (.13)	
R ² change	.02		.09	
F value	9.26***		6.03***	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

analyses were performed using gender, grade, the number of parents accompanying the students overseas, length of overseas stay, age of return, length of stay in Korea and acculturative stress as independent variables and the returnee students' school adjustment and re-aculturative stress at home as the dependent variables. Before doing the regression analysis, the residual analysis was performed through the Durbin-Watson coefficient on the process of regression diagnostics. As a result, the Durbin-Watson coefficient was close to 2, and the self-relationship among residuals did not exist. The multi-collinearity problem, expected when the range of VIF gets higher than 10, did not appear either. The independent variables were entered in two different steps. The returnee students' demographic variables were entered in Step 1, and the acculturative stress experienced in the host country was entered in Step 2.

As shown in Table 3, gender, grade, the number of parents accompanying the students overseas, length of overseas stay, age of return, length of stay

in Korea, entered in Step 1, accounted for 20% of variance in school adjustment ($R^2 = .20$, $F = 9.63$, $p < .001$). In Step 2, with the addition of the acculturative stress, the amount of variance explained by the variables increased to 22% ($R^2 = .22$, $F = 9.26$, $p < .001$). Controlling returnee students' acculturative stress in Step 1, the school adjustment was significantly predicted by grade ($\beta = -.38$, $p < .01$). In Step 2, adding to the acculturative stress, the grade ($\beta = -.35$, $p < .001$) still remained a significantly higher predictor of school adjustment and the acculturative stress ($\beta = -.18$, $p < .05$) also turned out to be a significant predictor of school adjustment.

As for the returnee students' re-aculturative stress, such variables as gender, grade, the number of parents accompanying the students overseas, length of overseas stay, age of return, length of stay in Korea, entered in Step 1, explained only 6% of variance ($R^2 = .06$, $F = 2.72$, $p < .01$). Among the variables entered in Step 1, the returnee students' length of overseas stay was related to re-aculturative

stress. The longer the length of overseas stay, the returnee student's re-acculturative stress was higher ($\beta = .29, p < .001$). However, when acculturative stress was entered in Step 2, it turned out to be more critical in predicting re-acculturative stress ($\beta = .32, p < .001$), and the length of overseas stay ($\beta = .29, p < .001$) was still found to be a significant predictor of re-acculturative stress. With addition of acculturative stress, the amount of variance explained by the model increased to 15% ($R^2 = .15, F = 6.03, p < .001$) of the variance of re-acculturative stress.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The number of Korean students returning from overseas has increased in the age of globalization. A considerable body of research focused on western culture participants and Japanese returnee students suggests that these returnee students experience not only the acculturative stress in the process of adapting to the host culture but also the re-acculturative stress upon returning to the home culture. However, the precise relationship between the acculturative stress and the socio-cultural readjustment of Korean returnee students has not been clearly explained.

This study examined the Korean returnee students' acculturative and re-acculturative stress also investigated to what degree the acculturative stress along with other variables of interest can predict the socio-cultural adjustment back to home country.

Results from this study suggest that Korean returnee students experience a low level of acculturative and re-acculturative stress the same as research on Japanese returnee students reported (Enloe & Lewin, 1987). The results of bivariate analysis indicate that the returnee students' school adjustment is significantly correlated with the school grade, the number of parents accompanying, age of return, and acculturative stress. The re-acculturative stress is positively correlated with the length of overseas stay and acculturative stress. The gender of the returnee students is not significantly correlated with either of the school adjustment and the re-acculturative stress. Gender does not seem to be related with returnee

students' readjustment to the home country. However, such a result is not consistent with some research on the school adjustment of Korean returnee students (Kang, 2001; Kim, 1999). Yet since these previous research focus primarily on higher graders among elementary school students in the returnee classes, further research is needed to investigate the gender differences on the returnee students' readjustment back home.

The hierarchical regression results for the returnee students' school adjustment imply that the grade can be considered as the only significant predictor after controlling acculturative stress. This indicates that the older the students are, the more difficulties they go through in adjusting to school life. This accords well with the findings of previous research on school adjustment of Korean returnee students (Kang & Lee, 2005; Korea Youth Counseling Institute, 2006; Ministry of Strategy and Finance, 2006). With regard to the returnee students' grade, a multivariate analysis of variance shows that there are significant differences in school adjustment between elementary school students and secondary school students. The returnee students' age of return was significantly related with school adjustment in the previous bivariate analysis. However, when the age of return is taken into consideration together with the grade in the hierarchical regression, it was not a significant predictor of school adjustment. This may indicate that as the returning age becomes higher, the difficulty in adjusting to school also becomes greater. It is inevitable that older returnee students attending secondary schools upon arrival to Korea have more difficulties than elementary level returnees in readjusting to the school setting. In the competition to get into the best high schools or universities, the returnee students often face negative consequences of the overseas experience, primarily due to the lack of home language skills and differences in curriculum between the host and the home country. However, the findings indicate that returnee students' current grade is more critical to school adjustment, regardless of the age of return. In addition, the grade of returnee students may represent the age at the time of return since there is quite high correlation between them.

The acculturative stress is also one of the predictors of school adjustment of returnee students. This finding implies that returnee students who have experienced higher level of stress adjusting to the new culture of the host country also experience more difficulties in school adjustment back home. This finding is inconsistent with the result that Korean returnee students with lower adaptation ability to different culture show a higher level of school adjustment (Kang, 2001). However, this particular research focuses on the elementary school students in the returnee classes who stayed in the host country with both parents, and the adaptation ability is measured using the tendency to go back to the host country. Further research is required to investigate the relationship between the returnee students' cultural adaptation to the host culture and school adjustment back home.

In line with the suggestion of some research (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Uehara, 1986), the findings of this study also indicate that returnee students' length of overseas stay can be considered as significant predictor of re-acculturative stress. As the returnee students' stay in a foreign culture becomes longer, it is highly probable that they become more integrated to the values, attitudes, and ways of life there. Accordingly, they report a higher level of re-acculturative stress upon returning home. In addition, many returnee students who have spent most of the developmental period in a foreign country may not have learned appropriate communication skills and ways of interaction specific to Korean culture. That can cause problems along with other re-acculturative stresses. Much research on Korean returnee students report similar findings (An, 1985; Kim, 2000). However, the most powerful predictor of the returnee students' re-acculturative stress is the acculturative stress.

The findings reported here suggest that returnee students who had adapted well to the foreign host culture in the past tend to experience less difficulty in readjusting to the home culture than those who had not. This indicates that the returnee students who had adapted well in a host culture experience a low level of acculturative stress and have a high level of self-esteem (Phinney, Chavira, & Williamson,

1992). This self-esteem, may help them to effectively cope with difficulties as they readjust to the home country as students and people with different cultural experience, thereby making the readjustment smoother.

This implies that measures to help returnee students' successful socio-cultural readjustment should take their initial overseas adjustment experience into consideration and incorporate effective training programs for developing skills necessary to overcome the acculturative stress they experience abroad. In addition, schools but also society should also be aware of the cultural challenges that Korean students returning from study abroad bring to both themselves and the society. This suggests the need for further research in the development of policies, programs, and training that address the readjustment of the returnee students adequately but also take the cultural experience into consideration to make society fit all the diverse cultural backgrounds.

The present study contributes to the ongoing research on the impact of acculturative stress of the returnee students on the readjustment back home. It also provides some useful insight into the socio-cultural readjustment of Korean students returning from overseas, but there are still some areas to be improved through further research. The participants who consented to participate in the present study and returned the completed questionnaire are mostly successful returnees who did not experience a severe acculturative stress in the host culture. This may mean a bias in the data. Many returnee students who did experience difficulties abroad and returned home early did not complete the questionnaire and could not be included in the study. It also seem desirable to conduct a longitudinal study which follows up a group of students studying abroad from the early stages of planning, through the overseas experiences, to the readjustment back home. Finally, it would also be useful to investigate the impact that returnee students make on the family relationship, school system, and society as a whole.

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