Child Studies in Diverse Contexts
2011. Vol. 1, No. 1, 25-38

www.e-csdc.org
http://dx.doi.org/10.5723/csdc.2011.1.1.025

Attachment Representations of Korean-Immigrant Mothers in America

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The purpose of this study is to examine the attachment representations of Korean immigrant mothers in America. The subjects were 25 first-generation Korean immigrant mothers who reside in Los Angeles. The Adult Attachment Interview (George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985) was used for assessing their attachment representations. As a result, 36% of the mothers were classified as secure-autonomous (F), 52% as insecure-dismissing (Ds), and 12% as insecure-preoccupied (E). It was concluded that there were lower rates of the secure type among Korean immigrant mothers who had immigrated to the U.S. during the 70's and 80's and higher rates of the dismissing type compared to mothers in South Korea.

Keywords : attachment representations, Korean immigrant mothers, Adult Attachment Interview

According to Bowlby (1969, 1973, 1980, 1982), an attachment representation is assumed to be formed through repeated interactions with the primary caregiver during the initial stages of infancy, and the internal working model formed during infancy not only influences the individual throughout his or her childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, but also in his or her parenting style for the individual's own children. Bowlby (1973, 1980) emphasized the role of early experiences in the formation of attachment relations and suggested the possibility that the quality of attachment relationship that is formed during the early years of infancy is sustained and passed onto the next generation.

Research on such transfer of attachment relationships through generations became possible due to the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) developed by George, Kaplan and Main (1985), measuring one's adulthood attachment representation. The AAI is a semi-structured, in-depth interview involving 20 questions which allows one to unconsciously reveal information about his/her attachment working model through the discourse-process of memories related to childhood and present attachment relationship with one's parents. Recently, the AAI has been used to estimate the extent to which parents at high-risk are willing to involve themselves in the intervention process (Heinicke et al., 2006); to determine whether, among adults, rates of insecurity are increased by disadvantages such as deafness or blindness (Bakermans-Kranenburg & van IJzendoorn, 2008); to search for anomalous parent-infant interaction patterns related to particular AAI classifications (unresolved/disorganized); to determine whether parents are substantially more frightened, frightening, and dissociative than other parents (Jacobvitz, Leon, & Hazen, 2006); to ask

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whether the daughters of Holocaust survivors found to be insecure on the AAI in Israel are significantly more likely than daughters of control participants to be insecure (Sagi-Schwartz et al., 2003); and to ask whether state of mind with respect to attachment might moderate the relation between maternal postnatal depression and infant Strange Situation security (McMahon, Barnett, Kowalenko, & Tennant, 2006).

Several studies have applied the AAI to measure the attachment representations of the parents and compared them to those of their children (Choi, Lee, & Kim, 1998; Fonagy, Steele, & Steele, 1991; Jang & Choi, 1999; Jin, 2006; Ward & Carlson, 1995) and have shown a significant concordance rate (55%-78%) between the two attachment representation types. These results indirectly proved the intergenerational transfer of attachment as well as the validity of the AAI (Fonagy, Steele, & Steele, 1991; Grossmann, Fremmer-Bombik, Rudolph, & Grossmann, 1988; Main & Goldwyn, 1984; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985; Zeanath, Benoit, Barton, Regan, Hirshberg, & Lipsitt, 1993).

Studies conducted to analyze mothers' adulthood attachment representation with normal samples (Broussard & Cassidy, 2010; Reese, 2008; Bakermans-Kranenburg & van IJzendoorn, 2009; Das Edien, Teti, & Corns, 1995) yielded 44.8%-58.0% of mothers as secure-autonomous, 23.0%-44.8% as insecure-dismissing, and 6.0%-10.8% as insecure-preoccupied. It also revealed that mothers categorized as secure-autonomous recalled more detailed memories of experiences with their children. Moreover, the children of mothers of secure-autonomous with high scores of coherence in their reports were shown to be positively developed in self-concept. On the other hand, studies with risk samples showed that the distribution of the mothers' attachment representation to be significantly lower in secure-autonomous mothers compared to the insecure-dismissing mothers. A study with mothers of 36 teenagers by Wallis and Steele (2001) showed 10% secure-autonomous, 51% insecure-dismissing, 28% insecure-preoccupied, and 10% unclassifiable. Furthermore, a study targeting low-income mothers of teenagers was categorized 27% as secure-autonomous, 35% as insecure-dismissing, and 37% as insecure-unsolved/disorganized.

Studies conducted in South Korea also showed differences among distributions of attachment representation types of mothers depending on their backgrounds. In the low risk group, the majority (60.0%-67.5%) of mothers belonged to the secure-autonomous type, 5.0%-20.0% to the insecure-dismissing, 5.0%-20.0% to the insecure-preoccupied, and 7.5%-15.0% to the insecure-unsolved/disorganized (Chang & Yang, 1998; Jin, 2006). In the studies of mothers with a history of pathology and lowincome, the distribution was 38.0-50.0% for the secure-autonomous, 27.5%-50.0% for the insecure-unsolved/disorganized, 7.0%-15.0% for the insecure-dismissing, and 19.2% for the insecure-preoccupied. The overall rate of insecure attachment was higher than that of the secure (Lee, Jin, & Jung, 2007; Lee, Shin, & Kim, 1999). These studies suggested the possibility that mothers classified as insecure attached may be predicted to have children with behavioral problems and mental illnesses. In particular, low-income mothers were reported to show a higher tendency to belong to the dismissing rather than to the preoccupied type in regards to their relationships with their parents. The low-income mothers may have had detrimental experiences involving parental deaths, separation, and family discord related to poverty (Lee et al., 2007; Lee et al., 1999).

According to Bowlby (1980, 1988), in order for a securely-attached relationship to be maintained, it requires working models of self and attachment figures during infancy to be updated in step with communicative, social, and cognitive competencies that develop in childhood and adolescence. These normal, stable processes may modify the working model of a child throughout his/her life. However, negative environments may affect parenting and in turn influence the working model (Hamilton, 2000; Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000; Waters, Weinfield, &

Hamilton, 2000; Weinfield, Sroufe, & Egeland, 2000). In particular, negative environmental changes, such as financial stress, parental divorce, and physical abuse, are reported to be the related factors that alter attachment representation (Hamilton, 2000; Weinfield et al., 2000). Moreover, a lack of availability and sensitivity toward infants due to a mother's depression as well as marital conflicts also alter infants' attachment types (Cummings & Davies, 1996; Waters et al., 2000). Changes in the living environment may affect the mother's own perception leading to an insecure attachment of her children as well as to the mother's ecological environments such as family system and socio-cultural system. Cain (2006) reported that family systems including marriage relationships, sibling relationships, and family structures, as well as socio-cultural systems including support from the local community, social and economic self-efficiency, and cultural influences, are significant variables that affect the formation of attachment. Therefore, it may be assumed that negative environmental changes confronted by parents modify parenting behavior and the attachment relationship between parents and children.

As one of many severe environmental transitions, the experience of immigration can be an affecting factor in the attachment relationships. In particular, first-generation Korean-Americans, with a relatively short history of immigration to America, have experienced serious conflicts in adjustment to the mainstream culture compared to immigrants of other nationalities in the U.S. (Farver & Lee-Shin, 2000). They experience various levels of stress in the process of making a transition from their former Korean culture to the new American culture (Kim & Song, 1997; Joo, 2002). For the majority of Korean immigrants in the 70's and 80's, immigration to the U.S. was a necessary step in order to pursue opportunities to elevate their socio-economic status, something which they could not have accomplished back in South Korea (Danico, 1998; Yoon, 2000). As a result, after the Immigration Act of 1965 (which actually came into effect in 1968), the number of Korean immigrants soared in the 70's and 80's, making them the fourth-largest Asian immigrant group in the U.S. (Min, 2006). Most of these immigrants settled near the "Korea-town" communities in large cities such as California or New York, and the group continued to grow as immigrants engaged in their own small-scale businesses, such as liquor stores, convenience stores, and dry cleaners. In particular, Los Angeles became the site of the largest Korean immigrant group in the U.S. (Bureau, 2001).

The majority of these immigrants were said to show such symptoms as anxiety and depression (Lee, 1993; Oh & Park, 2007), caused by the stress from the hardships of life that were more intense than in their native country; racial discrimination, conflicts with other minority groups, and family conflicts (Lee, 2006). These first-generation Koreans were alienated in the primary labor market due to their lack of knowledge about skills required in the U.S. labor market, such as language and customs, and were forced to work as low-wage manual laborer in factories or in the service industry (Yoon, 2000). Some self-employed immigrants ran their own stores which were aimed at serving Koreans and other low-income minority groups. These immigrants, worked long hours with labor help from their family members, but they continued to live poorly, which caused the quality of their lives and health to worsen. Immigration to the U.S. for the sake of financial stability and a better life ended up causing many first-generation Koreans to experience stress and frustration. These first-generation Koreans could not establish interactive and supportive relations with mainstream Americans due to their lack of linguistic ability, and became even more isolated both professionally and socially. As a result, reported feelings of isolation and inferiority in a society where they could not express their thoughts were shown to be as psychological instability and depression (Hovey, Kim, & Seligman, 2006). In addition, the parents' poor linguistic ability caused lack of communication between the parents and their second-generation children (Chon, 2007; Debra, 2007) who were accustomed to American culture and language. The parents also depended on their young children for translation when they needed to

resolve various issues in dealing with the mainstream society, which led to feeling a loss of authority as parents (Lee, 2006; Moon, 1999).

In particular, the stress level was quite significant for first-generation Korean mothers, who experienced difficulty in performing both economic activities and housework at the same time for the family's livelihood (Ahn, 2007). They also experienced stress in child rearing because they could not afford, in terms of both time and finances, to devote themselves to raising children since both parents were required to work, and also because they lacked knowledge about the local education system. Consequently, as these children grew older, there was less conversation between the parents and their children, and there were severe conflicts that resulted from the clash between the parents emphasizing traditional Korean values the children who were learning American values at school (Yoon, 2000).

From this point of view, such immigration experiences with these economic, social and cultural transition factors act as stressors on the mental aspect of the first-generation Korean-American mothers and may influence their personal values on child rearing, as well as in their communication and interaction with their children. These transitions are presumed to have an impact on the mothers' internal working models of their attachment relationship with their own parents from South Korea. Thus, the present study aims to examine Korean immigrant mothers' internal working models in terms of their attachment representations of their parents.

Methods

Participants

A total of 25 first-generation Korean mothers residing in Los Angeles, CA participated in this study. The selection of study participants was made by snowball sampling; with help from pastors at local Korean American churches, letters were distributed at worship service requesting assistance and participation in the study. Prospective interest in participation was received through phone calls and e-mails. For the convenience of the majority of working mothers, the times and places of visits were scheduled according to the mothers' preference.

The ages of the mothers ranged from 41 to 60 years, with the mean age at 51 years old (*SD*=2.00). These mothers had immigrated to the U.S. in the 1970's and 1980's. Two of the mothers had immigrated through marriage, the other two with their families during their teenage years, four with family during their thirties, and the other participants with family during their twenties before or after their marriage.

Table 1

The Demographic Backgrounds of Participants *(N=25)*

Characteristics		N	%
Education	High School	10	40
	Community college	2	8
	University	13	52
Year of Immigration	1970~74	3	12
	1975~79	7	28
	1980~84	10	40
	1985~89	5	20

Measure

In order to measure the mothers' attachment representations with their own parents during their childhood, a translated Korean version of the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) developed by George et al., (1985) was used. The AAI evaluates the attachment experiences of the adult-subjects with their parents through retrospection. The interview takes about an hour to complete and is arranged in the form of a semi-structured questionnaire. During the course of the interview, subjects are asked both to describe their attachment-related childhood experiences, — especially their early relations with the parents — and to evaluate the influence of these experiences on their development and current competency. The entire interview, including all comments by the interviewer and the interviewee, is transcribed verbatim, including (timed) pauses, disfluencies, and restarts. The transcribed responses from these interviews are placed into one of four adult attachment classification categories: secure-autonomous, insecure-dismissing, insecure-preoccupied, insecure-unresolved/disorganized. The AAI scoring system includes a set of 5-point continuous rating scales that assess the speakers' past childhood experiences with each parent (e.g., loving behavior, rejection), current state of mind with respect to attachment (e.g., idealization for parents) including discourse patterning in general (e.g., overall coherence of transcript, vague discourse usages).

The AAIs and the assessments were conducted by the first author who completed intensive training at a seminar for AAI assessment held at Yonsei University, and the analyses of the data were confirmed by two researchers trained in AAI at the University of Texas at Austin. Agreement on the classification of the categories for all the participants among the first author and the two researchers was 100%.

Procedure

In order to check the amount of time required and the appropriateness for the interviewing process, a preliminary interview was conducted in the beginning of July of 2007 with an adult from South Korea and a Korean American adult. The protocol of the AAI questions for Korean American mothers was modified upon the preliminary interview.

This study was conducted from July 15th to August 30th in 2007 with the first-generation Korean mothers who live in LA. For their convenience, the study was conducted at the participants' homes which the researcher visited, with the exception of three mothers who participated in the study from their places of employment. The researcher showed them the information form about the purpose of the research, the guarantee of confidentiality, and appreciation for their participation. The bilingual interviews were conducted by the first author mostly in the Korean language, but the participants were also allowed to speak English at any time. The first author conducted all of the interviews and all the responses from the interviews were transcribed. The time spent on an interview ranged between 40 minutes to 1 hour and 50 minutes.

Results

The distribution of AAI classification for the first-generation Korean American mothers is shown in Table 2. Here, higher rates of first-generation Korean American mothers belonged to the insecure type (64%) than to the secure type (36%). The majority (52%) of the participants belonged to insecure-dismissing, and 36% were secure-autonomous, 12% were insecure-preoccupied. There was no insecure-unsolved /disorganized. There were no significant differences in the AAI type according to the mother's educational level (F=1.32, ns) or the mother's time of immigration (F=.80, ns).

As shown in Table 3, the scale scores of the secure-autonomous mothers (36%) for the childhood experience of affection with their parents were, on average, 3.39 for the mother and 3.44 for the father, both of which were

Table 2
The AAI Classification of the First-Generation Korean American Mothers (N=25)

Classification		N	%
Secure	Autonomous (F)	9	36%
Insecure	Dismissing (Ds)	13	52%
	Preoccupied (E)	3	12%
	Unresolved (U/d)	0	0%
Total		25	100%

higher than the mid-score (2.5). The scale scores for the experience of rejection and role reversal were 2.50 and 1.78 for the mother, and 1.86 and 1.56 for the father, both of which were lower than mid-score. These secure-autonomous mothers had more experience of affection, and less experience of rejection, from their fathers than from mothers in childhood. Furthermore, the participants with a low degree of childhood experience of affection from their mothers were still classified as secure-autonomous if they had a high score for their experience of affection from their fathers.

Overall, for the participants who were classified as secure-autonomous, regardless of whether the participants' attachment-related experiences were positive or negative, they reported frankly on all of their attachment-related experiences and also presented personal anecdotes that might explain their experiences. Their statements were very coherent and their responses to questions were clear, directly related, reasonable, and concise.

For example, one of the secure-autonomous mothers described the emotional support that she received from her father in childhood: "No one could come to my school entrance ceremony. No one from the whole family. But Dad alone came.... Dad who remains in my memory...." Another mother described, "Well, Dad brought my backpack and picked me up, he was that affectionate, and he was that passionate for education." Additionally, a mother-participant with a score of 5 in terms of experience of affection from her father reported: "I would often lay on Dad's knees and he would clean my ears for me..." These participants stated that although their mothers did not treat them in a considerate manner, their fathers supportively nurtured them and the participants' descriptions showed coherence.

Secondly, the scale scores of the insecure-dismissing mothers (52%) for the childhood experience of rejection with their parents were relatively high, and the scale scores for the experience of affection were low. Overall, the main characteristics of the participants who were classified as insecure-dismissing were idealization of parents as attachment figures of the past. They reported on their parents very positively but they did not have specific evidence from their lives that could support their statements. Moreover, their later statements could sometimes contradict their earlier ones. Although they said several times during the interview that, "I don't remember my childhood well," they tended to remember well experiences that were not related to attachment. Adults who are classified as this type try to intentionally dismiss the importance of attachment and their relationship with parents in order to minimize the effects that arose from their negative experiences.

One mother with a score of 1 in experience of affection from both parents in childhood described her relationship with her mother: "[Mom] was a bit cold. And negative. She worries a lot... [she's] the one that I should protect... warm because she is my mother, well... (pauses to ponder). I don't feel as if she is 'my mother'. A person who doesn't speak in a warm tone. No warm feeling. That's all. She didn't spend a lot of time with us. No relationship." Another mother-participant classified as insecure -dismissing with a score of 1 in experience of affection from her parents in childhood said: "Mom wasn't very kind... (ponders and laughs)

Table 3
Scale Scores for Childhood Experiences, the Current State of Mind Related to Attachment, and Coherence of Transcript with AAI Classification *(N=25)*

			Secure-autonomous (F,) M (SD) Range	Insecure-dismissing (Ds,) M (SD) Range	Insecure-preoccupied (E,) M (SD) Range	K-W X^2
Childhood Experience	F	Loving	3.44(1.19) 2.0-5.0	2.00(1.04) 1.0-4.0	1.17(0.24) 1.0-1.5	10.21**
		Rejection	1.89(1.22) 1.0-5.0	2.92(1.37) 1.0-5.0	4.67(0.47) 4.0-5.0	7.11*
		Role-reversing	1.56(0.83) 1.0-3.0	2.00(1.43) 1.0-5.0	3.00(1.63) 1.0-5.0	1.80
	M	Loving	3.39(1.31) 1.0-5.0	2.00(0.98) 1.0-4.0	1.00(0.00) 1.0-1.0	9.36**
		Rejection	2.50(1.60) 1.0-5.0	2.69(1.52)1.0-5.0	3.67(1.88) 1.0-5.0	1.20
		Role-reversing	1.78(1.31) 1.0-5.0	2.31(1.50) 1.0-5.0	3.17(1.43) 1.5-5.0	2.96
Current State of Mind	Idealization of the parent		1.83(0.88) 1.0-3.0	4.08(0.98) 1.5-5.0	2.67(1.03) 1.5-4.0	13.11***
	Insistence upon inability to recall childhood		2.83(1.41) 1.0-5.0	3.85(1.00) 1.5-5.0	2.50(0.41) 2.0-3.0	5.00
	Anger expressed toward the parent		2.22(1.11) 1.0-4.0	3.04(0.88) 2.0-5.0	5.00(0.00) 5.0-5.0	10.49**
	Lack of resolution of mourning or trauma		1.00(0.00) 1.0-1.0	2.18(0.80) 1.0-5.0	3.70(0.94) 3.0-5.0	12.72**
Coherence of transcript			3.10(0.64) 2.1-4.0	2.07(0.51) 1.1-2.8	1.83(0.24) 1.5-2.0	8.54*

$^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p < .01$ $^{***}p < .001$

So...a bit...a bit...selfish" (spoken slowly and carefully with difficulty). She explained that the reason for this was that her mother was the only daughter in a family with seven brothers, and that when the participant visited South Korea, her mother was neither affectionate, nor took her daughter's side, as much as the participant wished her to. In such reports, the participants expressed that they did not have emotionally supportive relationships with their parents. In addition, in terms of the mother-participants' experience of rejection, one mother with a score of 5 in experience of rejection from father in childhood reported: "When I talked about going on a field trip, he would say 'Why would a girl like you want to go to such place?' but I wanted to go..." She also described her father as strict and frightening, although she said that he was much more generous towards her than to her brothers. In addition, another mother with a score of 5 in experience of rejection from mother in childhood described an experience with her mother which she thought caused her to become a passive, unexpressive person: "Uh...for me, the saddest thing was, when I... uh... I passed the exam, I passed it, and mom sighed, and then what mom said, We need to spend that much money?' I heard that, and that hurt me a lot. What she said wasn't a big deal (laughs).As for my mom, she was from the Gyeongsang-do region, so she would speak in this way (imitates by screaming)... and... so she would say, 'What!'

(imitates again by screaming), and that region's tough. You would do something, but you would just step back most of the time."

Additionally, these mothers showed high scores in the degree of idealization of their parents and the degree of difficulty in remembering childhood. For example, to questions about their relationships with their parents in their childhood, they replied: "But I don't seem to remember that much about when I was young." "When I was young?... I don't remember well about when I was young. (laughs)." "Special memories... uh…." "I don't remember that well about my childhood. They said I was much loved as a child, since I was the first daughter." These mothers expressed difficulty in remembering their childhood. During the interviews, they did not remember incidents that could support their reports of their relationship with parents in the past, and rather than reporting on incidents related to attachment figures of the past, they reported on incidents that were unrelated. They also described their parents in their childhood very positively, but could not provide incidents to support such descriptions. For example, one mother, who received a score of 5 in idealization of parents, reported that she had to spend a great deal of time with just her siblings until late at night because both her parents went to work. She repeatedly said that her parents were the most loving people in the world: "Yes, I still feel that way. I am not worth it, but my parents still give me too much love [that] it makes me feel bad –I just feel grateful" (spoken without pause, in a flat monotone). Additionally, another participant with a score of 5 in idealization of parents said that she was repeatedly hurt because of her father during her childhood. Yet, she reported: "In my childhood, my father was too good to me so that kind of thing [as hurting] never happened." Another mother with a score of 5 in idealization of parents reported that her family was basically divided in half during childhood because her father was busy with his career in the public, and that she was proud of him and thought her mother was too ignorant for her father. The participant described her father: "Uh... My father was a very good person, because he was well-known... in society... and because he did a lot of public work." She, however, acknowledged that while her father earned money to give to charity and had good reputation, her father had ignored his own family's livelihood, and that her mother was the one who actually took responsibility for the family's living.

Unexpectedly, insecure-dismissing mothers in this study showed relatively high scale scores in expression of anger towards their parents. One mother with a score of 4 in expression of anger towards parents said that she was hurt many times due to her father's actions towards her and her siblings in childhood, that she never relied upon her father under any circumstances, and that she resolved problems on her own: "[My father] would sometimes hurt me by what he said. Such times when he would spit out things like that would make me hostile towards father." Another participant with a score of 5 in expression of anger towards parents reported that she was raised by her grandmother as a child. Her mother had moved to the countryside as a schoolteacher and her father was always drunk and came home late, and thus there was no parent-daughter relationship. She said she had an independent in childhood, doing everything on her own, and expressed her anger towards her father: "My father would drink, and I had nothing like respect or trust or anything." On the other hand, these insecure-dismissing mothers had low mean scale scores of 2.07 for coherence of transcript. For example, "I don't have such feelings [of separation], because my father has so much love even now. So I don't feel separated." However, when asked to report on the love for her father in depth, she said, "I didn't rely upon my parents throughout my life, so I can't really say if I was separated or not separated from my parents," contradicting her previous statement.

Moreover, in response to the question about what kind of impact attachment relations with parents in the past had on the participant's present character, most of the mothers mentioned that they acted in the same way that their parents had acted to them in the past to their own children. For example, one mother spoke about

the impact of how her mother would never pack lunch for her and would yell at her if she did not wear clothes that her mother liked: “What my parents did to me, I, I sometimes do. ‘Would I do what my Mom does to my children when I get married?’ That’s what I used to ask myself, and now I do it to my children. There are those times. And I become so surprised. ‘I said I wouldn't do this but why am I doing those exact same things now?’ at those moments.” Another mother who reported that her mother was always strict but fair said: “I’m pretty strict toward my sons. I’m really not sure. I don’t know what my children think but when they talk about me they say that I’m fair. So considering that, I think I unconsciously show my mom’s way of raising children.” Another participant, who did not have much time to spend with her parents because they always came home later after work, spoke about the impact of her parents: “Now, I'm an outgoing person with other people. I'm easygoing with anyone at any place, but as I see it, I don't think I'm doing that with my own children.” Additionally, some mothers reported that the negative relations with their parents in the past had a positive, rather than negative, influence on their characters. Another mother, who had multiple experiences of affection and rejection in her relation with her parents during infancy, reported with difficulty, “Now is past the point where I (clicking her tongue) can say things about that. I overcame that by myself, through all those years and experience, and I did that by myself, because I would overcome those [hardships] by controlling myself about my parents and everything.”

The scale scores of the three insecure-preoccupied mothers (12%) for the childhood experience of rejection with their parents were high, with an average of 4.67 for the father and 3.67 for the mother, and their level of anger towards their parents was 5, which is quite high. In particular, anger towards their fathers was present, and they described it as if the wound still had not healed.

For example, one mother who told the researcher that she was very poor and her father did not look after her family reported: “I can only say, it was scary. It was scary, I didn’t like it... (initially speaks quickly and then ponders). It was scary, I didn’t like it, I... remember saying to my brothers and sisters, ‘Why don’t we beat our father...? (pauses to ponder) If five of us, five of us all hold father, then we can beat him up.’ At that time, he wasn’t a father, he was a villain, the scariest person on earth, a person that I hated.” She described this in a clear and vivid tone. Another mother also said she had grown up poor and that her family suffered since her father did not care for his family, and spoke in a sad tone voice throughout the entire interview: “My father was too irresponsible in his life. For family, he was irresponsible for his family, for his children as well. Mother was unhappy about those things. ‘Why would he live like that?’ [She had] that kind of thought. And when Father came home drunk, she would see him from far away and quickly run away from him... (clears her voice). I still remember that well, so I don’t miss him at all.”

On the other hand, although they expressed such anger, they did at times report some positive aspects of their fathers: the participant who described her father as a “villain” suddenly changed her words: “If it weren’t for drinking, he was [usually] a very quiet person (speaks in a serious tone). And the neighbors would be envious, too. They would say ‘Your father is so nice.’”Often, the participants were not coherent or focused in their reports during the interview; one mother initially reported: “I would go to my father. When I went he would hit me... I knew how to avoid the beatings. I know how to avoid them and how to run away from him.” Then, in response to the question of whether she had an experience of being threatened by her parents, she answered: “As for beatings, we children weren’t hit. My mom got hit by my father, but we weren’t hit,” contradicting her previous statement. These preoccupied mothers were preoccupied in their anger about their relationship with their parents who were still living. One mother reported: “I feel sad, I feel hurt, but now I’m the one who tries to understand. For Mom, I should. So I attend church service, and when I feel disturbed, I call

her. I cut the phone line two years ago. I changed my phone number. I changed it and didn't call for two years. And I would call Mom and say, 'Wait until I call you first, Mom, you can't call my home.'"

Overall, the participants who were classified as insecure-preoccupied still had resentment towards their past attachment figures. Thus, it was difficult for them to maintain objectivity about attachment relations. Their reports were disorganized, incoherent, and passive, and because they were excessively immersed in their early attachment-related experiences, their evaluations about their experiences showed a high degree of fluctuations. In other words, even though they reported positively about their attachment relations in the past, they expressed anger about their current relationships with their parents, tended to be dependent upon their parents, and were extremely focused on attempting to please their parents. Their overall statements were excessive and revealed grammatical mistakes.

As shown in Table 3, the three different attachment styles were compared in terms of the scale scores with the nonparametric statistics (Kruskal Wallis), and the results from the statistical analyses tend to support the overall descriptions of these three groups. Although the total size is relatively small (with the preoccupied type being extremely small), most of the scale scores across the three groups were significantly different.

Discussion

In this study, the AAI classification of first-generation Korean American mothers showed 36% of mothers as secure-autonomous, 52% as insecure-dismissing, and 12% as insecure-preoccupied. No one was categorized as insecure-unsolved/disorganized. This result seemed to be noticeably different from the previous studies that targeted middle-class participants in South Korea and other countries. Typically, the classification of AAIs with the middle-class adults in a low-risk group showed secure-autonomous type to be predominant, with over 68% of the total subjects (Benoir & Parker, 1994; Das Eiden, Tei, & Corns, 1995; Jin, 2006). Chang and Yang (1998) analyzed the distribution of 20 middle-class mothers' AAIs classifications and showed 60% as secure-autonomous, 20% insecure-dismissing, 5% insecure-preoccupied, and 15% insecure-unsolved/disorganized.

In fact, the results of the present study were more similar to those of Ward and Carlson (1995), who investigated teenage mothers. Ward and Carlson (1995) found that 32% of their subjects were rated as the secure-autonomous type. Also, the results were consistent to those in the study of Weinfield, Sroufe, and Egeland (2000) which targeted low-income families. The rates of the AAI classification to secure-autonomous, insecure-dismissing, and insecure-preoccupied were 32%, 63%, 9%, respectively. Weinfield et al. (2000) explained these patterns of distribution as being influenced by an unfavorable living environment such as inappropriate child-rearing practices, depression symptoms experienced by mothers, a lack of role-sharing by family members, life-stressors, etc. In the present study, the mothers classified as the dismissing type and the preoccupied type reported that they experienced financial difficulties and discord within the family, in addition to a lack of support and attention from their parents in the past. Furthermore, insecure mothers reported that their parents were committed care-givers, but they failed to report any related experiences that would support such claims, and thus appeared to have over-idealized the images of their parents during childhood. Moreover, two out of three mothers categorized as insecure-preoccupied (12%) appeared to have experienced unsuitable rearing due to financial poverty and their fathers' violence and alcoholism during their childhood. Although these participants reported that they were concerned for their own mothers and that they often act in a way that would please their mothers, they expressed anger towards their parents even now. Specifically, two mothers gave accounts of experiencing symptoms of depression and epilepsy, which are symptoms of

psychological disorders. These results seem to support that unjustified parenting behaviors such as physical child abuse have the most damaging influences (Bolgar & Patterson, 2001) and, at the same time, have consequences in the child showing symptoms of stress-related psychological disorders (Briere, 1992). As Waters et al., (2000) have stated, such unjust rearing experiences may lead the internal working model of insecurely attached participants formed during infancy to a more preoccupied manner that continues throughout their adulthood. They suggested that such negative life events would act to continuously maintain an insecure attachment representation, and transform a secure attachment representation into an insecure one.

However, there were mothers who were classified as secure-autonomous with their parents, and they also mentioned that the environment of their childhood was financially stricken. Nonetheless, these participants stated that they received supportive rearing and affection, stating that they haven't experienced any rejections and that their family members helped and depended on each other. From their childhood, it seems that their parents gave them warm support to teach them how to deal with impoverished environments. In other words, as Bolger, Patterson, Thompson, and Kupersmidt (1995) have suggested, the parents who overcame the stress of their poverty and were emotionally stable showed supportive parenting for protecting their children from dangers of a threatening environment. Thus, the inadequacy of their childhood in the secure-autonomous type would not have a significant impact on the quality of attachment formed in relationships with parents during infancy.

Therefore, it can be presumed that the mother-participants in this study were the ones who had chosen to immigrate to the U.S. to escape their poverty in South Korea during the 1970's and 80's and restart their lives. Despite the dream of revival, the challenging living environment for immigrants might have produced significant hardship, moderating their environment in the perception of attachment relationships with their own parents formed during infancy. In fact, the distribution for the AAI types of first-generation Korean American mothers was similar to those of studies targeted for high-risk groups: the distribution indicating a smaller number of the secure-autonomous type than the insecure type.

In summary, the distribution of the AAI types of first-generation Korean American mothers showed that the lower rate was the secure and the higher rate was the insecure. This pattern appears closer to the one shown in previous studies for low-income groups or psychological disorder groups than for those of the normal group. Thus, it can be concluded that individuals with insecure attachment representations about their parents may have more negative impact from severe environmental hardship in their internal model of attachment relationship. In other words, it strongly implies that the experience of immigration can psychologically affect Korean immigrant mothers in America.

However, it should be noted that the sample size is relatively small and the sample was selected from one city, resulting in some restrictions of generalization. For future studies involving attachment representations of immigrants, it is necessary to recruit more subjects residing in other states.

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Received November 30, 2010
Revision Received May 17, 2011
Accepted July 5, 2011