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**Empowerment/Disempowerment Issues in Immigrant Parents’
School Involvement Experiences in Their Children’s Schooling:
Korean Immigrant Mothers’ Perceptions**

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School Involvement Experiences in Their Children’s Schooling:
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by

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Dissertation

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Dedication

My family, who have prayed for me,

&

The Lord, who has guided my life toward Him

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There was a time that I believed doing a dissertation was my own share, irrelevant to others. However, I did not realize how many people have prayed and cared for me. Now, I am the happiest person in the world to know that I have those people who love and support me.

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**Empowerment/Disempowerment Issues in Immigrant Parents’
School Involvement Experiences in Their Children’s Schooling:
Korean Immigrant Mothers’ Perceptions**

Yi Jeong Kwon, Ph. D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

Supervisor: Stuart Reifel

Using Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba’s (1991) empowerment/disempowerment definition as a framework, this dissertation investigated how Korean immigrant mothers perceived and practiced parental involvement in their children’s schooling, and how an empowerment/disempowerment process occurred during their involvement. To inquire into the research questions, this study used the qualitative case study method, and five Korean immigrant mothers were the cases. The interview method was used to gather data, and an unstructured interview protocol, as well as a semi-structured interview protocol, was used for the interviews. Each mother was interviewed three times.

From this study, I found these things: For the concept of schooling, all the Korean mothers in this study agreed that schooling is all activities relevant to acquiring abilities related to having a better school life, and that the concept of parental involvement includes all the activities to support their children’s schooling, regardless of activity types. In a comparison of their beliefs and their practices for involvement, they show accord in terms of the comprehensive nature of parental

involvement. However, there were also discrepancies between their perceptions and practices of involvement.

To get an understanding of the discrepancy issue, their involvement experiences were explored, based on an empowerment/disempowerment framework. The Korean immigrant mothers showed distinctive features in empowerment and disempowerment while they were involved in their children's schooling. First, they felt contradictory feelings—guilt and pride-- toward their identity, and this influenced their empowerment and disempowerment. The second feature was the struggles that the Korean immigrant mothers reported: cultural differences, exclusion, and a lack of English skill for involvement. Last, the most salient feature to influence their empowerment/disempowerment was the standard they were using to evaluate their involvement.

These findings were discussed in terms of the features of empowerment/disempowerment and the factors that influenced their empowerment and disempowerment. The Korean mothers' standard of evaluation was discussed in depth, since it was determined to be the most basic issue to impact their empowerment/disempowerment experiences. Based on the findings, this dissertation concluded with presenting implications for teachers, educational administrators, and Korean immigrant mothers themselves, and with suggestions for future research.

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INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1: Introduction

THE NECESSITY OF THIS STUDY

Since many research studies have reported the effects of parental involvement on the schooling of immigrant children, the school involvement of immigrant parents has received attention from scholars who are interested in helping immigrant children's school achievement. According to these findings, many immigrant parents struggle with helping with their children's schooling due to various reasons--language differences, cultural differences, discrimination, etc.—and research studies have been conducted on various aspects to support those immigrant parents (Koh & Shin, 2006; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Turney & Kao, 2009; Yang & McMullen, 2003). However, research endeavors regarding immigrant parents' involvement in schooling have concentrated on immigrants of only a limited number of ethnic/language backgrounds such as Hispanic immigrant parents, rather than Asian immigrant parents (Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1996; Chavkin & Williams, 1989; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991; Sohn, S. & Wang, X. C., 2006).

After the passage of the Immigration Reform Act (1965), large-scale immigration from Asia resumed as well as from Latin America, and individuals of Asian origin have now reached 14.6 million strong (4.8% of the total population), and are the fastest-growing racial/ethnic group in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010). The explosion of the population can be explained by immigration (Chan & Lee, 2004). Among the Asian immigrants, individuals of Korean origin are the fifth-largest Asian group, with a population of 1.7 million people (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010), and 70-80 % of this population is foreign-born (U.S. Bureau of the

Census, 2002), like other Asian groups. This large immigrant proportion of the population of individuals of Korean origin suggests that many of the Korean immigrant families—not only children, but also parents-- are trying to adapt to the new environment in the United States. Also, due to their recent immigration, it can be assumed they are influenced by their Korean cultural heritage and use their culture to support their children's schooling. Considering cultural models as a major determinant of parental involvement and that families having different cultural models differ in their values and customs with respect to education (Suizzo & Soon, 2006), it is needed to conduct more studies relevant to the education issues of Korean immigrants.

In addition to the issue of the necessity of study based on specific cultural features, the research interests have been focused on the academic success of students of Korean origin, rather than uncovering their stories. Historically, individuals of Korean origin in the United States have frequently been labeled “hero groups” in the academic area, and this has led to the development of the well-fabricated image of Koreans as a “Model Minority.” This “Model Minority” image and the overstated academic achievements of Korean students may have contributed to their failing to draw researchers' interest to Korean immigrant parents' needs to support their children; it has seemed that researchers do not even perceive the need to support Korean children and their parents (Blair & Qian, 1998).

Recently, some research efforts focused on Korean immigrant mothers' school involvement have been made. According to the studies, Korean mothers volunteer less in their children's school such as being room mothers or members of the PTA board, or helping with fundraising events, and they confront difficulties during their

participation in their children's school, behind the well-known but superficial image of their children's brilliant academic successes. Those studies suggested that Korean immigrant mothers also need support in order to help their children to adjust well to their school (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Yang & McMullen, 2003).

According to Yang and McMullen (2003), from their study about Korean immigrant mothers' interactions with their children's school, Korean immigrant mother showed less active participation and experienced difficulties in communicating with their children's teacher because of their language and cultural differences. Sohn and Wang (2006), in their research about the perceptions of school involvement of Korean mothers, also reported that Korean mothers struggled when they interacted with their children's school due to the language and cultural differences, the feelings of discrimination, and the limited school support.

These studies have contributed to arousing researchers' awareness of Korean immigrant parents' participation and their difficulties; however, these studies had limitations in that they simply enumerated the difficulties of Korean immigrant mothers when they participated in their children's schooling. These studies used narrowed interview questions to reveal the reasons for their difficulties in participation, without addressing a more in-depth understanding of Korean immigrant mothers' perceptions, feelings, or their understanding about their school involvement, so there may have been the mistaken belief that the passive participation of Korean immigrant mothers has been their own fault.

Moreover, the concept of parental involvement used in these research studies has been the subject of controversy. These research studies have been conducted based on a White middle-class cultural definition of parental involvement, which

confines the boundaries of parents' involvement within a geographical site-- inside the school. These studies simply counted the frequency of the parents' presence on the school site, rather than examining the entire range of their participatory actions within the school, the home, and the community (Eccles & Harold, 1996). Using this narrowed definition of parental involvement may have resulted in considering immigrant parents' different ways of being involved in their child's school as showing those ways to be inferior to those of the White middle-class (Hidalgo, Siu, & Epstein, 2004; Williams & Chavkin, 1985).

These limitations--a lack of in-depth understanding and a reliance on White middle-class definitions of school involvement--have caused a failure to understand Korean immigrant mothers' involvement in schooling from their perspective. Even though it has been reported that Korean immigrant mothers show a different participation pattern from their White middle-class counterparts, we still do not know why Korean immigrant mothers decide to participate according to such a pattern and what factors influence that decision.

To inquire into how Korean immigrant parents actually do participate in their children's schooling and what influences their participation decisions, the research should be well designed to draw out the realities of their lives through their narration. According to Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005), when researchers study marginalized people, the research needs to be designed to give a voice to those people, and the researcher needs to be ready to hear narration from the people themselves.

By giving Korean immigrant mothers' voices a reach outside the Korean community, this study will help many educators and researchers understand Korean

immigrant mothers' perceptions and experiences of involvement in their children's schooling.

RESEARCH PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to examine Korean immigrant mothers' perceptions about their involvement in their children's schooling and explore what they experience during their involvement. The term "Korean immigrant mothers" in this study was defined as mothers who were born in Korea and had immigrated to the United States.

My first assumption about parental involvement in schooling was derived from literature reviews and my pilot study. Korean immigrant mothers consider education to be a crucial key to elevate their children in the United States and are eager to support their children to succeed in school (Sohn & Wang, 2006). They get involved in their children's schooling through activities based in the home, the school, and the community. However, their endeavors to get involved in their children's schooling have not been as successful as it might seem, given their great enthusiasm. Korean immigrant mothers have reported their struggles while they have tried to get involved in the schooling of their children (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Yang & McMullen, 2003).

The struggles Korean immigrant mothers experienced were also found in my pilot study. As I investigated their struggles, I found that some Korean immigrant mothers who were active school volunteers became less positive about their volunteering the more they had experiences in contact with their children's school. This finding is contradictory to the assertion of self-efficacy theory: The feeling of

self-efficiency tends to increase as people accumulate their experiences and develop feelings of mastery about a job (Costigan & Koryzma, 2010).

So, I assumed there might be a disempowerment process at work with the Korean immigrant mothers during their interactions with the school and perhaps with other agencies in the home or the community. However, I could not exclude the possibility of empowerment during the parents' interactions with the school, so I examined the empowerment process, as well as the disempowerment process.

The second assumption for this study was that there is an empowerment/disempowerment process while Korean immigrant mothers participate in their children's schooling, and it influences the mothers' decisions about future involvement.

To examine the empowerment/disempowerment process, I adopted Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba's (1991) theory of the empowerment/disempowerment process in the school-family relationship. In their research, Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) discussed the process of empowerment for Mexican American families, and these researchers believed that, through the acquisition of English literacy, a family can have power. According to them, empowerment means the process of acquiring power to act or to affect something by participating in a given activity, and disempowerment is the reverse: the situation of not having power or of having lost power. Even though I did not focus on English literacy, her research gave me insights about the family-school relationship, which can influence the disempowerment/empowerment of Korean immigrant parents.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Throughout this study, I explored, through an empowerment/disempowerment lens, how Korean immigrant mothers became involved in their children's schooling, and I examined what processes of empowerment/disempowerment influenced their school involvement. The specific research questions that guided this study were the following: 1) What do Korean mothers perceive parental involvement in their children's schooling to consist of?, 2) What empowerment/ disempowerment process occurs during the Korean immigrant mothers' involvement in their children's schooling?

By addressing the research question within an empowerment/disempowerment framework, this study contributes to our knowledge of Korean immigrant mothers' perceptions and practices in relation to their involvement in their children's schooling and of the inner processes which ultimately lead them to their practices.

THIS STUDY

This dissertation consists of 5 chapters and 3 appendixes. The chapters contain the following contents.

In Chapter 1, I have introduced the explanation of why the study about Korean immigrant mothers' involvement in schooling was necessary, and the research questions. Chapter 2 provides literature reviews about each area of parental involvement, empowerment, and Korean immigrant mothers. Chapter 3 entails a methodological illustration regarding how I proceeded with this study. Also, I introduce my paradigmatic grounds and the theoretical framework that I adopted for analysis. Chapter 4 presents findings from this study. It examines how the Korean immigrant mothers perceived parental involvement in their children's schooling. Also,

how they became involved in their children's schooling was compared with their perceptions of such involvement, to see whether their perceptions and practices were in accord. While they narrated their involvement experiences, what they said about their empowerment/disempowerment experiences was revealed. Chapter 5 addresses the significance of the findings from this study. First, I discuss how the Korean immigrant mothers perceived parental involvement and how their practices were different from their perceptions. Second, I discuss the distinctive features of the empowerment/disempowerment processes that the Korean immigrant mothers experienced during their involvement. Last, the factors influencing the Korean mothers' empowerment/disempowerment processes are discussed. I also provide implications for teachers, educational administrators, and Korean immigrant mothers themselves, and suggestions for future research.

As a Korean immigrant researcher in the United States and mother of children who were born in the United States, I have been interested in Korean mothers' experiences in their children's school--how they are involved in their children's schooling. Also, the most intriguing aspect for me was what empowerment/disempowerment processes influenced their decisions about school involvement. As many ethnic researchers (Valenzuela, 1999; Villenas, 2000; Zou, 2002) have said before, my subjectivity as a Korean mother and researcher contributed to my being alert to the meaningful things in ordinary Korean life and to my enabling the Korean perspective to rise to the surface, rather than evaluating the Korean immigrant mothers' school involvement with a Westernized eye.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 2: Review of Relevant Literature

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement has been one of the major topics that have gotten attention in the education field by people who are interested in students' optimal school achievement. However, it has not been long since researchers started their studies about the issue, although major studies have indicated that parents are significant factors in children's education.

Since the 1960s, many research efforts have been made to find the beneficial influences of parental involvement on their children's school achievement. Researchers (Dornbusch & Wood, 1989; Driessen & Smit, 2007; Epstein, 1991; Kim, 2002) confirm that, regardless of the parents' backgrounds, when parents are actively involved in their children's schooling, the children show positive achievement in their school. Dornbusch and Wood (1989), in their review of family processes and educational performance, found that there is a strong relationship between parental participation in school functions and children's school achievement. Drissen and Smit (2007), in their research to examine the effects of parental involvement on their children's school performance, found positive effects of parental involvement on their children's language and mathematical skills, while there was no effect on non-cognitive skills. Kim (2002) also reported that parental involvement has a positive relationship with their children's academic achievement. Involving parents in school programs creates a supportive environment for students, who feel that their parents are contributing to their education. When parents are involved in their children's

schooling, the children show higher test scores, better attendance, and consistency in completing homework (Epstein, 1991).

In contrast, a few studies showed unrelated or even inverse relationships between parental involvement and student academic performance (Domina, 2005; Meland, 1977; Reynolds, 1992). Meland (1977), in her study about parental involvement evaluation in the Title I program, reported that there is no relation between parental involvement and student achievement. This finding is also supported by Reynolds' (1992) study. Reynolds investigated the correspondences in the ratings of parental involvement among poor minority children, their parents, and their teachers, and compared the ratings with the children's reading and math scores. According to Reynolds, the students' rating of parental involvement showed an inverse relationship with their school performance; lower-achieving students reported greater parental contact with their schools. Reynolds assumed that this result is because the students perceived visiting school with problem behaviors. Domina (2005) also raised the effectiveness of parental involvement in his study using the data from the children of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (1979), and examined parents' involvement and their children's school achievement. In his study, he reported parental involvement does not independently improve children's learning, even though some involvement activities have prevention effects for behavioral problems.

However, even though some researchers have indicated their opposition, the majority of the research findings have been united in the prevalent belief in positive effects of parental involvement.

Another major strand of the research on parental involvement is a comparative study to reveal the factors that affect parental involvement (Stevenson & Baker, 1987). The children's age has a strong relationship with parental participation in the school, and parents who have younger children tend to get involved in their children's school more than parents who have relatively older children—middle school or high school (Crosnoe, 2001; Reynolds, Weissberg, & Kasprow, 1992). Also, parental involvement is related to children's gender. Girls' parents are more involved in school than boys' parents are (Carter & Wojkiewicz, 2000). Time availability has another crucial effect on parental involvement: Mothers who have jobs tend to participate less in their children's school, compared with mothers who stay at home (Muller, 1995).

Researchers (Hidalgo, Siu, & Epstein, 2004; Lareau, 1989; Scott-Jones, 1988) show that parents' SES is strongly related to their decision to get involved in their children's school. According to Scott-Jones (1988), the parents of young children and mothers with high educational levels are more likely to participate in their children's school than are their counterparts. Parents who do not have a great deal of formal education may feel powerless in their interactions with the school, and this influences their decisions on school participation. Economic status also has an effect on parental participation. In comparison with their lower-class counterparts, middle-class parents show more participation actions (Lareau, 1989), and low-income parents show lower levels of participation, compared to their middle-class counterparts, because of difficulties (Hidalgo, Siu, & Epstein, 2004).

Researchers (Chavkin & Williams, 1993; Hidalgo, Siu, & Epstein, 2004; Ritter, Mon-Reynaud, & Dornbusch 1993) have tried to compare parental involvement according to the parents' ethnic backgrounds. Large numbers of research

studies have reported that minority parents show relatively less participation in their children's schooling, in contrast to their White counterparts. This is related to their cultural beliefs such as "deference toward the school" (Ritter et al., 1993, p.115) and about teaching as being the teacher's domain.

According to Lareau (1989), many parents of color have relatively little information in their own language about school-related activities, so their children experience few events and activities, relative to their White counterparts. These experiences provide a format similar to that of other school activities, so, if children have those experiences before they begin school, then they can be more ready for school and can adapt more easily to the other school activities. Delgado-Gaitan (1992) also emphasizes the role of family social resources, and he points out that those resources are crucial to the ability of immigrant children to access the educational system.

These research efforts have been conducted based on the assumption that considers White-middle-class parental involvement as the appropriate norm, and they tend to conceive of minority parents' involvement as an indicator of parental interest in their children's education. Minority parents' relative inactive school involvement is understood as their disinterest in their children's schooling. However, those efforts which impose the perspective of White-middle-class parents on other ethnic/SES-background parents have been criticized, and there have been awakening voices saying that it is needed to examine minority parents' involvement in their children's schooling, based on each parents' group identity, rather than applying one standard—White-middle-class culture—to all of them (Hidalgo, Siu, & Epstein, 2004; Williams & Chavkin, 1985).

Based on this criticism, Williams and Chavkin (1985), in their study about the attitudes of minority parents toward involvement, clearly debunked the myth of minority parental involvement. According to them, different from people's belief, minority parents are concerned about their children's education, regardless of their ethnicity or minority status, and, moreover, they want to get actively involved in their children's school.

Another good example to support Williams and Chavkin's (1985) finding is the participation pattern of Asian immigrants. Asian immigrant parents show different patterns of school involvement, despite their deep concerns about their children's schooling. Whereas Asian immigrant parents show strong interest in their children's education, their interactions with teachers or their school participation may take forms differing from those that the schools in the United States expect. Chinese immigrant parents are competent at getting their children ready for school and at supporting their children's academic needs, while their presence in school remains minimal (Hidalgo, Siu, & Epstein, 2004).

In reality, immigrant parents' eagerness to participate in their children's schooling has not always resulted in active school involvement. As many research studies (Carreon, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Turney & Kao, 2009; Nord & Griffin, 1999) have competently reported on minority parents' relatively inactive involvement in relation to their White-middle-class counterparts, research trends have moved on the topic to reveal the impediments to minority parents' involvement in their children's schooling.

According to the studies (Chavkin & Williams, 1989; Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Lee, 1995; Scott-Jones, 1988), miscommunication between teacher and parent, work,

poor health, low self-efficacy, limited English skill, limited cultural knowledge, and illegal immigrant status block the parents from participating in their children's school.

Many immigrant parents do not know how to participate (Carreon, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Lee, 1995); they have different expectations for school (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Ritter et al., 1993); they even feel they are unwelcome by the school when they participate in their children's school (Scott-Jones, 1988). Latino immigrant parents are less involved with their children's school than majority-group parents, despite their eagerness to participate. Delgado-Gaitan (1991) finds the reason in the different cultural expectations of Latino immigrant parents: that parents need to show respect to the school, so, if parents get too involved, then that may be understood as disrespect.

Chavkin and Williams (1989) revealed from their research on Latino immigrant parents that the obstacles for Latino immigrant parents to participate in their children's school are limited English proficiency, employment demands, limited understanding of local educational systems, mistrust and misunderstanding between parents and educators, and fear of the discovery of undocumented immigrant status. In their study to examine the barriers to home-school collaboration for low-income Black parents and for teachers, Leitch and Tangri (1988) reported that the teachers perceived parents and their attitudes toward the school as the biggest barrier; teachers also pointed out the school and the larger system as major barriers, while the parents saw themselves as a major barrier. It is interesting that there is a common belief among teachers and parents--even among minority parents themselves--that low-income minority parents feel disinterested in their children's education (Leitch & Tangri, 1988; Williams & Chavkin, 1985).

These research findings are subject to criticism again because they regard minority parents as deficit beings and they attribute the difficulties with parental involvement to the minority parents themselves (Chavkin & Williams, 1989; Olivos, 2006).

As it has been a prevailing finding that parental involvement is affected not only by the parents themselves but also by the school environment, researchers have tried to find what factors of the school influence parental involvement. Bauch (1988), in her study examining what school factors influence parent participation, reported that the school plays a strong role in parental involvement. However, she also asserted that the combination of parent and school factors seems to influence parental involvement rather than just one school factor.

Research (Lareau, 1989; Lareau & Horvat, 1999) shows that parental involvement can be perceived differently in terms of parents' economic level. When White-middle-class parents participate in their children's schooling, their involvement has been considered to be a resource by the school personnel (Lareau, 1989). While middle-class parents' participation has been regarded as a contribution, low-SES immigrant parents have been perceived as beings who need to be educated. From this deficit perspective, lower-class immigrant parents' participation has been connected to the school-community collaboration programs and parent education programs, and, in these programs, parents have performed a passive role. Low-SES minority parents' participation has been seen as being manipulated into the form that the school sanctions, not as a valuable experience to forge parental capital such as with White middle-class parents' involvement (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

Different perspectives toward parental involvement depend on their SES, which influences the various terms associated with parental involvement. The term “parental involvement” has been used as mingled with “parent participation,” “parent engagement,” “volunteering,” “parental support,” “school-parents collaboration,” and even “parent education” in the research field.

The definitions of parental involvement, as well as its terms, are various. Sometimes the definition refers to the kinds of activities in which parents participate (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997), the kinds of places where parental involvement occurs (Ascher, 1987), or the level of power that parents have when they involve themselves (Handler, 1971).

The activities of parental involvement can be various in terms of their degree of participation. Parents can get involved in their children’s school as one-time volunteers for school events, volunteers on a regular basis, or as PTA members (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Parental involvement can be defined based on the range of the space: school, home, or community, and the research trend on parental involvement has changed its definition. Early researchers who studied parental involvement confined its range to within the school, so they had focused on parental actions such as volunteering in or attending school activities and conferences. However, the term “parental involvement” in the research area is not defined any more as an involvement only in the children’s school, such as volunteering, attending parent-teacher conferences, and other activities which are carried out at the school. Rather it is conceptualized broadly as “school and family partnerships” (Epstein, 1982), to include all parental supports for their children’s schooling without the special limitation of being only within the

school. According to Ascher (1988), parental involvement can be defined as a range of activities--from promoting the value of education in the home to the actual role of team decision-maker in policy, curriculum, and instructional issues.

Recently, the research studies regarding “home-based parental involvement” (Hill & Tyson, 2009; Suizzo & Soon, 2006) have flourished, based on the arousal of the importance of the home environment for children’s schooling. The researchers stressed parental involvement that occurred in the home should be counted in the category of parental involvement.

Also, researchers assert that parental behaviors are determined by not only their SES but also by cultural models that they share for education. Based upon their belief regarding cultural models as a major determinant of parental involvement, they have conducted studies about how immigrant families having different cultural models differ in their values and customs about education (Suizzo & Soon, 2006).

This movement has evolved into the research efforts to reveal how parents teach their children to internalize their cultural models (Grolnick, & Slowiaczek, 1994). In accordance with this effort, the term “academic socialization” was raised by researchers who want to reorient the direction of research in parental involvement toward the aspect of child socialization (Hill, 2001). Based on the assumption that parents’ cultural beliefs about education influence their parental behavior to support their children, it was found that those beliefs also influence their children’s school-related development, attitudes, and behaviors (Taylor, Clayton & Rowley, 2004).

Researchers from the critical perspective agreed with the influence of the cultural beliefs of the parents on their children’s academic attitudes. However, they take notice of the aspect of home culture as a strategy to use for confronting struggles

that they encounter (Bernal, 2001). They consider the pedagogy of the home, in which cultural knowledge acquired from home works as an asset for children in their schooling. This concept can be connected to the “fund of knowledge,” in terms of their agreement of cultural knowledge as strategies that are vital for immigrant families’ survival in the United States (Bernal, 2001). From this perspective, immigrant parents get involved their children’s schooling outside of the school setting, by teaching their cultural strategies.

In sum, parental involvement is a research topic that needs to be more discussed. However, although many research studies have competently reported the importance of parental involvement in their children’s schooling, most research efforts regarding immigrant parents have been rushed into comparative research to reveal their differences from parents of the dominant culture, rather than understanding the immigrant parents’ perceptions, feelings and experiences.

Moreover, most research about immigrants in the United States has been focused on the Latino population. The numbers of the Latino population, as well as the low-SES background of the majority of the population, influences the concentration of the research efforts. The perspective on Latino parents as beings who need to be educated has led researchers to focus on a certain ethnic population, rather than on a broad spectrum of immigrant groups.

However, considering that parental behaviors are influenced by their cultural beliefs about education (Taylor, Clayton & Rowley, 2004) and admitting immigrant parents’ cultural knowledge as useful strategies to support their children’s schooling (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990), it is needed to study different ethnic groups and their perceptions about their children’s schooling.

EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is one of the most frequently used terms in the lexicons of the education field, and great quantities of literature have been written for the benefit of various populations—parents (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Gordon, 1996; Griffith, 1996; Simpson & Cieslik, 2002), as well as students (Gay & Hanley, 1999; Reyes, 2009), in/pre-service teachers (Yoo, 2001), and communities (Freire, 1983). The term has been used in research, not only relevant to the beneficiary, but also in terms of a wide range of types of power within various areas of contribution.

Different from the extrapolation that empowerment can be shown only in research based on the critical perspective or on power-related fields, the term has been used without relevance to power in various areas. Empowerment has often been substituted with the synonym of “improvement in ability” in many research studies. Many research studies in the education field which examine children’s subject matter achievement have used the term of empowerment to refer only to acquiring certain skills such as the cognitive and social skills (McLaren, 1988). This synonymous usage of empowerment as acquiring certain skills by students appears in Gay and Hanley’s (1999) research. In their research, Gay and Hanley taught drama to students and believed that the learning experiences of drama can empower students in social studies and multicultural education.

This concept of empowerment can be seen in research studies about parents. In his research study to reveal the relationships between parental involvement, empowerment, school traits, and students’ academic achievement, Griffith (1996) uses empowerment as meaning parental skills to get involved in school activities. Gordon (1996) conducts her participatory research about Southeast Asian refugee

parents' relationships with their children throughout the acculturation process. In the study, she uses empowerment as various involvement strategies that parents can adopt. This idea comes from the point of view considering society to be fair and that the success of an individual can be achieved through their strengthened abilities.

However, the empowerment issue has more frequently been addressed by scholars who perceive society as unfair and unjust. These scholars view empowerment in the sociological tradition and, prior to defining the term *empowerment*, they used the word *power*.

In the sociological tradition, power is characterized by two opposite perspectives--the rationalist and the utopian. The rationalist believes that power necessarily occupies a predominant place in a social system, and, within this view, power can be understood as control over other people. In contrast, the utopian perspective sees power as the ability to act (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991).

Many of the literatures on empowerment have been created based on the utopian view of power as "the ability to act." Consequently, disempowerment is defined in the opposite way-- relative to empowerment.

According to Ashcroft (1987), power is "a capability to act" (p.143). People exercise power when they desire a certain state of affairs and act to bring it about. Power requires desire, interest, or passion; a vision of a state of affairs which is desirable or attractive and which differs from the current state of affairs; and the ability to act in a way that is sufficiently potent and informed to achieve what one desires.

Reyes (2009) addresses empowerment in terms of getting the ability to study, in his research of the relationships of marginalized students and their teachers.

Students can get the ability to study--not only academic achievement--when they have meaningful relationships with their teachers.

In his study of Southeast Asian refugee parents, Gordon (1996) understands empowerment as the ability and authority of parents to discipline their children. Due to their cultural and language differences in the United States, Southeast Asian refugee parents have no points of reference to guide their children, and this situation results in the loss of their authority with their children.

Researchers in other fields, such as Seligman (1975), when they discuss the empowerment issue, have long emphasized the importance of people's ability to feel that they are in control of a situation.

Another way of thinking about empowerment is to focus on the process of change, rather than ability itself. This perspective considers empowerment a continuing process rather than a completion—the process of acquiring ability. In social studies and multicultural education, empowerment is typically associated with developing skills to overcome social injustices and inequalities. As Sapon-Shevin and Schniedewind (1991) suggest, the “process of empowerment involves critical reflection on the nature of oppression; a vision of alternative models of interaction, decision making and power; and the skills necessary to implement this vision” (178).

Kabeer (1999) claims that empowerment refers to the processes by which people who have been disempowered acquire an ability. Accordingly, the change results in an empowerment process. Based on her ideas about empowerment, she makes the distinction between *powerful* and *empowered*. Even though an individual exercises their ability to act or ability to make a choice, the person is not empowered in Kabeer's sense, but is a powerful person because there is no change process from

disempowered to empowered: In their prestigious position, such a person was never disempowered.

Delgado-Gaitan (1991) also stands for the continuing process and insists that empowerment is the process of gaining access to power, and disempowerment is the process of losing access to power. There is a very close relationship between the processes of empowerment and disempowerment. Both happen in a stratified society with differential permission to access power.

While the efforts to create a definition of empowerment are still proceeding, researchers have paid attention to the ways to empower people. Sleeter, in “Empowerment through Multicultural Education” (1991), introduces comprehensive perspectives on empowerment and argues that students can be empowered by multicultural education. According to her, in order to view multicultural education as an empowerment strategy, one must first take seriously the notion that education can serve as an effective vehicle for social change and emancipation (Sleeter, 1991).

Gay and Hanley (1999) also negate empowerment as an inherent capability acquired automatically, and they insist empowerment can be achieved through learning and experience. They believe there is no absolute transcendental empowerment that can apply to every situation, so people need to learn empowerment just as they learn math or science.

Also, some scholars who base themselves on action research believe empowerment can be possible through teaching an oppressed group, so that the oppressed group can have a tool to emancipate themselves. Delgado-Gaitan (1990) discussed the process of empowerment for Mexican American families in her research, and she believed that, through the acquisition of English literacy, a family can have

power. According to her, empowerment means the process of acquiring power to act or to affect something by participating in a given activity, and disempowerment is the reverse: the situation of not having power or of having lost power.

Paulo Freire, in his best-known work, “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” (1983), describes dehumanization as a result of oppression or exploitation: People fail to become fully human. People in a dehumanized state can liberate themselves when they realize their oppression; he calls this process “conscientization” (p.19). Freire considered peasants on plantations the oppressed group, and, to help them to develop “conscientization,” he used teaching literacy to uneducated peasants as a strategy to empower oppressed people. He argues in favor of educating the oppressed group through a problem-posing approach, and that a dialogic approach can help the people to become aware of their oppressed situation and transform their reality into a sound hope for freedom.

Meanwhile, Ruiz (1991) raised his concerns about the subject of empowerment; he threw out an implicit question: Who is the main agent of empowerment—the self or other than the self? Different from prior researchers (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Freire, 1983) who believe other people than the self can help the oppressed person emancipate him/herself, Ruiz (1991) argues that empowerment is not given by others but that the oppressed can empower themselves.

This passive usage of empowerment, which is used as a benevolent action by others for oppressed people on their behalf, is also criticized by Ruiz (1991). He argues teachers do not empower students but create the conditions for promoting empowerment so that the oppressed people can empower themselves.

As to the attribution of empowerment, some scholars (Park, 2008) view it as not mutually exclusive, but integrated into the oppressed group's multi-faceted life. In her study, Park (2008) used the term *empowerment* to "emphasize the coexistence of conflicting forces which empower them in certain ways but exacerbate their oppression in other ways" (p. 232). Wray (2004) advocates multitudinous power relations while she criticizes the Westernized dichotomous concept of "power with independence and powerlessness with dependence" (p.23). She asserts that empowerment and disempowerment can occur at the same time.

Even though the history of the research efforts to find a correlation between parental involvement and empowerment is not very long, Mindick (1988) points out that the concept of empowering parents has been advocated for many years in early intervention programs as a key factor influencing students' achievement. According to Cochran and Dean (1991), empowerment for parents happens when power which was originally in a balanced state, shifts from being in the hands of professionals to resting in the hands of the parents. Researchers in the education field have realized parents are one of the most important factors and have examined them from the various points of empowerment. Griffith (1996) reports parental involvement and empowerment are strong predictors to explain students' academic achievement.

Parental self-efficacy is one of the most frequently mentioned terms in association with parental empowerment. Jones and Printz (2005) define parenting efficacy, based on the self-efficacy theory, as parents' self-evaluate their ability to influence their children and the environment in ways that will encourage their children's development (Costigan & Koryzman, 2010). Self-efficacy theory assures that getting mastery experience is the most effective way of building strong self-

efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Having successful experiences helps people have confidence in their ability, while challenging experiences weaken their feeling of efficacy. Researchers have reported that parents' self-efficacy is a more decisive factor in parents' empowerment than adopting other empowerment strategies (Costigan & Koryzma, 2010).

Another concept referred to in connection with parent empowerment in research studies is acculturation theory. Costigan and Koryzma (2010), in their study on Chinese immigrant mothers' acculturation and adjustment, define acculturation as "the change that takes place when two cultures come into continuous first-hand contact" (p.1). Acculturation is a crucial factor influencing immigrant parents' adjustment. Costigan and Koryzma (2010) consider parent self-efficacy belief as a key mediator in the association between immigrant Chinese parents' acculturation and adjustment. They conclude that both the parent groups who show higher orientation toward Canadian culture and those who show higher orientation toward the ethnic Chinese culture have strong parental self-efficacy. Both groups can get mastery experiences in their parenting through greater English proficiency and the parents' familiarity and comfort with Canadian culture--for the former group--and through support from their ethnic community for their struggles in educating their children in a new cultural context--for the latter group.

The Concept of Empowerment Adopted in This Study

In this study, my assumption is that, when parents support their children's schooling, they experience power relations and power plays a key role during those interactions. When parents interact with their environment, they negotiate the power relations with each institution and become empowered or disempowered.

For the conceptual framework of this study, I borrowed Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba's (1991) definition of empowerment, which is based on the utopian perspective--"the possession of power to act or to affect something by participating in a given activity" (p.138).

The decision to adopt this framework is derived from the pilot study with other Korean immigrant mothers. From the pilot study, I found Korean immigrant mothers were influenced by their prior experiences with school participation. Based on their interactions while they participated in their children's schooling, they decided on their future participation—such as frequency, types, or the activeness of the participation.

Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba's definition of empowerment--"possession of power to act"--is useful to explain how the Korean immigrant mothers decided to act or not to act in the future, based on their experiences. For example, if one mother decided not to participate in the future because of her past experience, then I interpreted it as a disempowering experience, and vice versa. Also, not only because of negative feelings, but also because of a lack of experience, the Korean mothers may have felt no power or less power to act for the activity, and I interpreted the reaction as disempowering, and vice versa.

Their definition of empowerment--"to affect something by participating in a given activity"--can help to understand the Korean immigrant mothers' self-efficacy feelings. In reality, in my pilot study, the feeling of self-efficacy was the most powerful variable to explain how the Korean immigrant mothers chose and decided on their volunteering. If a mother felt self-efficacy for a certain activity; then she

tended to do the activity again in the future, while she showed less participation in the contrary situation.

However, the most persuasive reason why I adopted Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba's (1991) definition of empowerment for my study is because their definition is comprehensive for understanding the empowerment/disempowerment of these Korean immigrant mothers. From the last pilot study, I realized Korean immigrant mothers' empowerment/disempowerment is not simply related to one crucial factor, such as self-efficacy; rather, it is the result of the interaction of various interwoven elements. According to Moraga (1983) in her writing about research on marginalized people, any meaningful examination and solution cannot be found "without an emotional, heartfelt grappling with the source" (p.53) from the oppressed themselves. Just as in her assertion, the Korean mothers' experiences should be examined by listening to their stories, how they felt about their experiences, and how they felt about their possession of the power to act, rather than by revealing whether a certain factor influenced the mothers or not. During the study, I examined, through this lens, the interactions of Korean immigrant mothers, which took place while they supported their children's schooling, and how these Korean immigrant mothers gained or lost their ability to participate in or support their children's schooling. In this study, "schooling" is not just being able to do certain things such as academic achievement, but also knowing how to operate appropriately within a particular context.

KOREAN IMMIGRANT PARENTS

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2004), the population of individuals of Asian origin increased by 3.4% between 2003 and 2004, the highest rate of any race group during that time period. With a population of 1.07 million people, the individuals of Korean origin are the fifth-largest Asian group, and the individuals of Korean origin population grew 135 % from 1980 to 1990, and another 35% from 1990 to 2000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000). The explosion of this population is due to immigration (Chan & Lee, 2004).

Despite their fast-growing population, Korean immigrants have not been distinguished separately in the efforts of educational research studies for a while after their first immigration began, and they were simply regarded as “Asians.”

However, the category “Asian” is too broad to represent Koreans, because diverse ethnic groups belong to the one category of the “Asian.” According to the 2002 Census (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002), there are Asian immigrants coming from 25 different Asian countries in the United States. Despite the great differences among various ethnic groups, even in research literature, most of the data about Korean immigrants are aggregated into the one single category of “Asians.”

Korean immigrants have unique characteristics that distinguish them from other immigrant groups. Among the Korean immigrants, 70-80 % of them in the United States (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2002) are foreign-born immigrants, and they use the Korean language in their homes. The high education level, when compared to the levels of other immigrants, is another feature of Korean immigrants, as well as their foreign-born percentages. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census

(2002), individuals of Korean origin are most likely to graduate from high school and college in America.

Also, Korean immigrant parents are portrayed by the media as being part of the “Model Minority” (Lee, 1996; Winnick, 1990) groups, along with other Asian groups, due to their strong interest in their children’s academic achievement, and their children’s school success, especially in math (Schneider & Lee, 1990). This has contributed to researchers assuming that the Korean immigrant population is well assimilated into the U.S. culture. The nickname of “Model Minority” has conspired with the inclusion into one Asian category of both U.S.-born and foreign-born people of Korean descent to produce a scarcity of research studies relevant to the Korean immigrant population.

However, recently some Korean researchers (Kim, 2002; Kim, 2004; Shin, 2000) have tried to call researchers’ attention to the Korean immigrant population and to uncover Korean immigrants’ experiences in the school systems of the United States, beyond their superficial academic success.

One of the main strands of research efforts about the Korean immigrant has been focused on the parents’ participation (Kim, 2002; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Yang & McMullen, 2003). This is not unexpected, when we consider the amount of research--not only about Koreans--which has reported that parents are an important factor in their children’s school life, and that parents’ participation is related positively to their children’s school achievement.

Research studies relevant to Korean immigrant parents have shown that Korean parents have passive (Lee, 2005; Sohn & Wang, 2006) and even negative attitudes (Hall, 2005) toward parent volunteering in school.

According to Sohn and Wang (2006), Korean parents show passive attitudes toward school involvement, even though they have positive perceptions of school. They are reluctant to visit school, except when their children have problems in school. The researchers found the parents' passive involvement to be caused by linguistic and cultural barriers, feelings of discrimination, and limited school supports.

In a comparison study (Hall, 2005) conducted in China about Korean, American, and Chinese parents' attitudes toward parents' involvement, Korean immigrant mothers had significantly different participation patterns and perceptions from American parents and Chinese parents. The Korean parents felt their communication with the school was not effective, and they showed negative attitudes regarding parental involvement in school.

To reveal the reasons for the inactive participation of Korean immigrant parents, research studies have focused on the difficulties during Korean parent interactions with their children's school. The most salient problem of Korean immigrant parents when they participate in their children's schools is the different language from that of Korea.

According to Yang and McMullen (2003), Korean immigrant parents struggle with communication problems with the teachers, because of their lack of English skills and their cultural differences from their children's teachers. This is supported by Sohn and Wang's (2006) study, in which they pointed out that limited English proficiency is the most significant barrier for Korean mothers to build effective partnerships with teachers. Their language barrier definitely hinders creating close relationships with English-monolingual teachers or other personnel who have educational information, such as American parents or school advisors, and this

problem is made disastrous by the lack of Korean-speaking bilingual staff. Then, this results in a lack of information about the school system and the available educational resources (Sohn & Wang, 2006).

The Korean immigrant parents' cultural differences and limited information about the school culture also make it hard for them to participate in their children's school activities, and this also affects their children negatively (Koh & Shin, 2006; Sohn & Wang, 2006). Korean immigrant parents often struggle with understanding the American educational system due to their lack of prior experience in the United States. According to Koh and Shin (2006), even parents who have advanced degrees in the United States have struggles with understanding earlier school concepts: preschool programs or the K-12 educational systems. Educational jargon such as the names of supplies, academic vocabularies, and holiday-related words also influence negatively the Korean immigrant parents' school involvement (Koh, Shin, Chung, & Reeves, 2009).

The Korean immigrant mothers' deference to school authority, based on their Confucianism, has been indicated as a crucial factor to influence their passive school volunteering. The researchers reported Korean immigrant mothers are reluctant to voice their opinions and to participate in policy decision-making activities like PTA, because they feel the need to show their respect for the teachers and the school (Oh, S. K., 2004; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Yang & McMullen, 2003).

However, this is contradictory to the other finding that Korean immigrant mothers are clearly aware that American school culture is different from their culture. The contradiction was found even in the same research study. Sohn and Wang (2006) reported Korean immigrant mothers understand their need for school involvement,

especially volunteering, while, at the same time, the researchers pointed out Korean immigrant mothers' cultural deference as one of the major causes for their reluctance to visit the school.

The Korean mothers--different from another study (Lee, 1996) that stated that they do not know how to get involved in the school system--believe they should follow the American cultural standard for school involvement, and they also understand how they can get involved in their children's schooling (Sohn & Wang, 2006).

Another reason referred to as one of the most frequent reasons to hesitate to participate in the child's school is the discrimination or unwelcoming atmosphere of school personnel, including teachers. Discrimination issues tend to be ignored in the literature on the education of individuals of Asian origin. However, in Sohn and Wang's (2006) study, all the Korean parents reported that they had experienced racial discrimination, although they were cautious about mentioning it. Korean parents also experience unwelcoming messages about their participation from their children's school, and this hinders their participation (Kim, 2002).

While many studies have focused on the Korean parents' struggles during interactions with their children's school, Yang and McMullen (2003) reported that the Korean immigrant parents were active in school participation. Yang and McMullen found, in their study to examine the relationships between Korean immigrant parents and their American teachers, Korean immigrant mothers were active in school participation and they paid strong attention to their children's academic success. Korean immigrant mothers eagerly tried to communicate with their children's

classroom teachers to help their children gain academic success (Yang & McMullen, 2003).

However, although the Korean immigrant parents in their study showed themselves to be active school participants, these parents were not satisfied with their interactions with school teachers. Also, the Korean immigrant parents' participation pattern that showed in Yang and McMullen is quite bi-modal. Korean immigrant parents' participation is limited to the personal level with the teacher or volunteering for classroom activities or events, not the policy-relevant activities or school-level ones (Yang & McMullen, 2003). In Yang and McMullen's study, many of the Korean parents confess that they are afraid of participating in the PTA, because of their English concerns and lack of knowledge about the school system and relevant legal information.

In sum, the research about Korean immigrant parents is a relatively young field, considering the limited amounts of research. In reviewing the research studies relevant to their parental involvement, it is found that all the studies agree that Korean immigrant parents have struggles during their school participation, even though they show active participation; such studies have discovered even the degrees and the kinds of difficulties.

However, there is no in-depth study to examine the experiences of Korean immigrant parents during their involvement in their children's schooling. Most of the studies have been interested in revealing the reasons affecting Korean immigrant parents' passive participation. Moreover, most research studies until now have been done based on the narrow definition of parental involvement which confines parental involvement to their physical presence in the school, such as in volunteering,

attending parent-teacher conferences, or attending parents nights. Those studies result in excluding Korean immigrant parents' school involvement experiences outside of school.

Considering the limitations and the gap in the prior studies, it is needed to conduct an in-depth study exploring Korean immigrant parents' school involvement experiences, based on broad boundaries, and not just enumerating their difficulties with school participation.

RESEARCH METHOD

Chapter 3: Methods

RESEARCH PARADIGM

It is important to reveal my theoretical perspective before I expound on the methodology that I used in this inquiry, because a researcher's theoretical perspective determines the form of the research method and how the researcher presents the research outcomes (Crotty, 2003). A researcher's theoretical perspective provides a tool to look at the cases that are studied, as well as a view of how s/he looks at the human world and social life (Crotty, 2003).

My stance for this inquiry was based on a critical perspective paradigm, which asserts there are dominant constructions of reality which can promote inequities (Lather, 1991). The critical perspective agrees with the constructive paradigm in terms of their shared conception of knowledge as something that is constructed. However, different from the constructive paradigm, the critical perspective considers that knowledge is socially and historically situated and promotes the dominant culture rather than other ideas/ forms of knowledge (Crotty, 2003).

The critical perspective arose from the awareness that the dominant research studies had been conducted from a White, middle-class, male-oriented perspective (Mertens, 1998). Moreover, the research studies based on this perspective failed to reveal minority people's perceptions (Padilla & Lindholm, 1995). Therefore, Padilla and Lindholm (1995) stressed the necessity of culturally sensitive research studies about minority populations, based on the critical perspective. Throughout this study, I believed that Korean immigrant mothers' voices can be delivered by using the critical perspective.

The main purpose of this study was to examine Korean immigrant mothers' perceptions of parental involvement and how they were involved in their child's school. As the subjects in this study, Korean immigrant parents are a marginalized group in the society, and their features are fabricated by the dominant group, using mass media, rather than being described through these parents' own narration. Korean immigrant parents' beliefs about parental involvement in their children's schooling are an outcome of the interactions between their Korean culture and American culture, and are also an outcome of the power negotiations between their agency and the powered in school. Critical inquiry considers this power relationship to examine the Korean mothers' perceptions of school involvement, because "critical inquiry illuminates the relationship between power and culture " (Crotty, 2003, p.158) within society "to expose the forces of hegemony and injustice" (Crotty, 2003, p.157).

Grounded in a critical perspective, I assume that a power relationship occurs whenever parents engage themselves in their children's schooling, and that their experiences influence their subsequent participation decisions. I also have the assumption that immigrant parents have complicated experiences that are interwoven with their culture, which they brought from their home countries when they immigrated, and which influences their getting involved with the dominant culture in this society; it is usually the White-middle-class' culture which they encounter when they participate in their children's schooling.

Within the critical perspective, the case study (Merriam, 1988) method was used for this study to reveal Korean immigrant mothers' perceptions about parental involvement. Case study enables the researcher to provide an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of marginalized people in the social context (Willis, 2007), so

it allows us to listen to Korean immigrant mothers' voices through their own narration. By using a critical case study, I can deliver Korean immigrant mothers' voices, rather than simply describe their experiences, on the issue of how they perceived parental involvement and how they got involved in their children's school.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that has grounded this study was based on the idea that an empowerment/disempowerment process occurs for parents while they participate in their children's schooling, and the process affects their subsequent participation decisions.

Within this framework, using an empowerment/disempowerment lens, I approached this study examining how Korean immigrant mothers perceived schooling and got involved in their children's schooling and what process of empowerment/disempowerment happened while they were involved in their children's schooling. For the conceptual framework of this study, I borrowed Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba's (1991) definition of empowerment, which is based on the utopian perspective: empowerment is "the possession of power to act or to affect something by participating in a given activity" (p.138). Compared to the rationalist view of power, that understands power as control over other people, the utopian perspective sees power as the ability to act (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991).

According to Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991), empowerment is the process of gaining access to power, and disempowerment is the process of losing access to power. There is a very close relationship between the processes of empowerment and disempowerment. Both happen in a stratified society with differential permission to access power.

The disempowerment process can be defined as a type of socialization which results in a lack of self-confidence, in psychological and sociocultural conflicts, and, ultimately, in a failure to participate meaningfully in social institutions. Also, the empowerment process, based on the definition of the disempowerment process, can be described as the opposite socialization process, in which the individual gains high self-esteem and confidence in his/her ability to work well, and in which there is the creation of opportunities to find access to the information and resources enhancing individual or collective goals (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba, 1991).

In this study, I analyzed data using the definition of Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) of empowerment and disempowerment. Any experience that affected such negative decisions such as ceasing, passive participation, and the suspension of future parental involvement was categorized as part of the disempowerment process. On the other hand, any experience that affected positive decisions such as continuation, active participation, and finding alternative ways was categorized as part of the empowerment process.

For this inquiry, I examined, through this lens, the interactions of Korean immigrant mothers, that took place while they supported their children's schooling, and how these Korean immigrant mothers gained or lost their ability to participate in or support their children's schooling.

Definition of Terms

To assure the authenticity of this study, the concepts and terms that I used in this study should be taken into account.

Schooling

Considering that my purpose in this study was to examine how Korean immigrant mothers perceived and practiced supporting their children in various areas, instead of just within the limited boundary of the school buildings themselves, I chose the word “schooling” instead of “school” when I interviewed. This also was intended to avoid the confusion that the Korean parents might have about the word “school” itself, even though they might consider their supports outside school as parts of their involvement.

This idea came from my pilot study with Korean immigrant mothers, who responded differently when I used different terms for the question: “school” or “schooling.” When I used the words “parental involvement in school” for the question, they tended to refer to school volunteering; however, when I asked about “parental involvement in [your] children’s schooling,” they responded with several activities in various areas.

For this study, I defined the term “schooling” as not just being able to do certain things such as academic achievement, but also as knowing how to operate appropriately within a particular academic context.

Parental Involvement

In accord with the definition of schooling, the term “parents’ participation in their children’s schooling” is not a term geographically confined within the school, but rather has a comprehensive meaning that covers all parental support. Instead of using a narrowed definition of parental involvement at school, I used a widened definition of it that includes the additional areas of the home and community.

“Hack-up”: The Term for Schooling in Korean

The Korean term that I used for this study should be identified to assure my research validity. Because I spoke Korean when I interviewed the participants, I needed to choose an appropriate term for “parental involvement in their children’s schooling” in Korean. In Korean, we have the expressions “parental involvement in their children’s schooling” in Korean. In Korean, we have the expressions “parental involvement” [Bu-mo Cham-yeo] and “schooling” [Hack-up]; however, the two words are rarely used together, whereas “parental involvement in school” [Bu-mo Hack-kyo Cham-yeo] is commonly used. Therefore, I used the expression “supporting children’s schooling” for the interview, instead of “parental involvement in schooling.”

Korean Immigrant Mother

Scholars differ in their definitions of immigrant, but, in this study, I confined the concept of Korean immigrant mother to mean mothers who were born in Korea and had immigrated to the United States. Also, I considered their immigration intentions and limited my sample to those who intended to become permanent residents, rather than being here for temporary transit, such as for the purpose of study or work.

American Mother

The term “American mother” in this study was originally used as an opposite term to immigrant mother, and indicates a mother who was born and has been educated in America. However, different from my initial intention, the term has been used to refer to a specific subject—a White middle-class mother. During the interviews with the participants, the Korean immigrant mothers in this study frequently mentioned “American mothers,” and they

explained the population as “White upper-middle-class mothers who are interested in their children’s schooling.”

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative case study of five Korean immigrant mothers: Kyung, Jae, Jiwon, Young, and Emily. According to Saran Merriam (1988), case study is a research design that can be used when the researcher wants to uncover and to inquire into a specific phenomenon that is impossible to extract from the context. This distinctive feature of case study is well suited to examine Korean immigrant mothers’ parental involvement, which is interwoven with the influences of the dominant cultural power in this society, as well as their heritage culture. In addition, a case study is holistic, so it provides us an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of marginalized people in the social context (Willis, 2007). Considering that Korean immigrant mothers belong to a relevant marginalized population in the United States, the case study method enables the researcher to bring us detailed and in-depth understanding, rather than broad and generalizable results (Stake, 1995).

Merriam (1988) defined the case as the unit of analysis, which can be an individual, a program, or a conception. Stake (1981) supported Merriam’s idea about case, and he used Louis Smith’s (1978) idea of “a bounded system” to define the case. The case can be whatever “bounded system” is of interest, so a person, a school, or a population can be the case. The bounded system of the Korean immigrant mothers who get involved in their elementary children’s schooling in the United States is considered to be the case in this study. To select the case, the researchers should be cautious not to select a sample that well represents others, but rather select the sample that helps them to understand the phenomenon. To understand Korean immigrant

mothers' parental involvement beliefs and their experiences, the case study ought to describe thickly and in as detailed a manner as possible (Glesne, 1999).

For this study, I used in-depth interviews as the principal form of data-gathering. In-depth interviewing is an appropriate method to collect the data that I believe gives me the critical perspective for this inquiry. According to Guba and Lincoln (1998), the research in this paradigm to understand reality "requires a dialogue between the investigator and subject of the inquiry" (p. 206) since "reality can only be understood as multifaceted interaction" (Crotty, 2003, p. 118).

Research Questions

The specific research questions that directed this study were the following:

1. What do Korean mothers perceive parental involvement in their children's schooling to consist of?
2. What empowerment/disempowerment process occurs during the Korean immigrant mothers' involvement in their children's schooling?

Site

This study was conducted from 2010 through 2011, in Hope City, which is a suburban city in a large southwestern metropolitan region. This city has been a middle-class-White residency area; however, recently it has changed demographically with a steep influx of immigrants. The demographic change in Hope City distinguishes it from being a big city neighborhood because of its rapid growth and the percentages of Asians living there. Although a big city neighborhood reports its ethnicity distribution as 68.4 % Hispanic, 25.0% African American, 4.5% White, 1.1% Asian, 0.5% American Indian, 0.1% National Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 0.4% of two or more ethnicities (2010. 2011 District Facts Report, 2011), Hope City

reports its student demographic distribution as 44.24% White, 21.66% Hispanic, 19.71 % Asian, 10.61% African American. The percentage of Asians--19.71%--is also considerable in comparison with the national statistic showing Asians as 4.8% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Considering that the Asian population typically is crowded into higher-performing schools--as recognized by the NCEA (National Center for Educational Achievement)--, it can be assumed that the major reason for the rapid increase in Asian population there is the fame of its high-performing school district (NCEA, 2011).

Excellent Elementary (pseudonym) is located in one of the most affluent areas in this city. According to the annual performance report (2010) based on its TEKS test performance, Excellent Elementary showed that 99% of its students passed (compared to the state average of 90%) in reading, 99% of the students passed (compared to the state average of 84%) in math, 99% of the students passed (compared to the state average of 93%) in writing, 98% of the students passed (compared to the state average of 83%) in science, and 97% of the students passed (compared to the state average of 77%) in all tests. Excellent Elementary shows an analogous demographic pattern of immigrants within the school district. The distribution of the students' races is 12.41% African, 20.5% Hispanic, 25.5% Asian-Pacific Islander, and 41.6% Caucasian (District AEIS report, 2010).

The school was selected on the basis of convenience for accessing Korean immigrant mothers, and because my son attends Excellent School, so it has been convenient to recruit Korean immigrant mothers there. Other than convenience, I considered a researcher's understanding about the school atmosphere. During the interviews about school participation with the participants, prior knowledge about the

school has been necessary in order for the interviewees to fully share their experiences with the researcher. Since I am also a parent of an attending student at Excellent Elementary, it was no problem for the participants to share their stories with me.

Participants

Five Korean immigrant mothers were intentionally selected from the same elementary school to minimize influence from different school atmospheres while the mothers participated in their children's schooling. Researchers (Casanova, 1996; Hara & Burke, 1998) have reported that school atmosphere influences parents' school participation. However, in this study, my intention was to hear each mother's story about her perceptions of participation in her children's schooling and her participation experiences, not to examine how a school environment influenced parents' participation. Even though I controlled for the school factor, I did not assume that all five Korean mothers' participation experiences were completely controlled, such as in a laboratory. I also admit that all the participants had different experiences, even though they interacted with the same school personnel.

In addition to my limiting the study to include only participants from the same one school, to minimize the influence of school atmosphere, I confined the participants' birthplace to Korea. The birthplace is related to the purpose of this study, to explore immigrant mothers' participation in their children's school in the United States; people born in the United States are considered citizens, not immigrants.

The last concern I considered when I selected the participants was their years of living in America. This was because I assumed--based on the literature review--that immigrant mothers might have different English skills, cultural knowledge, and

school experiences, along with their years living in the United States, and these factors might affect their participation experiences. Research studies have reported that immigrant mothers struggle with interacting with school personnel due to their limited English skills and lack of cultural knowledge (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Yang & McMullen, 2003), and they struggle with guiding their children due to limited cultural knowledge and an absence of school experiences in the United States, and sometimes even in their own countries.

By selecting participants who had different numbers of years living in the United States, it was intended to obtain more varying narrations about parental involvement. Details on how the mothers were selected are presented below.

RESEARCH PROCESS

In this section, I have described the research process according to the time-line. This research study was conducted from 2010 spring through 2011 summer, and the three times of the interviews of each participant were conducted once each semester: The first interview was conducted in the beginning of March 2010; the second interview was done in the middle of October 2010, and the last interview was conducted in March 2011.

Stage 1: Participants Selection

The participants in this inquiry are five Korean immigrant mothers of children who are enrolled in Excellent Elementary School. In a case study, to select the case, the researchers should be cautious not to select a sample that well represents others, but rather select the sample that helps them to understand the phenomenon (Merriam, 1988).

To understand how Korean immigrant mothers perceived schooling and participated in it, and their experiences during their engagement with their children's schooling, a stratified purposeful sampling (Mertens, 1998) was used. This sampling method combined sampling strategies that used subgroups that were chosen, first, based on certain standards, and then, entailed choosing a sample of cases according to each subgroup. In this study I chose the Korean immigrant mothers population in Excellent Elementary School as a subgroup, and five mothers were selected as cases.

To select the participants, I contacted a Korean mother whose son was in the 5th grade and who knew many Korean mothers in Excellent Elementary School. After getting a list of Korean mothers from her, I contacted each mother personally and explained briefly about this study, as well as getting personal information from them.

After talking with them, I selected five mothers from among the mothers who had agreed to participate in this study. The standard of selection was that the participant should be a Korean immigrant who was born in Korea. The nation of birth is relevant to the qualification of the immigrant. Also, I considered the mothers' years of stay in the United States since they immigrated, and I selected five mothers who immigrated in different years.

While I considered the factors of birthplace and immigrant years in selecting the participants, I did not control for the children's grade in school. However, when two mothers who had the same number of immigration years agreed to participate at the same time, I chose the mother whose child's grade did not overlap with those of the other 4 mothers' children.

To collect affirmative consent forms from the mothers, I met with them individually and explained more about this study, although I had already explained

basic information about this study in the consent letter. All the consent forms for the mothers were translated into Korean, and the participants got a consent form in their preferred language--in English or in Korean: 4 mothers--Kyung, Jae, Jiwon, and Young--asked me for a Korean version copy, and Emily wanted an English-version copy.

Although I chose the five Korean immigrant mothers from the same elementary school and considered their different numbers of years living in the United States, I could not control their SES, personality, or prior experiences. Therefore, it is helpful to understand the mothers' experiences by having some additional information about them. Even though I have provided more detailed information about each participant and her stories in the Chapter 4 Findings section, to assist the reader in understanding them, I introduce each participant briefly here.

Kyung

Kyung immigrated 20 years ago to marry her husband, Min, who had already immigrated to the United States with his family 23 years ago. At the time of the interviews, their family consisted of 19-year-old Tiffany, who was a college sophomore, 11th-grade Jacob, and 1st grade-Grace, Kyung, and her husband Min. Min graduated from a university in the United States, and Kyung finished high school in Korea. They had owned a family business before, but, since they closed it due to the economic depression, Min worked at a small company, and Kyung worked in a hospice center. Although they both worked, their economic condition was not good and suffered from financial issues.

Kyung evaluated her English level as medium-high. She was familiar with Excellent Elementary because her children had attended the same school since

Tiffany started there. Kyung knew how the school had changed, not only in its physical appearance, but also the school personnel and its atmosphere.

Jae

Jae and her husband Hoon immigrated to run his business 12 years ago, and Sora was 1 year old at that time. Yura was born 6 years ago, and she was in 1st grade at time of the interviews. Jae graduated from college, and she married just after she graduated. Her English proficiency, according to her, was medium-level, so she had no problem communicating with Americans in daily life.

The family lived in New Jersey before they moved to Hope City 2 year ago. Since moving to Hope City, Jae was busy helping Sora, because Sora had struggled to adjust in her new school. So Jae had no chance to get adjusted to Hope City. As Sora was getting adjusted here, Yura entered Kindergarten. Jae was quite satisfied with Yura's school, Excellent Elementary, except for the ratio of children to a teacher.

Jiwon

Jiwon's family came to the United States 4 years ago when Chan was 6 and his younger sister Seung was 3, since their father Lee had transferred his company to the United States. Chan was a 3rd grader and Seung was a kindergartener at the time of the interviews. Lee had graduated from university and worked as an engineer in Korea. Jiwon, Chan's mother, graduated from university and had worked for an airline company in Korea. Until they came here, Chan and his sister had been cared for by a nanny. However, when Chan's family moved to the United States, Jiwon gave up her career and decided that she would devote herself to taking care of her children. Jiwon evaluated her English level as medium.

Young

Young came to the United States 10 years ago to study with her husband Jun. She earned a master's degree in Foreign Language Education, and she had taught ESL students as an ESL specialist for 3 years in an elementary school before she moved to Hope City two years ago, because her husband, Jun, got a job there after finishing his Ph.D. She started her Ph.D. in the Special Education Department one year after she moved here. They had a 7-year-old 2nd-grader son, Siwon and a 1-year-old daughter, Yun, who was born last year. She speaks English fluently and evaluated her English level as high.

Young had experience attending school in the United States, so she was familiar with the American school system. Also, she had enough knowledge to compare Korean values and American values in education and to choose the appropriate one for each situation and to create her own educational philosophy for Siwon.

Emily

Emily immigrated to the United States when she was 4. Her husband David also immigrated here when he was 13. They both graduated from college. Emily owned a daycare center, and David was an engineer. They had 3 children—an 11-year-old 5th-grader Andrew, 7-year-old 2nd-grader Jacob, and 5-year-old Angel. Andrew and Jacob attended the same elementary school, and Angel went to daycare during the morning. Although both Emily and David could speak Korean, their family used English in their daily life except when their parents visited them. She feels more comfortable using English than Korean.

Excellent Elementary School is the second school for Andrew. Recently, the family moved within the same Hope School District, and Andrew had transferred his school to Excellent. Last year Jacob entered school and, at the time of the interviews, was in 2st grade; Andrew was in 5th grade. Due to her business, it was hard for Emily to take care of her children like other home-maker mothers. However, her business was relatively flexible, so she tried to spend time with her children.

Researcher

As a research designer, a case study researcher takes a crucial role in the research. The researcher sets the boundaries of the case and confines some components in the case. In this study, as I examined Korean immigrant mothers' participation in their children's schooling, I defined their participation by contexts, such as the home, school, and community in which the participation occurred. This boundedness, these contexts and experiences contributed to specify the case in this study (Stake, 1988).

Also, the researcher's personality, as well as her/his ethnicity, class, and gender, is a pivotal factor that influences getting information through the interview method, since an interview is a negotiated text in which two people interact (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Thus, as a researcher, I believe I need to describe myself to let my readers infer my influence during the interviews.

I came to America to study with my husband 10 years ago. While I studied, I had two children, who were born in the United States, and I became an immigrant parent myself.

As my children entered the public school system, I had chances to talk with other Korean parents of children in the same school as my children. Whenever I met

them, I realized they were eager to support their children. It was interesting that they helped their children in their own ways and that not only other people such as teachers or other-nationality parents, but also the Korean parents themselves realized that their methods of support are different. While the Korean parents tried to support their children, they also had concerns about their children's schooling, which were derived from or even aggravated by their immigrant status.

My concern is not greatly different from that of other immigrant mothers'. As an immigrant mother, I am also struggling with supporting my children's schooling. Even though I studied immigrant parents and their struggles in the United States so that I have knowledge enough to analyze each situation, it is a different matter with my own struggles in real life. To deal with each struggle, I have needed to face them directly and to make a decision or to find a solution in my own way.

My positionality as a Korean immigrant mother and a scholar who has been educated in the United States may contribute to my research, as I hear Korean immigrant mothers' voices and attempt to understand their stories. This self-rationalization is supported by Sofia Villenas (1996). According to her, researchers from marginalized cultures should realize they have to represent their culture, and she calls upon them to recognize their position as border crossers. Moreover, she warned us that, as researchers, we should identify ourselves:

"The 'native' ethnographer must deal with her own marginalizing experiences and identities in relation to the dominant society" (Villenas, 1996, p. 712).

Stage 2: Data Collection

Data collection began after I got the consent forms from each participant. An in-depth interview method (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005) was used to collect the data

for this study. The in-depth interview method aimed to elicit information about the meanings and interpretations of events for the participants. This method allowed me to explore the Korean immigrant mothers' perspectives on schooling and on their participation in their children's schooling, in greater depth. According to Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005), the research about marginal groups such as immigrants needs to hear directly from the groups themselves. To better understand Korean immigrant mothers' experiences with school involvement, it is necessary to hear narrations from the Korean mothers themselves through in-depth interviews, and to hear not only about difficulties, but also about their feelings, perceptions, and the reasons relevant to their involvement.

While I conducted in-depth interviews with each mother, both an unstructured interview (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996) protocol and a semi-structured interview (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006) protocol were used. The semi-structured interview protocol was only used with the initial questions, in order to grasp basic concepts from the mothers. While each interview progressed, each mother shared different concerns and experiences in answer to each question; therefore, further interview question were bound to be different in order to investigate their experiences individually.

Each of the participants was interviewed three times during this research study. For the first interview, I used an unstructured interview protocol and a semi-structured interview protocol. Each Korean immigrant mother was asked to describe her children's school lives freely about her children's schooling and her supporting activities, without any formatted question at first, by using an unstructured interview. After then, I asked about her concept of schooling and parental involvement and her

support for her children at home, using a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix A, Samples of Interview Questions for the First Interview).

Next, I used a semi-structured interview protocol for the second and the third interviews. The second interview was to get information about how the mothers supported their children for schooling at school, and their experiences during participation (see Appendix B, Samples of Interview Questions for the Second Interview). For the third interview, I also used a semi-structured interview protocol to access the information about how the mothers supported their children through community participation and their resources for information about the school (see Appendix C, Samples of Interview Questions for the Third Interview).

However, even though I intended to divide each interview according to topic, it happened frequently that each topic mingled with other topics since those issues were interwoven. For example, when I asked Young about why she eagerly participated in Boy Scout activities, she answered that building a human network through the activities was a major reason. While she explained about the issue, Young added more about her participation activities at school, where she could not find for herself the human network she needed. Another example is that Kyung answered about her schooling belief while she discussed community activity. When I asked Kyung why she registered Grace for Korean language school, even despite her financial difficulties, she answered her belief about schooling that self-confidence influences children's school success and that language is closely related to self-identity.

When they drew out another issue that deviated from my interview question, I did not cut off their answers as long as their comments were not beside the point,

since I believed that parents' beliefs about schooling and their participation are closely related--this was based on another research finding (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Moreover, based on my pilot study, which I had performed in another city, I considered their participations at home, at school, and in the community to be complementary with each other.

The interviews were conducted during the morning at the parents' houses while the participants' children were at their school. All interviews were recorded with a tape recorder. The interviews were performed in Korean and were translated into English by the researcher. To protect the original meanings, I showed my translations to a person who is familiar with both Korean and English.

Whenever I completed interview transcription, I shared my transcription with each participant to get a member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). At that time, I also asked them about any of their statements that I found was not clear during transcription. This question led to accessing further information, as well as assuring the accuracy of the assertions.

Stage 3: Closure Inquiry and Data Analysis

Closure Inquiry

The final phase of this research was member checking after the transcription of the third interview, and it occurred during June 2011. Even though I checked the accuracy of the transcription and the meanings that I understood after each interview, it was needed to check their meanings in a block, rather than to check partially, in order to understand the mothers' perspectives coherently.

Data Analysis

After transcription, I read each interview to identify recurring patterns in order to code the data and establish the categories of responses. The approach to data analysis was shaped by the theoretical underpinnings of the inquiry and the guiding questions. When I read the data, I analyzed those data from the critical perspective and used Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba's (1991) empowerment /disempowerment definition as my conceptual framework.

This analysis process was interwoven with the data collection because the insights, meanings, and tentative assumptions that arose during data analysis gave direction to the next steps (Merriam, 1988). While I read the transcriptions to analyze them after each interview, I wrote down my insights and reflections in analytic memos, and the memos guided my questions for the next interview and the member-checking process.

Therefore, data collection and data analysis were conducted concurrently throughout the research. Glesne (1999) reminds researchers that "data analysis done simultaneously with data collection enables you to focus and shape the study as it proceeds. Consistently reflect on your data, work to organize them, and try to discover what they have to tell you" (p. 130).

Throughout the analysis process, I read the collected data, including the analytic memos, immediately and then identified categories by dividing the data into smaller groups. In this study, since the principal goal was to listen to five Korean mothers' narrations, I made each mother's story an individual category. Also, for further elaboration of the analysis, other categories were created to show the commonalities and differences between participants. I used comparisons of the

collected data to build categories, to define the mothers' commonalities and differences, and to discover recurring patterns in the perceptions of their children's schooling and of their participation (Mertens, 1998).

As the analysis progressed, the initial categories were modified because further data analysis occurred. Initially, I made categories by dividing the experiences into the empowerment experiences and the disempowerment experiences. However, as the data accumulated, it was found that new data did not fit into any category. For example, Jiwon reported having both empowerment and disempowerment feelings at the same time and for the same activity, such as her volunteering. Jiwon was proud of herself for her volunteering, because she got over her difficulties in language and cultural competency, while she gradually lost her confidence through repeated negative experiences. This did not fit into the empowerment/disempowerment dichotomous categories; however, this situation occurred with other participants, also. So I modified the initial categories and made new categories based on the activities that were shown recursively among the participants' supportive activities.

Just as I shared my transcriptions and reflections with the participants, I also shared my findings part with them to get member checking. The feedback from the participants—complementary statements, corrections, and suggestions—was used to further the revision of the initial findings part.

QUALITY AND RIGOR

Different from quantitative research, which concerns itself with ensuring the validity and reliability of research, the qualitative research adopts different forms of strategies to convince readers about its trustworthiness (Merriam, 2001). To assure the

quality and ethics of my study, I focused on elucidating internal validity, reliability, and external validity, based on Merriam's (2001) criteria.

Internal Validity

According to Merriam (2001), internal validity is a matter of how well research findings match reality. Merriam points out that qualitative study is based on the assumption that "reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing" (p. 202) and asserts that attaining an internal validity is important for the qualitative research.

To obtain internal validity for this inquiry, I used member check, long-term engagement, the researcher's biases, and peer debriefing. After I completed each data collection and transcription process, I went back to each participant and asked her if what I understood from the last interview was accurate. When I finished the third interview, I did one more member check overall for the whole of the interviews. This member check enabled me to access the Korean immigrant mothers' beliefs coherently.

Prolonged engagement in this study during its one-and-a-half years provided definite validity to my study. When the term "prolonged engagement" is used by Lincoln and Guba (1985), it means spending sufficient time at the research site in an ethnographic study.

Even though this was a case study using the interview method three times for each participant, it entailed enough meetings to be called prolonged engagement. Since this study was conducted over one-and-a-half years and all the participants' children, as well as researcher's, were enrolled in the same school, I met some mothers almost every day and talked with them informally in addition to our

interviews. During our informal meetings, we shared ideas about various topics and were able to become closer.

This long-term engagement contributed to my observing their changed attitudes regarding involvement in their children's schooling. While they were involved in their children's schooling, the mothers decided about their subsequent involvement. Based on frequent informal dialogues with them, I could ask them about their changing attitudes or their new decisions, and I was able to stay current on their perceptions, along with their experiences, as time went by, rather than just describing their perceptions as discussed during our interviews.

Also, the long-term duration of this study enabled me to keep the intervals between our interviews at least 5 months long. I asked some questions three times of each mother and confirmed whether she had the same answers for those questions. Those intervals were long enough for the participants to forget the latest interview memories, so that they were not affected by influences from their prior interview(s). This enabled me to compare their ideas for each interview, in order to check whether they were consistent, and, if not, I asked what influenced the difference in their beliefs.

I clarified my epistemology and the theoretical framework that I used in this inquiry when I started this methodology section, and throughout the whole research process, I had reflected on them. This contributed to eliminating to the utmost my bias as the researcher who designed and drove this inquiry.

Lastly, I used peer debriefing to guard the internal validity of my study. I showed my Korean transcriptions and English-translated transcriptions to a person who immigrated when she was 12 years old and who is familiar with both the Korean and the American languages and cultures, and I got her confirmation that my English

translations matched the original Korean transcriptions without distortion. I also showed my writing to my graduate school colleague and got his advice about that.

Reliability

Reliability is related to the replicability of research findings to other studies in traditional quantitative experimental research (Merriam, 2001). However, qualitative researchers prefer to describe the study in detail as much as they can, so that the audiences can share the study with the researcher and audit the results derived by the researcher to be certain that they make sense—Lincoln and Guba (1985) denominate it as the “dependability” or “consistency” of the results. So, in qualitative research, it is needed to prove whether the results I provided are congruent with the data collected, in order to ensure reliability; for this I used the investigator’s position (Merriam, 2001) and audit trail (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

To attain reliability as well as internal validity, I explained my theoretical framework behind all the research procedures in detail. This verification of my position can provide the audiences with explanations about what affected my decisions for each research phase.

By leaving an audit trail (Guba & Lincoln, 1981), I can provide a chance for the audiences to judge the findings of my data. I described all the procedures of the inquiry about participant selection, site selection, data collecting, and categorization of themes. My explanation as to how I arrived at the results can lead the audience to track my journey throughout the inquiry.

External Validity

External validity is related to the generalizability issue, which has been argued in the research field between qualitative researchers and quantitative researchers.

However, considering that the main purpose of qualitative research is to understand the particular in depth, rather than to find out general truth, it would be more desirable to find not “abstract universals” (Erickson, 1986, p. 130) but “concrete universals” (p. 130)—that is what Stake (1995) calls naturalistic generalization.

To ensure external validity, that is, generalizing of the research results, I used rich and thick description (Merriam, 2001). I provided sufficient “thick description” so that future researchers can compare the contextual variables operating in the research situations with theirs and determine whether the research results can be transferred to their study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Ethics

The power relationships of researcher-participants are different between experimental and qualitative research. However, regardless of which researcher has more power than others, it is needed to be cautious to protect participants from potential harm, by setting guidelines and regulations (Merriam, 2001).

In qualitative research, such guidelines and regulations are used to prevent an ethical dilemma from occurring during data collection or analysis or the dissemination process.

Before the participants joined this study, they were told about my research, and that they could reject the acceptance of this study and could withdraw from the study at any time. Not only did they hear this from the researcher, but also they read the consent form, which described in detail all the research procedures. They could choose one version of the consent form—a Korean version or an English version--, based on their language preference.

Analyzing data may provoke ethical problems in qualitative research because the researcher is the only instrument to collect and analyze the data. Especially when the researcher analyzes the data, the researcher's bias tends to intervene (Merriam, 2001). To minimize the interference of my intentions on the research findings, I talked with my graduate school colleagues, and they read my data and analysis. While I discussed with them, I reflected on my beliefs and checked whether I had pre-assumptions or biases about the research participants.

One of the most risky problems in qualitative research is the possible exposure of the participants' identities to the public. To protect the participants' privacy, I used pseudonyms instead of their real names.

In conclusion, this inquiry is a qualitative case study grounded on a critical perspective to explore Korean immigrant mothers' perceptions of schooling and how they got involved in their children's schooling. This study used the in-depth interview method to provide the Korean immigrant mothers' narration, so that their stories can be heard. When I delivered the Korean mothers' stories, I used an empowerment-disempowerment framework for the audience, so that that they can employ it in order to better understand the study.

FINDINGS

Chapter 4: Findings

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide findings drawn from in-depth interviews with five Korean immigrant mothers: Kyung, Jae, Jiwon, Young, and Emily. However, my intention in this chapter was not to present but rather to share my interviews with future researchers as if they were present and working with me. Through providing the detailed interview scripts, I aimed for those researchers to be able to track the original data (Mertens, 1998). Moreover, the researcher can join my journey to reach conclusions by tracing the “chain of evidence” (Yin, 1994).

This study was led by two research questions: 1) What do Korean mothers perceive parental involvement in their children’s schooling to consist of? 2) What empowerment/disempowerment process occurs during the Korean immigrant mothers’ involvement in their children’s schooling?

To inquire into the first research question, I asked the Korean immigrant mothers about their perception of schooling--first because it was necessary to know their definition of “schooling” in order to examine their practices of parental involvement in their children’s schooling. Then, I asked them possible activities to support children’s schooling and their practices for providing such support. This was to examine the differences between their perceptions and practices, and to reveal what influenced the differences.

The second question was able to be explored partially through the first question about their perceptions of possible activities for a parent to be involved their child’s schooling and their practices for such involvement. While the mothers

described their beliefs and practices, these were sometimes revealed in their descriptions of experiences which influenced their present practices. Also, I explored their empowerment/disempowerment experiences through direct questions such as “Can you share any unpleasant/pleasant experiences with me that happened while you were involved in your child’s schooling?”

This chapter consists of two parts: The first part introduces detailed descriptions of each participant and their narrations about their beliefs and practices of parental involvement; in the second part, I summarize the Korean mothers’ perceptions and practices of parental involvement through comparisons, and present factors which influenced the Korean mothers’ empowerment/disempowerment process, which resulted in their involvement practices.

The first part consist of the five Korean mothers’-- Kyung, Jae, Jiwon, Young, and Emily-- stories about their perceptions and practices of parental involvement in their children’s schooling, through their narrations.

The background of each mother, which might have influenced her involvement perceptions and practices has been provided at the beginning of each case. Even though I set limitations for the participants’ birth place to have been only in Korea and their intended place of residence to be only in the United States when I chose the participants, I could not consider other factors, such as their SES background, or prior experiences. So it is wise to describe their detailed personal backgrounds to give the reader a better understanding, before bringing in their stories (see Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Then I introduce each mother’s beliefs about schooling and her participation experiences through her narration. The experiences were divided into categories of the

locations in which mothers were involved in their children's schooling—home, school, and community (Driessen, Smit, & Slegers, 2005). Among the mothers' narrations of their stories, their empowerment/ disempowerment experiences are also presented.

When each mother's story has been completed, I provide a summary of the participant's narrations and indicate a theme that distinguishes the participant's story from the other mothers' stories. The theme for each mother is following: Kyung--resilience, Jae--reconciliation, Jiwon--respite, Young--resourceful, and Emily--repudiation.

The second part provides some themes that I drew from their involvement practices. In the beginning, the Korean mothers' perceptions of schooling are presented before examining their involvement in their children's schooling. This was based on the belief that it was necessary to know how they perceived schooling before we could understand their involvement in their children's schooling.

Through the comparisons, the agreement and disagreement between their perceptions of possible parents' participation activities and their real participation practices for schooling are provided. Then, I analyzed the Korean immigrant mothers' involvement experiences to find themes, using Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba's (1991) empowerment/disempowerment framework. This part informs how the Korean immigrant mothers came to decide their involvement practices and what influenced their decisions and practices. Moreover, the ways that the Korean immigrant mothers negotiated with the realities that obstructed their active involvement are also provided.

To help the understanding of each participant, Table 1 shows information about each mother.

	Kyung	Jae	Jiwon	Young	Emily
Immigration Years	20 years	12 years	4 years	10 years	40 years (when she was 4.)
Reason for Immigration	Marriage	Run business	Job transfer	Study	Family immigration
Children	Tiffany-- College Sophomore	Sora--7 th Grade	Chan-3 rd Grade	Siwon- 2 nd Grade	Andrew-5 th Grade
	Jacob-11 th Grade	Yura-1 st Grade	Seung- Kinder- garten	Yun-1 Year Old	Jacob-2 nd Grade
	Grace-1 st Grade				Angel-5 Years Old
Education Level	High school degree in Korea	B.A. degree in Korea	B.A. degree in Korea	B.A. degree in Korea M.A. degree in America	B.A. degree in America (Whole education in America)
English Level	Medium- high	Medium	Medium	High	Native- Fluent
Occupation	Hospice	Home- maker	Home- maker	Graduate Student	Business Owner
School Involvement Experience in Korea?	No	Yes	No	No	No

Table 1: Participants' Backgrounds

The following case is Kyung's story. The 5 cases were aligned according to the participants' self-evaluations of their support for their children's schooling: from the lowest to the highest score. The order is Kyung, Jae, Jiwon, Young, and Emily.

Chapter 4.1

KYUNG'S STORY

Background

Kyung had immigrated 20 years before the study to marry her husband, Min, who had already immigrated to the United States with his family 23 years before. Both Min and Kyung had graduated high school in Korea, and Min earned a college diploma after he immigrated. Kyung also tried to pursue her college diploma but dropped her studies.

The couple has 3 children--19-year-old Tiffany, who is a university junior, 11th-grade Jacob, and 1st-grade Grace. They used to have a family-owned grocery store before, but they closed their business recently. Currently Min works at a small company, and Kyung is a hospice worker.

To the question of the level of her English skill, Kyung evaluated her English skills as medium-high, and she has had no problem listening and saying to others what she wants to tell them. Among my participants, she is the person who was the most familiar with Excellent Elementary School, because she had lived in the neighborhood over 15 years and her children have attended the school since Tiffany entered school. Kyung knows how the school has changed, not only in its physical appearance but also the school personnel and its atmosphere. She is mainly satisfied with Excellent Elementary.

Kyung described herself as calm and inactive, and she believes that, because of her inactive personality, she cannot support Grace more actively. For example, Grace wanted to do outdoor activities more, such as soccer, but Kyung could not register for the soccer class because she missed the registration period. She confessed,

“Actually, I knew about the registration period, but I hesitated because I really did not want to go to soccer class. I don’t like going outside.”

Despite her harsh evaluation of herself, Kyung is an experienced mother who already has two adolescents. During interviews, she kept comparing her experiences raising her two older children to those raising Grace, and she wanted to provide better support for Grace than she did for her other children because of her inability then.

Perception of Schooling

Kyung considered that schooling means everything relevant to a child, including academic and social abilities, as well as interpersonal abilities.

To the question of in what kinds of activities Kyung was engaged to support Grace’s schooling, she answered that she did several activities for Grace in various places: at home, at school, and in the community.

Kyung enumerated her tasks for Grace at home: She checks Grace’s folder every day, helps with Grace’s homework, reads the newsletter from school and checks on events, and sends the items that are required by the school. During summer break, Kyung also purchased some workbooks and taught Grace by herself. She tried to get Grace to read as many books as possible, so she checked out books from the library regularly and let Grace read those books.

Most important of all, Kyung believed having communication with children was the best way to show her affection for them and support of them. So, she tried to carry on a dialogue with her children as much as she could.

Kyung also explained what she had been doing for Grace at school: volunteering as a room mother and for events. She was a room mother last year when

Grace was in kindergarten, and she tried to volunteer for all the events for which the school asked for help.

To the question of what she was doing for Grace other than at home and at school, Kyung confessed with regret that she did not do any extra activities with Grace except Korean language school. This is not because Grace is young, but because Kyung could not afford those activities for Grace due to her family's financial difficulty since they closed down their business. Instead of extra activities, Kyung took Grace to the library regularly and registered her for less expensive programs in the Recreation Center during summer break.

However, even despite her financial struggles, she registered Grace in the Korean language school. Kyung did not count the Korean language school as an activity for Grace's schooling at first in her reply to the question of her beliefs about Korean language school; however, she admitted later that it was strongly related to Grace's schooling.

Examination of Involvement Practice

Home

Kyung believed it is her task to help Grace to succeed at school. She stated that communication with Grace, communication with the school, and helping Grace to study and to finish homework are her tasks for helping Grace to succeed at school. Among many activities, Kyung pointed out that having time for Grace and communicating with her are the most important things of all.

Kyung: I am interested in my children's schooling. To show my interest and affection to them, I think taking time with them to talk is the best way. Since I am not able to help my kids any other way, I try to communicate more with them.

Interviewer: How often are you talking with Grace?

Kyung: Not that much! But at least whenever I give her a ride and after she comes home, I always talk with her. When I raised Tiffany and Jacob, I had no time with them due to our business. So, for Grace, I want to be with her more. However, I always feel insufficient.

Interviewer: What kinds of help did you mean when you said “other ways” you cannot give to your children?

Kyung: Actually, I cannot help with their academic things. Even if Jacob does great in his social studies so he presents his essay in front of the class, I cannot help him at all. Nor with math either. I used to teach my kids math when they were young, even though I could not teach them other subjects. But, after they went into 6th grade, I could not help them even with math. (1st interview)

Interviewer: You said before, you believe taking time and having communication with children is the most important support for them. Is that right?

Kyung: Yes, I think so.

Interviewer: Why do you think so?

Kyung: Well. From my experience raising Tiffany and Jacob, listening to them is a very important factor for children. While my children were still young, they were o.k. But, when they became teenagers, then they struggled with many issues such as not only academic issues but also their identity issue. They are part of a minority here, so it might be worse. At that time, I was very frustrated because there was nothing to do but listen to them. But now, in retrospect on those days, I can see that [listening] was the best way to support them. (2nd interview)

Her belief regarding communication with Grace came from her prior experiences with her older children. While she supported Tiffany and Jacob, she despaired over her inability to help them. She confessed, “I even did not know about the [school] system, so I was anxious about everything” at that time. Kyung painfully admitted that at first she started listening as an alternative method because “I am not able to help my kids any other way.” She chose communication to support her children instead of teaching them academic subjects.

However, even though she chose communication as her alternative method at the beginning, now she was convinced, from her experiences with Tiffany and Jacob, that it would be better having free time with the children than teaching or hiring tutors for their academic achievement. Kyung stressed that communication is especially helpful for minority children because they struggle with their identity issue in the White-dominated society. This is supported by other literatures (Phinney, Romero, Nava & Huang, 2001; Rumbaut, 1994): that minority children struggle with identity issues.

While Kyung insisted on the importance of communication, she frequently used negative expressions regarding her abilities in her mothering such as “I am not able to help my kids any other way”; “I always feel insufficient”; “I cannot help with their academic things”; and “I was very frustrated because there was nothing to do” during her interviews.

Kyung doubted her ability to support her children, even though she had been doing many activities successfully for Grace. The prior experience with struggles and challenges due to her unfamiliarity with American culture, when she wanted to help her older children, weakened her self-efficacy. According to Costigan and Koryzma

(2010), immigrant parents who have lower levels of acculturation may experience more difficulties, which result in decreasing their sense of efficacy as parents. Kyung frequently lamented her immigrant situation, using “because I am foreigner” whenever she mentioned her inability and compares her support with that of other American mothers. The following interview shows how she felt about herself:

Interviewer: Then, what do you think? If you were not an immigrant but an American, then do you think the situation would be different? If you were an American, you’d be better with your kids?

Kyung: Well. It might be different if I were an American. First, this is their nation. Different from us, to whom everything is strange, they are accustomed to things here. Also, it may be a different philosophy, but we Koreans cannot leave our business to an employer--different from Americans, who enjoy vacations and leave their business. Americans consider the quality of their life first, and they can travel with their family for one week. However, we Koreans hire as few employees as possible and devote our time to our business to get more profit. I don’t know why.

Actually, I have been thinking that, if I were American, then my children would get better support, so I feel very sorry for them. For example, when Tiffany was young, similar-aged children came to my grocery store, and they sang a nursery song. I thought my daughter could sing a song like them, so I wanted to teach her. But I did not know any American nursery songs, so I went to buy a cassette tape to learn one myself first. Everything is the same way. Because I am a foreigner, to teach something to my children, I need to learn it myself and then take time to teach it to them. That means, my children learn everything later than other

American children. Also, regarding the school information, other mothers graduated from school here, so they have knowledge about each stage throughout school. They know about what is needed for this stage and for the next stage. I have been feeling guilty about my children, especially Tiffany. I could not give her advice. When she decided to go to a university, I could not give her any advice. (miserable face) Actually, I wanted to help her so I tried to search for information from the Internet, and I realized it is beyond my control. So, Tiffany did everything for herself. (1st interview)

Immigrant mothers like Kyung tend to struggle in two ways --supporting their children while they themselves learn how to survive in an unfamiliar situation (Park, 2008). From Kyung's narration, it can be seen that Kyung had felt her inability throughout Tiffany's early years, until her first child entered a university. Kyung tried to learn anything that was needed and to teach Tiffany to support her; however, she finally realized that it did not work effectively. Whenever she found that Tiffany needed something, her perception was not timely, but late, so she felt that she had been one step behind other American mothers.

Immigrant mothers' struggles to give advice to or to support their children are mostly common in research studies (Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001) about immigrant mothers, regardless of their nationality. Since they are not familiar with the U.S. school system, they tend to depend on their children and the teacher regarding school matters and cannot be actively involved in the decision processes (Costigan & Koryzma, 2010).

Kyung believed helping Grace at home was also included as school involvement. She eagerly supported Grace and had confidence about it--different

from her feelings as she supported Tiffany and Jacob. However, during the interview, there was a discrepancy between her statement about confidence and about her inability. Kyung unconsciously expressed her previous sense of inefficacy whenever she evaluated herself: “Now I can help Grace better.” This sense of inefficacy was caused by her prior negative experiences with her older children. Also, she felt that she struggled due to her financial and time issues, and these factors obstructed from Kyung supporting Grace.

School

Kyung had been a room mother the previous year, 2010, and she had participated in as many activities as she could, even though she could not volunteer as a room mother, this year (2011). To the question of the reason why she has actively volunteered and tried to attend every meeting, she answered:

Kyung: For Tiffany and Jacob, I did not do that and I still feel sorry for them. But I want to do my best for Grace, which I did not do for them. Also, Grace asks me to volunteer.

Interviewer: Why did you not do it for them? Because of your business?

Kyung: That can be one reason, but, at that time, I did not know anything. Maybe, it was very hard for Tiffany and Jacob at that time. I did not know about American schools and their culture, so there were only a few things that I could do for them. Of course, I still do not know well.

Interviewer: Do you still have problems understanding American culture?

Kyung: Sometimes, but now, I have definitely more knowledge in order to raise my child confidently. It used to be very hard for me to get information, so that I did not know how to support the children. I wanted to do the best things for

Tiffany and Jacob, but I could not do that because of my ignorance. But Grace is my last child and I am experienced enough to be confident. (2nd interview)

Kyung evaluated herself as ready to support Grace, using the expression “definitely knowledgeable.” Similar to her evaluation of teaching Grace at home, she confessed she now has much confidence about her interactions with school personnel, compared to the time when she raised Tiffany and Jacob. Due to her lack of knowledge about the American school system, Kyung could not volunteer at that time, and she has felt guilty about it for their sake. She added the issue that “I wanted to do the best things for Tiffany and Jacob, but I could not do that because of my ignorance.” She protested that her inactivity was not because of disinterest, but because of her ignorance about how to participate in her children’s school.

Literature suggests that immigrant parents’ unfamiliarity or ignorance results in relatively less participation in the school (Carreon, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Lee, 1995), and that their participation pattern is misunderstood by school personnel as the parents’ disinterest in their children’s schooling (Chavkin & Williams, 1989). However, according to Williams and Chavkin (1985), many immigrant mothers have interest in their children’s schooling, but they despair over their inability to participate in their children’s schooling.

The following excerpt is Kyung’s story relevant to her struggles when she supported Tiffany and Jacob:

Interviewer: What kinds of difficulties did you have before, when you interacted with school or teachers?

Kyung: At that time, it was hard for me to communicate with teachers, so I avoided visiting school. But I am free from that kind of anxiety. I can send a note or email to the teacher now.

Interviewer: What was the reason you did not communicate well with the teachers? Is that because of the language issue?

Kyung: Well. The English issue was critical! The hardest thing that has hurt me, was going to a teacher-parent conference. At that time, I really wanted to know about my children, and I had many questions in my mind to ask to the teacher regarding my children. But I could speak only a few words to the teacher and just listened. Actually, an American teacher usually mentions encouraging points about the child. (laughs) I appreciated it, but I always came back home depressed because I had barely asked anything and didn't tell the teacher what I really wanted to say. (2nd interview)

Kyung pointed out the language issue as the biggest barrier to prevent her from actively participating in school. Their language difference is one of the major reasons that Korean immigrant parents struggle when they interact with teachers and other school personnel (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Yang & McMullen, 2003). Because of a lack of English skill, Kyung felt anxiety and inability whenever she attended teacher-parent conferences.

Different from her last experience with Tiffany and Jacob, Kyung was now confident about supporting Grace because she has become familiar with the school system and the culture and even the language through the experiences with her two older children. During interviews, she frequently mentioned her determination to provide better support for Grace.

Based on her belief, Kyung was actively engaged in Grace's school activities, and she had the responsibility of being a room mother. Considering that Grace is her last child, her active participation in Grace's schooling has been different from research findings (Stevenson & Baker, 1987) that parents are likely to be more involved in their first child's school activities. The discrepancy may have come from the fact that Kyung is an immigrant--different from parents in Stevenson and Baker's (1987) study--, so she hesitated to participate in school activities for her older children due to her unfamiliarity. This assumption is supported by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) in their study about what factors influence parental involvement decisions. According to them, self-efficacy is one of the major factors influencing parental decisions as to whether to get involved in school activities, and parents who have high self-efficacy tend to participate more, while low self-efficacy parents do not (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

When we had the second interview, she was no longer the room mother this year because of conflicts of her schedule with the meeting times and her need to give Jacob a ride for his band activities. Asked whether she wanted to keep being a room mother volunteer for Grace after Jacob goes to college, she answered;

Kyung: Well. (smiles) Grace asks me to volunteer for different positions such as the library or cafeteria. Volunteer work is needed on a daily basis for those places so I should come to school more frequently than I have been lately.

Grace likes it that I show up as much as possible at her school. But I said to her it would be hard for me to volunteer.

Interviewer: What did she say?

Kyung: She is stubborn. She said to me, “Mom, some mothers who speak English poorer than you can volunteer, too.” (laughs) Actually nowadays I have started work, so it may be hard, but is there any option for me? (smiles) My daughter asks me to volunteer, so I should go volunteer.

Interviewer: Do you believe that, if you volunteer, then that benefits Grace?

Kyung: Of course! Actually, when I attended a room mother meeting, other room mothers asked me my daughter’s name. While we work together, then we get to know each other’s child’s name, and we can be close to the teacher. Although teachers do not show favoritism because of a mother’s volunteering, they recognize her name at least. (2nd interview)

Kyung believed her volunteering gave advantages for Grace, even though they were not direct. However, the main reason that drove her to participate in Grace’s school was the desire to fulfill her role as a mother for Grace--different from her older children-- and because of Grace’s request. This finding is in accord with research that reports parents’ beliefs about their role are the most powerful factors that influence their decisions about school participation (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Kyung wanted to participate actively at school and showed confidence about her volunteering. This was active participation, compared to her participation for Tiffany and Jacob. The feeling of guilt about Tiffany and Jacob has driven her to volunteer more on Grace’s behalf, to compensate for her previous lack of support for the older children and she is confident about her ability to interact with school personnel as well as to talk at parents-teacher conferences. This ability has developed because she has become familiar with American school culture and language through her prior experiences with Tiffany and Jacob.

Community

Due to the economic issue, Kyung did not regularly enroll Grace in any other program except Korean language school, but she has registered her for some classes at the Recreation Center during summer break. The only extracurricular class Grace was currently taking was Korean language schooling. Kyung considered Korean language school as one of the activities for Grace's schooling.

Kyung: I think learning Korean is important for children. Language is strongly connected with the emotion of the nation. Jacob and Grace were born here, and Tiffany came when she was very young, so they do not have any memory about Korea. So I plan to let them know about Korea because it is their parents' country. They need to know about the country and a Korean's emotion if they are to understand us [parents]. And learning Korean is the best way to teach about Korea.

Interviewer: Do you think understanding Korea and learning Korean is helpful for Grace's schooling?

Kyung: Of course! For my children, Korea is not only my country but also their country too. It may sound strange, but they always keep in mind that they are of Korean descent. Korean language school helps them to maintain their identity as Koreans and to have pride in that. Having pride in their ethnicity, so they have good self-identity, not shame about their ethnicity, is an essential factor for immigrant children to succeed in this country. (1st interview)

As she pointed out Korean immigrant children's struggle with their identity before, when she talked about the importance of communication with their children, Kyung believed that having a positive self-identity is important for immigrant

children to succeed in this society. She insisted that learning Korean helps her children to maintain their national spirit as Koreans, which connects them with their parents. According to Kyung, children can have a positive self-identity that is related to their success in school through getting awareness and pride in their ethnicity.

For Grace to learn Korean, Kyung decided to register Grace in Korean language school. Korean language school is a special institution to teach Korean for Korean immigrants in the United States, and it plays an important role for them to maintain their identity for generations (Jo, 2001).

Besides Korean school, Kyung wanted for Grace to have other extracurricular activities since she believed learning extracurricular activities strengthens children's affinity for the same group, but she could not do that due to their economic difficulty. Kyung confessed she has had struggles to support her children because of her limited time and finances. While Kyung expressed her confidence about teaching Grace or volunteering at her daughter's school, as she evaluated herself, Kyung believed that she "does not provide sufficient support" for Grace's other activities besides at home and at school.

The following excerpt shows how she felt about her situation:

Interviewer: You said you do not provide sufficient support, then can you explain more about what is insufficient in your opinion?

Kyung: I think I should take her [Grace] various places, such as events or travel to other cities to widen her perspective. But I could not do that because of not only time concern but also financial difficulty. That is so painful for me as a mother. I needed to focus on surviving in this other country, so I did not take care

of my children well before. It is still going on Grace, even though the situation is much better now.

Interviewer: So do you think the reason you did not have enough time with your children is that you were busy with your business?

Kyung: Yes. When I came here, my husband and I had lots of stress. At that time, we were at a fork in the road. Survive or die. Everything was unfamiliar to us. Even the grocery shop we owned was the first business for us. So we put all our time and energy into the business. I was really sorry for Tiffany and Jacob, but, even if I were back at that time, I would do things the same way. There was no choice for me. (3rd interview)

According to Kim (1998), the fear of not surviving is another issue that plagues immigrant mothers, and Kyung is no exception. Kyung's expression, "survive or die," is frequently seen in other research studies about immigrant parents, and the anxiety that the immigrants feel drives them to devote their time and energy to their jobs. This tends to cause them to suffer from a shortage of time for their children. Kyung felt guilty about this, but she also bitterly admitted she had no option at that time and she would do the same thing again, if she were in the same situation again.

Financial pressures are another issue that has preoccupied Kyung as she has supported her children, and it is entangled with her concern about her limited time for her children. Different from the other Korean mothers in this study who have a middle-class background and are home-makers, Kyung has a relatively low SES background, so she is forced to play the role of a co-breadwinner with her husband. Kyung wanted to register Grace for other extra activities or to go on a trip to another city, but it would be a burden for her family.

Instead of taking extracurricular activities after school, Kyung used the library for Grace to read and to hear story time. However, recently Kyung has felt the necessity to give more various experiences to Grace such as going to a museum.

Kyung: I used to take Grace to the library, and we came back home after my taking time with her to read or to hear story time. But, nowadays, I think Grace needs more experience than just what I have given her before.

Interviewer: What do you mean “more experience”?

Kyung: Like a museum, for example.

Interviewer: Have you taken Grace to a museum before?

Kyung: No. Actually, when she was in Pre-K, she went to the children’s museum for the field trip. At that time, I accompanied her. But, after that, we did not go again to the museum.

Interviewer: Can I ask why you did not go to the museum with Grace?

Kyung: (Laugh). Actually, not only with Grace. I have never gone those kinds of places with my children—Tiffany, Jacob, and Grace. When Tiffany and Jacob were young, I was really busy with my business, so I had no time. And, for Grace, well (pauses and hesitates), it may be because I am lazy. I feel guilty about them.

(1st interview)

Kyung believed various experiences contribute to developing children’s creativity and to widening their mental ability, which is related to their schooling. Kyung rued her inability to take her children to a museum or other places such as community events. According to Kyung, she was now relatively free--compared to her previous situation with Tiffany and Jacob--even though she had a job, but she could not go to the museum and other activities. She found fault with her laziness.

She ascribed all the responsibility to herself because of her “laziness,” and this led her to feel guilty.

However, in the third interview, which was conducted one year after this interview, she was excited to share her experience of participating in a community event. (Festival) As an activity of the Korean language school, Grace participated in a fashion show in a community cultural festival. Even though the activity was not initiated by her but by the Korean language school, Kyung was proud of Grace and her participation in the festival. This initial participation helped her escape from her anxiety and gave her confidence to continue her participation in community-based programs.

It is reported that parents’ participation is related to the parental ability to gather information regarding school-related events. However, many immigrant parents do not know where they can gather information regarding school-related events, and the lack of information lowers their chances for participation in cultural activities on a community basis (Lareau, 1989). To the question of the sources where she gets the necessary information, Kyung answered as follows.

Kyung: I know I can find that information from the Internet or the newspaper.

Interviewer: Have you searched for that information from the Internet?

Kyung: Not for the information but usually I found information about what I want there.

Interviewer: When you said the newspaper, is it Korean or American?

Kyung: (Laugh) Of course, Korean. Sometimes, I am too busy to read even a Korean newspaper. Usually, I ask other Korean mothers in order to get information.

Different from the research finding (Lareau, 1989) that reports immigrant parents' struggles with gathering information, Kyung was confident about finding information and knew resources for information. However, in retrospect during the first interview, she stated her struggle to gather information to support her older children—especially the first one, Tiffany-- and this supports the findings (Lareau, 1989).

I have been feeling guilty about my children, especially Tiffany. I could not give her advice. When she decided to go to a university, I could not give her any advice (miserable face). Actually, I wanted to help her so I tried to search for information from the Internet, and I realized it is beyond my control. So, Tiffany did everything for herself. (1st interview)

The difference may have been because she had learned from her previous experience with her older children.

It is a distinguishing feature that the primary ways she used for gathering information are through her Korean friends and sometimes from the Internet, while she showed confidence about finding information from the Internet or the newspaper. Later, when I asked about the discrepancy between her beliefs and her practices, she answered like this:

Well. I can search for a lot of information through the Internet, and I am not doubtful about my ability to find good information. But, I think, for me, as an immigrant, it takes time. If I were an American, I wouldn't even search for some information, but I would just know that information. That is the big difference. So I cannot escape from the feeling that I always fall behind other, American mothers. (3rd interview)

Kyung felt she was behind native-born American mothers regarding gathering information--not because of her inability to find information, but because of her unfamiliarity with the U.S. system. Even though she was good at searching the Internet, she also admitted it took time to find the information she was looking for. This brought her a feeling of defeat. However, to compensate for her lack of cultural knowledge, she used the alternative way--she asks other Korean mothers instead of searching for the information herself. She was satisfied with this because, by using her social network as her resource to get information, she can save effort, as well as her time.

In sum, Kyung, as a mother of three children, has had more experiences with the American school system, and these experiences helped her to support Grace better than she had supported her older children—Tiffany and Jacob. According to her belief, schooling included everything relevant to a child--not only studies but also social abilities.

Kyung helped when Grace studied math and did her homework at home. She was an active participant at Grace's school and was a room mother last year. She also believed that learning Korean and extra activities in community programs could be related to Grace's schooling. However, due to the economic difficulty, it was hard to register Grace for community programs except Korean language school. Kyung believed learning Korean is important for Korean immigrant children like Grace to keep a positive identity, so she emphasized to her children the importance of learning Korean.

Through her experiences with her first two children, Kyung has accumulated enough knowledge and English skill to support Grace, even though she still struggles

with other difficulties: lack of knowledge about the school system, time and financial difficulties, and unfamiliarity with cultural activities.

While her prior experience helped Kyung in supporting Grace, it also gave Kyung an inferior feeling--even though she currently did many activities for Grace--, so that she deplored her inability whenever she could not do something for Grace. She confessed her “left-behind” feeling in comparison with other American mothers.

Resilience: I could not do well before but I am getting confidence this time.

In Kyung’s story the opposing sentiments of frustration and volition are mingled. She has felt frustrated from the last experiences with her older children and disempowered. She struggled to participate in Tiffany’s and Jacob’s schooling because of her lack of English skill, lack of cultural knowledge, and her limited resources—time, money, and human.

Those difficulties influenced her to lose her sense of efficacy. The defeatism and guilty feelings about her older children—Tiffany and Jacob— were another principal focus of entire interviews with her whenever she mentioned her active volunteering for Grace.

While she felt disempowered, she had prepared herself for supporting Grace well this time. During her interviews, Kyung showed confidence about participating in Grace’s schooling, and this could be seen from her repeated remarks: “Now I can do it.” Through her experiences caring for her older children and living in the United States, she has acquired English skill and knowledge about the American educational system, and those achievements contributed to the recuperation of her damaged sense of self-efficacy.

This drew her to actively participate in Grace's schooling, even though there still remained the financial difficulty. Her changed attitude toward school participation went along with her increased sense of efficacy. This is supported by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's (1997) research, in which they insisted parents who have a high sense of efficacy tend to participate in their children's schooling while low self-efficacy parents tend to participate less.

However, despite her active involvement in Grace's schooling, Kyung lost her confidence easily and lamented her previous lack of support for her older children, whenever she mentioned her present readiness to support Grace.

In sum, different from her past disempowered experience with her older children, Kyung was able to empower herself by acquiring the necessary tools to participate in Grace's schooling. Even though she also easily lost confidence and deplored her immigrant status, because of her prior negative experiences, nonetheless, she drove herself to compensate her past inability for Grace. Kyung has been recovering her self-efficacy despite her prior experiences with her older children and tried to participate actively on behalf of her youngest child.

Kyung's story makes a good comparison to Jae's story, which is introduced next. Jae is similar to Kyung in terms of the negative prior experiences. However, Jae's response in dealing with those experiences was different from Kyung's. Jae's story helps to understand how she perceived and reacted toward her experiences.

JAE'S STORY

Background

Jae and her husband, Hoon immigrated 12 years ago to the United States with their first daughter Sora when she was 1 year old. Yura was born 7 years ago, and now their family consists of Jae, Hoon, Sora (now a middle school student), and Yura (first grade). The other family members of both Jae and Hoon reside in Korea.

Hoon graduated from a university and worked at a trading company in Korea. After immigration, Hoon ran an international trading company in a metropolitan city on the East Coast. However, due to the economic depression, Hoon decided to downsize his company and changed its location to Korea. So they moved back Korea when Sora was in 4th grade and Yura was 4 years old. However, Jae's family decided to come back to America, and they moved in Hope City two years ago.

Jae also graduated from a university in Korea, but she has been a full-time homemaker since she got married, instead of pursuing her career. She evaluated her English proficiency as being at a medium level, so she has no big problem communicating with teachers at conferences. Jae described herself as not shy rather as a forthright being. While we had interviews, she frequently talked about her characteristics: "Well! I am not a person who does not dare to ask or request something of someone. I am not afraid to ask anything if I think I missed something important." However, Jae also evaluated herself as too "lazy" a mother to support Yura well, compared to other mothers who support their children actively.

Since moving to Hope City from Korea, Jae has been busy because of Sora, Yura's older sister, who had struggled in her new school. So Jae has had few chances to explore Hope City and to associate with people. However, as Sora became adjusted

to her new environment, Jae has been able to afford to pay attention to other things. She believed it was perfect timing that Yura entered kindergarten after Sora finished her adjustment to the new environment.

Jae confessed she felt a little guilty about her daughters since she is an immigrant, so she cannot teach the major (American) culture to them. Jae continued to talk with a brief sigh, “Of course I don’t want to raise them in the American way; however, sometimes I feel guilty about them, that, if I did that, it would be easier for them to adjust here.”

Perception of Schooling

Jae believed that schooling includes studying, building friendships, and learning rules that a child needs to follow, no matter their preference. Different from her broad concept of schooling, she answered the only parental actions relevant to schooling that parents may get involved in are through volunteering at the school and sending things that a teacher needs in their class, when she responded to the question of “How can you participate in Yura’s schooling.” However, she described other activities when she got a more detailed question such as “Do you think helping with Yura’s homework is related to her schooling?”

She was not confident about her support for Yura’s schooling. Jae evaluated herself by saying that she did not support Yura well—not because Yura is the second child, but because she believed children are supposed to do their work for themselves.

Examination of Involvement Practice

Home

Jae helped Yura and Sora to finish their homework at home, and she believed it was helpful for their schooling. While Jae described her supports for her children,

she appended her previous comments about her limitations with helping with homework by adding,

I can help Yura now. Because Yura is just a kindergarten student now [it is easy]. But this will continue only until she becomes a 3rd grader. After 3rd grade, I can't help her any more because it is too difficult for me. In reality, I cannot help with Sora's homework anymore. Her [Sora's] English level is beyond me. (1st interview)

Jae lamented her limited ability to help with Yura's homework during certain years. Even though she earned a B.A. degree in Korea, her English skill restricted her helping with homework up to 3rd grade. Jae did not consider her current supporting as a full contribution for her children, rather as an unstable one because of its time limitations.

In addition to helping her children with their academic development, Jae also believed that helping children to build friendships is one of the important supports for their schooling. To support Yura to do that, Jae knew that she needed to invite other children in Yura's classroom to play with her. However, Jae had not invited other children to her house. She felt guilty for Yura's sake about it, but she did not want to invite Yura's friends to their house. To the question of why she was reluctant to invite Yura's friends into her house, Jae answered as follows:

It is uncomfortable... I am really concerned about how to treat her friends because they belong to a totally different culture [American culture], so I don't know what I need to do for them. Also, in this culture, parents accompany their children. So, if I invite Yura's friend, then her mom will come with her, and it

means I need to entertain her. (laughing with shuddering) That is the worst part.

(1st interview)

Jae's anxiety about a situation in which she would lead a conversation with another American mother in English prevented her from supporting Yura to develop the child's social ability. Jae confessed she felt it was a burden to try to get along with other American mothers both because of language differences and because of their having no shared topic that they could talk about. As Jae mentioned, she regarded American mothers as belonging to a "totally different culture," so she assumed it would be hard to find common topics to discuss with them. This hesitation associated with other American mothers due to the uncomfortable feeling led Jae to evaluate her support as insufficient (Costigan, & Koryzma, 2010).

School

Jae believed participation in school events is related to children's schooling but that volunteering is not needed to support children. So she tried to participate in all school events which parents should attend, such as parents' night, teacher-parent conferences, and school opening day; however, she did not volunteer at Yura's school regularly. She also checked the teacher's wish lists often and has sent some items on her lists. To the question of the reason why she did not volunteer, she answered me with a self-scoring smile: "I think it [volunteering] is all a useless thing." (1st interview) She did not believe that volunteering itself is not useful to any mothers and their children; however, it was useless--at least for her as an immigrant mother. She confessed about her volunteering experience in which she had gotten the impression that her volunteering was not useful.

When Sora was in elementary school, I believed I needed to attend every meeting. Since Sora was my first child, and, in addition, I was new in the United States, I had no information about school. I had attended all the meetings and even the PTA meeting. However, when I went to the PTA meeting, I could not speak out at all-- not only because of my English skill but also because I had no knowledge about the topic. They talked policy, not only about the school and but also about their ISD and even about middle school and high school. While they talked about the broad school system in the ISD, the principal addressed the issues about our school. Whenever I attended the meeting, I had been thinking, "Why I am here? Don't I waste my time?" After several times attending the meetings, I decided to quit PTA attendance. (1st interview)

At first, when Jae started to volunteer, she thought that participation is a duty as a parent. Even after she realized it is voluntary, she continued to attend the PTA meetings because she wanted to contribute to the school through her participation. Her belief about the role of a parent drew her to the PTA meetings for a while (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

However, as she participated more, she was coming to lose her confidence that her attendance would contribute to the school, because not only could she not take part in their discussions, but also she could not understand them at all. When Jae started to attend in the PTA meetings, she had no knowledge about American culture and the school system because she was a newcomer in the United States. While she was in the meeting, the topics that were discussed alienated and silenced her. Different from her expectation that, if she kept attending, then she could become accustomed to the issue, Jae was getting tired due to the feeling that she was wasting

her time. She evaluated her attendance as having no meaning for both herself and for the other people who were in the meeting, because she did not get involved in any discussion. Jae miserably said in retrospect that she got the impression that her volunteering was unwelcomed.

This feeling of being an unwanted volunteer was found in other literature about immigrant parents. Immigrant mothers are inclined to hesitate or cease volunteering because of their impression that their volunteering is not welcomed or is not useful (Scott-Jones, 1988; Turney & Kao, 2009). The feeling results in low efficacy of the parents, so that many minority parents lose their power and motivation, even despite their anticipation of their children's positive outcomes (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). The prior experience with Sora made her feel disempowered and also created a negative influence on Jae's decision about future participation in Yura's school and she firmly declared that—for her--volunteering was not useful for supporting her children. Due to that impression of the “uselessness” of her efforts, she stopped her participating in the PTA meetings. Instead, Jae supported her children at home and through other activities.

Jae's active volunteering for Multicultural Day last year is an example that proved that Jae's feeling of inefficacy from her prior experiences with Sora had influenced her passive participation pattern. Jae volunteered for the Korean team to perform the Korean traditional dance at Multicultural Day in school. At that time, four Korean mothers initiated meeting for the event, and Jae was one of the members. They gathered other Korean mothers to attend the event. Many Korean mothers joined with their children and practiced with their children for one-and-a-half months. The

audience ardently applauded their dance. Jae explained what made her want to be active for the event.

Well...because someone was needed who could organize the Korean team at that time. And nobody [no Korean mother] volunteered for it so Jiwon and I decided to volunteer at first, and we asked Hyo and Chae if they wanted to volunteer.

(laughing) (2nd interview)

Unlike the unwanted feeling from her prior experiences, Jae pointed out the feeling of being needed by someone as the drive that moved her to volunteer for the event. Since the multicultural event tends to be perceived as a showcase for “other” cultures, i.e., not American culture, even though it is indeed one of the cultures in America (Derman-Sparks & the ABC Task Force, 1989), Jae, as a Korean immigrant mother, felt responsibility for the event to introduce Korean culture, while American mothers did not feel that way. Jae and three other mothers were the same ones who felt more responsibility for the event. Jae thought there was “nobody [no Korean mother] volunteered for it,” but that “someone was needed.” She believed she could be a “someone.”

Also, Jae was confident about organizing and leading the Korean mothers’ group. Since she believed it would be under control before she volunteered for the event, Jae initiated, with other mothers, arranging for the Korean team. Her sense of efficacy with the activity has contributed to her decision to get involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Jae’s volunteering contributed to the successful performance of the Korean team, so that she had a sense of efficacy from her volunteering. However, this sense of efficacy was not connected to her future active volunteering at Excellent School.

For this, Jae explained “because it is different. I thought I could control the event, so I did it, but for the other activities that I need to work with other mothers [American mothers], those are beyond my control.” (2nd interview) Jae pointed out her concerns about her English and other potential problems.

In addition to the unwanted feeling, Jae also was disappointed about her volunteering, so that she has stopped volunteering. When Jae started to volunteer at first, she expected she could become closer to the classroom teacher. She believed it would be beneficial for her child, but she did not feel any difference between before and after her volunteering--not only with respect to the relationship with the teacher, but also as to the teacher’s attention to her daughter. Jae blamed herself that, because she could not speak English and was not accustomed to the relationships with Americans, she and the teacher did not develop a relationship.

The third factor influencing her decision to stop her volunteering was her uncomfortable feeling whenever she volunteered.

Jae: Since I don’t work alone but work together with other American mothers, there are many uncomfortable things for me.

Interviewer: What is uncomfortable?

Jae: Well...I feel like I cannot blend in with them [American mothers].

Interviewer: Why do you think you cannot get along well with them?

Jae: The language issue may be the biggest reason.

Interviewer: As far as I know, isn’t your English pretty good?

Jae: (chuckles) Not that much! I can understand in general, but, if they [Americans] talk fast to each other in the movie, I need to repeat it several times

to understand their conversation. I have lived here a long time, but how long I have been here is a totally different matter from how well I can speak English.

Interview: Then, if your English skill were not an issue for you, could you expect different results to come?

Jae: (chuckles) Well, I think there would be no difference!

Interviewer: Why? Why do you think like that?

Jae: Frankly speaking, my character is not like that. Consider my personality; I am not the person who is afraid of confronting challenges due to my English skill. I was not blocked by some other reasons; rather it would be better to find a cause in myself. That is my fault! I just hesitate to volunteer by myself. I feel my limitation whenever I volunteer.

Interviewer: Can you explain more specifically what does “the limitation” mean that you felt?

Jae: As an immigrant, neither English nor the culture is comfortable for me. Actually, at that time [when she volunteered for Sora], it was just 3-4 years that had passed since I had arrived in the United States, so it was worse than now. I volunteered if the school asked me to and attended all the PTA meetings. I did the best I could. However, one day I realized I could do only trivial tasks. It cannot be explained. (She draws a line with her hand.) It seems like there is an invisible line. If you go over the line, you are looked at as doing too much and being obtrusive. (2nd interview)

In this narration, Jae compressed various negative feelings into the word “uncomfortable.” Jae experienced feelings of isolation while she participated in PTA. She had difficulties associating with other American mothers (Sohn & Wang, 2006).

She pointed out the language issue as the main reason. The language issue has been found by research studies about other immigrant parents. Immigrant parents' lack of English skill has been considered one of the major factors that block immigrant parents' school participation because it obstructs immigrant parents from communicating with the school, with other parents, and with school personnel (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Turney & Kao, 2009; Yang & McMullen, 2003).

Not only language but also cultural differences make it uncomfortable for immigrant mothers to get along with American mothers (Sohn & Wang, 2006). That uncomfortable feeling again influenced Jae to be intimidated and fearful of going over the "line."

Jae also experienced frustration because of an invisible limitation that restricts her participation. Jae could have access to volunteering; however, she did not have access to doing important tasks but always did "trivial tasks". Also, she could not be active, but was expected to be passive, and she was exhausted by the situation. Jae mentioned her exclusion experience with the expression of there being an "invisible line" that blocked her role from including anything but trivial tasks. The invisible and euphemistic exclusion has been raised by researchers who have studied immigrant /minority parents. Jae could not stand her situation, in which she needed to be passive and do "trivial tasks," so she opted out of the group. This passive resistance was the only way she felt she could react against the powerful mothers in the PTA meetings

Through negative feelings such as inefficacy, feeling unwanted, isolation, and feeling restricted during her last experience, Jae had become disempowered and decided to opt out of volunteering actively for the school. She chose to keep minimal

attendance at meetings that were required by school such as teacher-parent conferences, family night, or orientation.

Community

To the question of what kinds of other supports Jae is doing for her children besides activities at home and at school, she picked after-school activities and Korean language school. Yura was taking art class and swimming class as her after-school activities. Sora got tutoring lessons for English and math and took one class from a Korean private academy, which is called a “Hagwon,” for math. About hiring a tutor and using a “Hagwon,” she stated, “Because Sora is a middle school student, so I believe, it is time for me to devote all my efforts to her academic success.” (1st interview) Different from her feeling about her inadequate support for homework for Yura, Jae was quite satisfied with using a tutor or “Hagwon” for Sora. Jae had confidence this was a good thing for Sora and she planned also to hire a tutor for Yura when she entered middle school. She explained more about the reason for hiring a tutor for Sora:

Interviewer: Why do you hire a tutor and enroll Sora in Hagwon?

Jae: The main reason is because I am not able to teach her myself. She is beyond me. Actually, my husband, too [is not able to teacher her].

Interviewer: As I know, Sora’s grades are always in the top 5%, right? Does she still need extra tutoring?

Jae: She needs more. Also, the other mothers do the same thing [for their children], so, if only she does not get tutoring, she will be less competitive.

Interviewer: Who are the other mothers? Do you mean Korean mothers?

Jae: No. Not only Korean, even American mothers hire tutors for their children, too. They are even more enthusiastic. If you look at American mothers who support their children, you can realize a Korean mother's support is nothing, compared to theirs. (She smiles bitterly.) We cannot even follow them. I was shocked [to see their fervent support].

Korean mothers are famous for their high fever for education, right? But American mothers devote all of their time to their children. They are their child's driver, schedule manager, and even counselor for academic decisions. Also, even though our Korean children get tutoring, usually the mothers take their children to the tutors. But, Americans, if they are financially affluent, they make the tutors visit their house. They do not move. They move others. What should I do for Sora? I cannot afford to hire home-visit tutors, but, at least, I have money to enroll Sora in Hagwon and to pay for tutoring, even though we move a little bit. I think it is good for both Sora and me.

Interviewer: Do you believe American mothers are fervent about education?

Jae: Definitely! They invest more time and money in their children, so that we [Koreans] cannot get on even ground with them. Even now I feel there is a certain gap between us that I never overcome. Also, there are differences in culture and language between us. If I don't hire a tutor for Sora, then she will be defeated in school. (3rd interview)

To help Sora's studies, Jae used tutors and academic institutions as her resources, and she believed this was an effective way to promote Sora's academic scores, rather than teaching her herself. The idea of hiring tutors or using "Hagwon" for a child's studies is common in Korea (Zhou, 2006), and Jae also used to learn

from a tutor or at “Hagwon” in Korea. However, the reason she used tutors or “Hagwon” was, not only because of her experiences in Korea but also because of her new standard from American mothers. Jae used the standard of “other mothers,” which meant American mothers, especially White upper-middle-class mothers, to prove the correctness of her actions. The idea to hire a tutor was initiated from her prior experiences in Korea at first, but the idea was sanctioned by the upper-middle-class American mothers’ similar actions.

From her experience, Jae realized the existence of “enthusiastic American mothers” who belong to the upper-middle class (Lareau, 1989), and she set her standards in reference to those of American mothers, who are devoted to their children’s education, and she tried to measure up to her standards, which were similar to their ways. This attitude of awareness of the upper-middle class American’s norm has been seen in her responses throughout our interviews. For examples, as for the present to the teacher, Jae answered, “American mothers give presents more frequently to their teacher,” and, as for the fervor for education, she answered, “We Koreans are not a big deal. If you look at American mothers who support their children... (shakes her head). We can’t beat them.” (1st interview)

Through consistent comparison with other upper-middle-class American mothers, Jae got approval for her ways and made decisions about her children. However, on the other hand, she also could not avoid getting an inferior feeling from the comparison, because of the relatively fewer resources that she could use. She expressed her feeling as “I feel there is a certain gap between us that I never overcome”; “We Koreans are not a big deal”; “A Korean mother’s support is

nothing,” or “They invest more time and money in their children so that we [Koreans] cannot gain ground against them.”

However, despite all her negative feelings, Jae was quite satisfied with her current support for Yura--and even for Sora--to help with their after-school activities. This is different from her response, which showed dissatisfaction about helping Yura with her homework, because, while she felt inferior when she could not help with homework, Sora’s work--such as middle school math or essay-writing--needed more professional help, so it was a comfort for her to use tutoring or “Hagwon”, as she said: “Even American mothers hire tutors for their children, too.” Jae admitted she could not beat affluent American mothers on the economic resources front, but she found the negotiation points from “Hagwon” to support Sora, as was shown through her response: “I cannot afford to hire home-visit tutors, but, at least, I have money to enroll Sora in “Hagwon” and to pay for tutoring, even though we move a little bit.” Jae confessed that her way was not exactly the same as the best one; however, also she admitted that her way was the best that she could do for her children.

While Jae was aware of American mothers as her standard when she made decisions about the education of her children, she could not escape from feeling less confidence about her ability to use information resources, as well as to use financial resources for her daughters.

American mothers and I are different, even at the starting point. They have been here since their birth, and they are familiar with this society and its system, while I am a stranger here. To get certain information, I need to use my full energy and resources to find it out, but Americans can just get it. That is so natural to them. It means I need to do my best, but sometimes I can access only

partial information, while they barely make any effort, but they already know it. That is a big difference! All the information I desperately try to find out is sometimes just a basic part of their lives. Also, even the quality of the resources we can access is different! We Korean mothers share our information with each other, and the teachers' pool also includes Koreans, but American mothers ask their homeroom teachers directly to recommend a good teacher for a certain subject as a private tutor. We [Korean mothers] cannot imagine that! Even though both Korean and American children get tutoring, their levels are a totally different matter. (3rd interview)

Due to her unfamiliarity with American society, Jae struggled with finding the information that she needed for supporting her children. As she said, while a certain piece of information is "so natural to" Americans, so they "can just get it," she needed to strive to obtain the information, spending her time and energy. This was not only Jae's struggle. According to Lareau (1989), immigrant mothers are struggling to find information and due to their lack of a pool of information resources, it tends to happen that they cannot get adequate information that they need.

Jae also believed Girl Scout activities could be a possible way to support her children's schooling. Just like her attitude toward school volunteering, she considered that Girl Scouting might be effective for others, but not for her children. According to Jae, she supported Sora's Girl Scout activities when Sora was in elementary school but she does not get involved in it for Yura. For the question why she does not make Yura take part in Girl Scout activities, Jae answered me, "Umm. There is no specific reason. Just without reason, nowadays, I hesitate to participate in school activities. Girl Scouting is really demanding." (3rd interview)

However, later, Jae confessed her real reason for not wanting to do it this time: that she was uncomfortable about getting along with other American parents since “I could not jump into their dialogue. Even now, sometimes it is hard to talk with them if they talk about a certain topic or if they speak too fast. And, at that time, my English was poor so it was hard.” (3rd interview) The experience of difficulty in associating with other parents when she supported Sora made her feel disempowered, and it resulted in her not supporting the activity for Yura.

Jae believed learning Korean is strongly related to her children’s schooling, so she registered her children for Korean language school. For the question of why she believed learning Korean is related to her children’s schooling, Jae stated that:

Learning Korean may not be useful for the present, because they [her children] are in a U.S. school. However, I believe language is bound up with emotional communication. Actually, if I speak something emotional in English, then it may not deliver my subtle meaning to her. I wish my children can feel the same thing that I feel. Also, considering their family--not only us but also their grandparents... [they need to learn Korean]. Actually, only we are here. Other family members are in Korea. If they cannot speak Korean, they are detached from us [Korean heritage]; then they are nothing--neither American, nor Korean. If they have a firm identity as Korean descendants, it will help them overcome struggles when they confront any issues relevant to their identity. (3rd interview)

Jae insisted using the same language is an essential condition for better communication emotionally. Just like Kyung, she was anxious about the identity issue that her children would confront in the future. Jae believed her support for her

children was to help them have a positive identity as Korean descendants and that learning Korean would be an effective way to develop it (Jo, 2001).

In sum, Jae believed that schooling includes studying, building friendships, and learning to follow rules. Throughout all the interview procedures, Jae described herself as a lazy supporter for Yura's schooling.

Despite her harsh self-evaluation, Jae helped with Yura's studies and homework at home and with after-school activities and Korean language school such as community-based activities. Also, she tried to participate in all school-relevant meetings except PTA meetings.

Her support for Yura--except home activities-- showed considerable differences from her support for Sora, who is her first daughter. Jae confessed this difference was not because Yura is her second daughter but because she realized, from her experience with Sora, that her active participation was not related to her children's performance and adaptation— she called it “useless”—because of her inefficacy. Due to her prior involvement experiences for Sora, she had self-inefficacy and decided to opt out of active volunteering at school and in the community, i. e., Girl Scout activities (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Reconciliation: I do not participate because I cannot do it. However, I can do it in my own style.

The most salient feature in the school participation of Jae was her opting-out from trying to be like American parents. It is obvious that Jae sensed how American, especially White upper-middle-class mothers participate in their children's schooling (Lareau, 1989), from her remarks whenever she compared herself to other American mothers. Jae became disempowered through consistent comparing of herself with

White middle-class counterparts. She frequently mentioned, “We cannot even follow them,” or “We Koreans are not a big deal,” which showed her defeatism. Jae set American middle-class mothers’ school involvement methods as her standard to follow and tried to imitate them. This standard made her repeatedly feel disempowered whenever she failed to meet the standard, and this resulted in the cessation of her school volunteering and Girl Scouting

However, while she felt disempowered in some activities especially volunteering at school, she also tried to find an alternative method to support Yura, instead of following American ways.

This attitude did not first begin when she participated in Sora’s schooling; rather, it was her way of reconciling herself to the limitations that she felt after she struggled to follow the American standards that she set for herself.

After she realized she could not get involved in their discussion, Jae stopped attending the PTA Board meetings. Not only for the PTA Board, she also realized her volunteering was neither wanted by others nor did it contribute to the work, because of her lack of English skill and cultural knowledge. Jae decided to opt out of school volunteering; instead, she decided to attend school-related events--as many as she could. Since Jae believed volunteering was not a crucial factor to help Yura’s schooling, she was satisfied with her decision.

Jae also showed a similar attitude to that about her other school involvement activities, such as helping with other extracurricular activities. For example, Jae supported Sora to do the Girl Scout activities when she was an elementary student, but she did not register Yura for the activity. The situation was the same as for the school volunteering: Jae commented about the activity that it “may be helpful but not

important.” Jae added, “If I can support them like other American mothers, then it may be helpful for Yura, but I cannot.” Jae regretted her inability to support Yura and Sora, but she also did something to help her children’s schooling in her own way to compensate for her inability.

Also, the coping strategy for her inability to help with Sora’s studies represents well her attitude about school involvement. Jae admitted her inability to teach her children without discomfort and found an alternative way in the options that she could do. While she explained about tutoring, Jae indicated “tutoring” not only as a unique Korean strategy, but also as a middle-class White American mothers’ way to support their children. Even though she could not hire expensive tutors like upper-middle-class American mothers, she found an affordable tutor for Sora.

In sum, Jae is similar to Kyung in terms of her struggles to participate in her children’s schooling due to language and cultural differences. Also, they both set American upper-middle-class mothers’ school involvement methods as their standard for supporting their children.

However, Jae is different from Kyung as to her coping strategy. While Kyung tried to overcome the influence of her negative experiences and to meet the standards she has set for herself, Jae imprinted the limitation that she felt from her last experience on herself and decided to opt out of the standard; she has tried to find alternative activities within the boundaries of her capabilities: finding a tutor, attending school-related events, and taking Yura to swimming class and Korean language school.

The next story is about Jiwon, who has immigrated the most recently among the participants. Throughout her story, it is possible to compare her participation with

that of Kyung and Jae, and also to know how experiences influence her decision to participate in her son's schooling.

JIWON'S STORY

Background

Jiwon came to the United States 4 years ago with her son Chan (5 years old at that time) and her daughter Seung (2 years old at that time), since her husband, Lee had transferred his company to the United States. All their other family members reside in Korea. Now, Chan is a 3rd grader and Seung is a kindergartener at Excellent Elementary School. Hope City is the first city they have lived in America. After they immigrated, they applied for green cards, and the process has almost entered the last lap.

Lee earned a master's degree and worked as an engineer in Korea. While he worked for his former company in Korea, he got an offer from the current company in the United States and decided to accept the offer. Jiwon graduated from university and had worked for an airline company before she came to the United States; a nanny had cared for Chan and Seung. However, after immigration, Jiwon gave up her career and decided that she would devote herself to taking care of her children. She confessed it was the first time for her to take care of her children by herself and, even though she was nervous about it, but she also believed it would be a chance for her, as well as her children, to build a good relationship.

Jiwon is the most recently immigrated mother among the participant mothers in this study. However, she enthusiastically participated in various activities and gathers information about education. Jiwon pointed out her outgoing and active personality as a major reason for her vigorous participation. To the question of her English proficiency, Jiwon evaluated her English skill as being at a medium level.

Jiwon had no experience with involvement for elementary children before she came to the United States. Although she has experience supporting Chan's schooling in Korea, he was a kindergartener at that time, and being a kindergartner is different from the meaning of what it is in the U.S. school system. While kindergarten is included in the public education system in the United States and is compulsive, it is rather voluntary in the Korean system.

Jiwon evaluated herself as supporting Chan pretty well. According to Jiwon, Chan needed to be acquiring appropriate study habits, rather than just getting currently good academic scores since Chan was just in the 3rd grade.

Perception of Schooling

According to Jiwon, schooling is a concept that includes all activities related to "school curriculum from Math to P.E." To support children's schooling, she believed, parents need to create a supportive environment, not just teach their children directly. She described volunteering, helping with homework, guiding Chan's studies at home, and arranging play dates for him with classmates as her jobs to support Chan's schooling.

Jiwon believed parental involvement in children's schooling is strongly related to the children's adjustment in their school. She stressed the importance of volunteering at school among the various types of parental involvement. If she participated in many school activities in Chan's school, then, she believed, it helped Chan to have a better school life since active volunteering gives the teacher an impression that parents are interested in their child, and the teacher will give more attention to the child in response to the parents' interest. Also, her volunteering could help Chan to occupy a relatively higher peer position, because his classmates

recognized her presence in school, so they considered him valuable. She explained more about her belief:

Children know whenever a mother appears in the school. They even know whether someone's mother has an interest in him/her or not, and it influences the child's relationships with friends. If someone's mom visits school frequently and helps with school events, then her child becomes famous in school. When I look back at my childhood, my mother was an active participant in my school. At that time, my friends envied me, and I could occupy a relatively high position among my friends. (1st interview)

Examination of Involvement Practice

Home

Jiwon believed children's emotional health is an important thing for parents to take care of when they support their children's schooling. She believed that she could help Chan to be an emotionally healthy child by providing good nutrition and a comfortable environment. So Jiwon tried to clean their house before Chan came home after school, and she prepared snacks from scratch, so that Chan could feel emotionally comfortable at home.

Later, Jiwon confessed that her belief about creating an emotionally comfortable atmosphere might be derived from a guilt complex, to compensate for her absence while Chan was young. Before she came to the United States, Jiwon had worked, so she needed to hire a nanny for Chan, and she feels guilty about him because she did not take care of him herself.

Her focus on creating a comfortable atmosphere was also connected with an academic point. According to Jiwon, Chan is in just the 3rd grade, so it is important

now for him to be developing a good attitude about studying and the ability to manage by himself, rather than just getting good grades. Jiwon believed guiding Chan to get appropriate attitudes for study -- reading books every day, doing his homework after school, sitting to study at least 30 minutes at one time, etc.-- was an important way for her to get involved in his schooling.

Jiwon made Chan do the workbook and read books every day. She set a goal together with Chan and encouraged him to achieve it. For example, she assigned Chan the task of reading 100 books 10 times each, since she believed that reading the same book several times was useful to increase children's reading and understanding skills. As for the source of this belief, she stated the idea came from her sister, who lives in Korea. Jiwon made a table to check his reading achievement and has kept encouraging him to complete his task. She focused on the development of Chan's English skills because they had recently immigrated. She also taught Chan math and English herself.

While she explained about her support for Chan's academic area, Jiwon seemed to reassure herself that her current support was useful for Chan, and she did not vacillate about her future plans for him. As for the academic support, she added this additional opinion:

Jiwon: I don't think Chan should go to an Ivy League university. Actually, before I came here, I thought like that. But not now. If he can go to an Ivy League school, then I will love it. However, even if he cannot go to an Ivy League school, that is no problem at all.

Interviewer: Why do you change your belief about the Ivy League schools?

Jiwon: Well (chuckles). I was educated to believe that I needed to enter a good university if I wanted to succeed in Korea. But, it is not the same [situation] here. In America, it seems flexible. There are lots of possibilities. Even though someone is not good at studying, if the person is good at something, he can be happy here. Different [from Korea]!

Interviewer: Then, why do you encourage Chan to study well?

Jiwon: The reason I encourage him to study is that I worry that he may get hurt when he becomes a teenager because he is in a minority group. When he enters middle school, then he may be struggling with his identity. If he studies well, then he will have self-esteem and get pride in his abilities, so that, even if he confronts such a negative situation, he can overcome it without getting hurt emotionally. Of course, it is not the only reason, but it plays a big part. (1st interview)

Jiwon considered academic success as a safeguard to protect Chan from future emotional jeopardy that might harm his self-esteem due to the fact that he is Asian. She worried that Chan might struggle with his identity issue in the future. The concern about a future crisis in self-identity was the same as Kyung's. This concern is also found from other immigrant parents regarding their adolescent children (Phinney, Romero, Nava, & Huang, 2001).

While Jiwon had confidence about supporting the academic area of Chan's schooling, she also admitted that someday she won't be able to help him any longer due to her inability; however, she did not bother herself about it. She commented on that question without hesitation: "At that time, I will hire a tutor for Chan." Jiwon

believed hiring a tutor was another method of giving support that she was able to do for him.

In addition to academic support, Jiwon believed helping Chan to make friends through play dates with other children could be her support for his schooling. However, different from her belief, she has never invited Chan's school friends to her house before. As for the reason, she explained:

If I spoke English better, then I could invite Chan's friends to my home. Actually, not only because of my English skill, but also because of discomfort and embarrassment, I have hesitated to bring them to my house. I am worried that, if I invite them into my house, then their parents will also come to my house so I have never invited Chan's friends to my home. This affects Chan's relationships with his friends. In the beginning of school, Chan, Cooper, and Jacob were close to each other, but now Cooper and Jacob are closer because they had play dates together a lot. One day, I had a sinking feeling when I heard Chan's answer to my question about why he did not use his "lunch with a friend" coupon. He said, "Mom, I have no friend to have lunch with. Cooper used his coupon for Jacob, and there was no friend to have lunch with me." I cannot get rid of the feeling that that is my fault. Different from Cooper's and Jacob's mothers, who support their children to build strong friendships, I cannot help Chan, and, because of my inability, my son lost his chance to get along with his friends. (1st interview)

As she confessed, Jiwon felt guilty that Chan was at a disadvantage for having friends because she could not support play dates for him with his school friends. Jiwon ascribed her noninvolvement in a play dates group to her lack of English skill and of cultural knowledge.

Due to her unfamiliarity with the language and culture in the United States, Jiwon had an uncomfortable feeling toward being a host of other, American mothers. This is also found in Sohn and Wang (2006)'s study: that Korean mothers tend to be uncomfortable trying to get along with American mothers. Jiwon despaired about her incapacity to support Chan, comparing herself to other, American mothers.

To compensate for her deficiency of not supporting Chan's friendships, Jiwon tried to be a counselor for him. She paid more attention to his school life and asked about it whenever he came home after school: whom he played with at school, what activities he did, and what was his favorite thing during schooling. Sometimes she gave advice to Chan about relationships with friends when he talked about his struggles to hang out with friends in school. However, she admitted her advice was not quite helpful for his friendships. She knew how to help Chan make friends faster and make his friendships stronger: She needed to arrange play dates with the mothers of Chan's friends. But she confessed she was not ready to have play dates with Chan's school friends yet.

Jiwon tried to counsel Chan and believed it was a way of being involved in Chan's schooling, not only for his friendship but for all school-related issues. Jiwon tried to give advice about friendships, etiquette, or school rules to him, so she asked about his school life while she took him home after school or at home.

I worry that Chan may be hurt emotionally because he is in a minority here. But, I don't even know this system [the American system]; then how can I help him? Actually, he speaks English better than me. So I try to communicate with Chan as much as I can. I especially listen to him more. I hope to be the shelter where he can rest whenever Chan craves consolation. If he feels that there is at least one

person who always stands by him, then doesn't that make it secure for him? (1st interview)

Jiwon worried that Chan might be hurt emotionally because of his immigrant minority status. So she used a strategy of "counseling and listening to him" to give him a refuge to recharge himself. However, Jiwon struggled to give appropriate advice to him because she did not have school experience in the United States. Since Jiwon understood Chan's struggles only vaguely, she gave at most general advice to him. While she mentioned her struggles, she cynically added with a scornful smile that "I try to give advice to Chan. But, that is all. That is the only thing I can do for him."

Similar to her impression about the effort to give advice about friendship, Jiwon had no confidence that her counseling was helpful for Chan. Because of her lack of knowledge about the school system or the culture of America, she even doubted herself: whether her advice was appropriate for American situations, or, rather, whether it suited customary Korean situations.

School

Volunteering was the activity Jiwon took the most time to discuss in connection with her school involvement. She perceived volunteering to be the most important activity for school involvement.

When Chan was in 1st grade, even though it was only Jiwon's second year in the United States, she worked as a room mother and volunteered to help with several activities. She was one of three room mothers in Chan's class, and she had supported the other two mothers, who are American. Preparing room parties was one of the major duties of room mothers, and they usually gathered with other room mothers and

co-operate with each other for school events, such as the year-end party, field days, or multicultural days.

To the question, “Why are you volunteering so eagerly?” she pointed out that encouraging Chan’s confidence by her frequent presence at school in order to impress his friends, showing her strong interest in him to his teacher, and developing close relationships with teachers, as the reasons for her active volunteering.

However, since last year, after one year of volunteering, she had not volunteered as a room mother any more and had even hesitated about volunteering for other activities. As for the change, she explained:

Recently, I feel it is very hard to volunteer. At first, I was confident about volunteering and actually did it with enthusiasm when Chan was in 1st grade. However, the more I have volunteered, the less confident I was. Since the majority of the PTA was White Americans, I could not break into the group. Of course, the mothers in the PTA have no problem. I know, as long as I am myself, then everything is o.k. However, although White American mothers are nice to me and answer me whenever I try to ask something, I can feel there is a certain wall that is invisible. I cannot be fully assimilated into the group. I am eager to volunteer to support my children; however, more and more I feel too tired to try and that drives me to booze. Nowadays, whenever I am in despair, I ask myself why I am trying to volunteer despite my uncomfortable feeling; this happens whenever I attend the PTA. Even though I don’t volunteer, I think we are o.k. Chan is doing really well in school, so there is no pressing need for me to volunteer. (2nd interview)

It is noteworthy that Jiwon hesitated about volunteering after having had volunteer experiences-- her last active participation, when she had even less experience with American schools. Through her narration, Jiwon showed that the experience negatively influenced her decision on volunteering. While she worked with other American mothers, Jiwon felt it was hard to get along with them and that there was barriers blocking her from getting close to them. As she has experienced those barriers she could not break, Jiwon was getting tired and called off her volunteering. This is a similar finding to the one that foreign-born Black immigrant parents get marginalized and less comfortable as they spend more time in America (Turney & Kao, 2009). For her question to herself of “Why am I trying to volunteer?” the answer she found was that “there is no pressing need to volunteer” because Chan was doing well in his school.

To the question as to what made it hard for her to volunteer, she pointed language issue out first.

Now, I can speak with the mothers of my daughter’s friends. However, when I volunteered as a room mother for Chan, I was more intimidated since I was not quite ready for it, because I had just arrived here at that time. Other room mothers whom I worked with are so nice to me but some mothers never talked to me. There was one mother, and she kept asking me after she finished saying something. “Can you understand what I am saying?” Whenever she asked me the question, her face gave me a totally different message: “You cannot catch on to what I am saying, can you?” It made me really upset. (cynically) I should learn more English! (2nd interview)

The language issue is the most frequently found factor to hinder immigrant parents from participating actively in their children's school (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Yang & McMullen, 2003). Since Jiwon started her volunteering in her second year after she came to America, it was hard for her to speak fluently. However, her listening ability was quite good, so that there was no problem with volunteering for her except for the other mothers' attitudes. Some mothers considered her as being unable to speak English and never talked to her or made sure that she understood what they said. The other mothers' repeated questions to check whether she understood made Jiwon feel upset and humiliated at the same time.

The second issue she picked out that made her hesitate to volunteer was the isolated feeling that was caused from being the only Asian among the room mothers. Whenever the room mothers gathered together to prepare for school events, Jiwon felt uncomfortable, because she was the only foreigner except for a Spanish-speaking mother who had immigrated a long time ago. Even though the other mothers were nice to her, she felt that those people were different from her. The feeling of isolation is also found as one of the major obstacles to block immigrant parents from participating in their children's school (Sohn & Wang, 2006), and it is worse especially when their command of English is poor (Costigan & Koryzma, 2010). Because she was the only foreigner at the meeting, Jiwon was uncomfortable and felt lonely.

Jiwon also picked her lack of knowledge about American culture as a possible reason she stopped her volunteering. At the first interview she did not admit she had difficulties with cultural differences, saying, "I think I am managing the difficulties pretty well now. Maybe [it is possible] because my character is positive and

adventurous.” However, at the second interview, her answer to the question of what was the most unpleasant experience among her volunteer experiences, was related to the issue:

For the year-end party, I made a decoration with candies because the theme of the party was “The Candy Land.” After the party, I asked a room mother who was a vice president of the PTA if I could bring the decoration back to my home. I never forget her face, the way she looked at me. She looked at me strangely as if she could not understand why I wanted it back. It was so unpleasant. Later, I realized that they saved the decorations for later. However, she did not explain that at all, so I did not know. Even now, I cannot forget her face as she looked at me and the message that her eye delivered to me: “You’re really weird!” (2nd interview)

Despite her confident remark at first that the cultural differences were not a big issue for her, she remembered this thing as the worst experience among her volunteer experiences. Later she admitted this experience definitively influenced her decision to stop volunteering. Jiwon interpreted this as happening because of her lack of knowledge about American school culture rather than because of a discrimination issue. The cultural difference has been reported as one of the reasons that obstruct immigrant parents from participating in their children’s school (Koh & Shin, 2006; Sohn & Wang, 2006).

With the unpleasant experiences at PTA meetings, Jiwon damaged her self-confidence and became skeptical about volunteering. This resulted in the suspension of her being a room mother after the one year of volunteering. Jiwon explained about her suspension of volunteering as being because she was physically and mentally

tired from her volunteering. Although Jiwon seemed to perform her volunteer work successfully during the year due to her confident and active characteristics, she also struggled throughout each moment that she had unpleasant experiences and was exhausted. However, it is noteworthy that she assured herself that this was not a permanent but a temporary suspension, whenever she mentioned the suspension. She declared, “I will resume volunteering someday when I am ready for a challenge again. But, not this time. I need a rest. I am too tired now.” (2nd interview)

To the question of why she wants to keep up volunteering instead of giving up, Jiwon explained she thought the experience of volunteering had positive aspects for both Chan and her, even though she had struggles during her volunteering. Since Chan was happy and proud of her volunteering, Jiwon regarded her participation as meaningful for her life. According to a research study, children’s request for their parents to volunteer is one of the most powerful factors for parents to decide in favor of their school involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Also, after finishing the last school year as a room mother, she was satisfied, with a sense of achievement because she contributed to the school and to the PTA.

I want to give applause to myself for volunteering last year because I did it even though there were some difficulties. Not only my accomplishment but also I am proud of myself regarding (pause to choose a word), well, bravery? Hmm, self-reliant? I don’t know how I can express my feeling. Anyway, I think I am awesome. (smile) I was the only non-American mother in the PTA except one Mexican mother, who immigrated a long time ago. Nobody [other immigrant mothers] did volunteer for PTA except me. (2nd interview)

While Jiwon had struggles and an uncomfortable feeling from her last volunteering experience, she also got satisfying experiences from it. Jiwon considered her last volunteering as a kind of “achievement” in her challenge to conquer the struggles she encountered, and she was proud of it. In addition to her feeling of achievement, Jiwon highly regarded her pioneering attempt to join PTA at first as a foreigner. These satisfactions gave her a drive to keep her volunteering endeavors open for the future, even though she made no current effort.

Community

Chan engaged in various after-school activities such as baseball, Korean language school, and getting piano lessons. However, Jiwon did not think that playing baseball and learning Korean were related to Chan’s schooling.

Jiwon registered for Chan to join a baseball team, but she did not think the sports activity supported Chan’s schooling. The reason Jiwon chose baseball for Chan was because she believed sports are good for physical health, as well as because Chan wanted to play baseball. To the question of explaining more about sports activity, Jiwon said she did not have any special experiences in connection with baseball since she just gave him a ride and did not participate in the team activities.

Also, Jiwon did not believe teaching Korean for Chan was not related to his schooling, and that it was necessary for him.

However, for the piano lessons, Jiwon believed playing at least one instrument and getting familiar with music was a required attribute for him to be able to enjoy his life when he grows up. Also, Jiwon added that the music activity was related to schooling, because playing in an orchestra could be counted as an important activity to get credit for when trying to enter a good university in America. Jiwon kept credits

for entering a good university in her mind whenever she mentioned Chan's schooling, and, to the question of the issue, she answered:

Different from Korea [style], children need to do various things other than study here. So I think the importance of a mother's role is more prominent here. If a mother supports her child with strategy, then it is strongly related to the child's success. It is tougher here [than in Korea] (sighs). So, an immigrant mother like me always has her eyes wide open to the issue of supporting my child well. (3rd interview)

From her narration, Jiwon revealed she was aware of her immigrant status as relatively disadvantageous, and to compensate for this weak point, she was alert to the information relative to Chan's schooling. Also, when she said, "...the importance of a mother's role," she meant the middle-class American mothers' ways to support their children. According to the Lareau (1989), upper-middle-class mothers use their strategies such as volunteering, teaching, taking their children to the library, or outdoor activities to support their children, and their ways are distinguished from those of the mothers in other classes. Jiwon caught on to the differences of middle-class American mothers' ways to support their children and tried to adopt their strategies.

While Jiwon supported various after-school activities for Chan, her evaluation of her support was stingy. To the question of whether she supports for Chan well outside school and home to support his schooling, Jiwon answered she did not think she was doing well for him outside school and home. Jiwon thought she needed do more community-based activities [even though she did not realize that those activities

were community based] for Chan and gathered information for such activities, but she could not do the job well. She explained about it:

I think I am lazy. I should do something and gather more information for Chan, but I feel like I have clipped my wings a bit by myself. Actually, I was not a person like that...(She looks at the empty air and sighs). For example, Young [they are close friends] is so active that she walks up and does what is necessary to gather information for Siwon. She is not afraid of anything when she goes to seek information, and she makes a decision after evaluating the information. In my case, if I were in Korea, I could do things the same way as Young, but my English is not good...Actually, in terms of both the quantity and quality of the information I could access if I spoke English fluently, isn't it true that I could get more information? Since Young participates in the Boy Scouts, she is able to have more chances to talk with American mothers. However, [because of my English skill], I can have only limited choices. (3rd interview)

Jiwon evaluated herself as having an insufficient ability as to use the community or get the information she needed to support Chan, by participating in community activities. Jiwon believed American mothers have more information than she and that she could access information only through the resource of Korean mothers. She felt that this information that she possessed was too limited to support Chan well.

When Jiwon compared herself to another Korean mother, Young, she felt a greater sense of inferiority and guilt. She had no confidence--not only about her ability to gather enough information, but also about her ability to evaluate information--whether it was appropriate for Chan or not. Jiwon attributed her inability

to her English skill and lamented that this matter could not be improved as long as her English skill was still being developed.

She was also frustrated over the situation that she could not demonstrate her innate abilities. During the interviews, she frequently mentioned the hypothetical situation, 'if she were in Korea,' and showed her frustration about the reality in which she was restrained by the language difference. Her feeling of having "clipped my wings a bit by myself" is also found from many immigrant mothers who have struggles in the United States.

In sum, Jiwon had a great interest in Chan's education and considered schooling to include everything relevant to a child's school life. Jiwon believed she could contribute to increasing Chan's school performance through her support, especially her volunteering for school. In accordance with her belief, Jiwon actively engaged in Chan's schooling such as preparing his snacks from scratch, helping him to study and to finish homework, volunteering in his school, and registering him for piano lesson.

Even though Jiwon still participated actively in Chan's schooling, she did not volunteer this year. She explained that her feeling of isolation, the language difference, and cultural differences had caused her to discontinue volunteering as a room mother, as well as for other school volunteer activities. While she participated as a room mother, Jiwon felt disempowered--different from her confidence when she first started volunteering--so that she wanted to rest for a while. However, she added she would do PTA and room mother someday when she felt she was ready.

She believed extra activities were not related to her school involvement except helping with Chan's piano lesson. She evaluated her participation in the community

and in the home as less appropriate and deplored her inability to arrange play dates with Chan's friends and to gather various pieces of information. She stated that she needed to use the community and gather more information regarding community-related activities. While she felt her limitations, she struggled with her sense of inferiority and frustration due to the discrepancy between her expectations about herself and the realities of life.

Respite: I am tired because of the many struggles that I overcame, but I will meet the challenges soon, once I am recharged.

Jiwon's story is unique in terms of her getting the feelings of victories and defeats at the same time through her trial involvement in the conventional education system.

Due to her recent arrival in the U. S., Jiwon had relatively poor language skills and cultural knowledge. However, despite her lack of ability, Jiwon actively participated in Chan's schooling because she believed her support directly helped Chan's success in the United States. Her active participation was in accord with Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997)'s finding that parents who believe their participation helps their children's schooling tend to participate more than their counterparts. Also, when Jiwon started her volunteering, she was full of a sense of efficacy that she could support Chan, so she confidently negated the possibility of language or cultural knowledge issues happening to her.

However, after finishing one year of volunteering, Jiwon had stopped all participation relevant to school volunteering. Through experiencing many barriers such as language, cultural differences, and differentiation at school, she was coming

to lose her power to confront those barriers. The experience has resulted in damage to her confidence for volunteering.

Meanwhile, although she was skeptical about her volunteering, Jiwon also was proud of her achievement. Even though she had struggled during her time as a volunteer, she evaluated herself as great, since she did her responsibility and did not give up.

As for the suspension of volunteering, Jiwon stressed it was not permanent but temporary, until when she had recharged her power to volunteer at school. While she admitted the volunteering was beyond her capacity, she also showed her unyielding resolution that she would continue to be involved in Chan's schooling.

Not only for volunteering, she also showed an ambivalent response about her participation in Chan's schooling at home. While Jiwon had confidence enough to support Chan's study at home, she despaired over her inability to have play dates for Chan with his friends.

Jiwon was similar to Kyung in terms of setting the norm of middle-class American mothers' school participation as her standard and trying to follow it.

However, she was different from Jae in terms of using a coping strategy that challenged that same standard—while holding her breath--, while Jae tried to reach compromises between her Korean references and American references in her capacity, instead of trying to fit herself entirely to the American mothers' ways. Young, who will be introduced next, provided a good comparison with the other mothers in terms of her using both Korean and American references, depending on each situation.

YOUNG’S STORY

Background

Young came to the United States ten years ago to study with her husband June. She earned a master’s degree in Foreign Language Education, and had taught elementary ESL students as an ESL specialist for 3 years in a northeastern city of the United States. However, she resigned her position two years ago and moved to Hope City because her husband June got a job after finishing his Ph.D. Recently, Young started her Ph.D. in the Special Education Department after she moved to Hope City.

Before they moved to Hope City, they applied for green cards and recently got their green cards. Young and June have an eight- year-old son, Siwon, and a one- year- old daughter, Yun, and both children were born in the United States. Their other family members reside in Korea.

Young was the only mother who had been educated both in Korea and in the United States among the participants in this study. The experience as a graduate student and an elementary ESL specialist in the United States contributed to her understanding of the American school system —the same as the experience as a student from elementary school to college in Korea helped her to grasp the Korean school system. Young used her knowledge about both school systems as the resource for supporting Siwon’s schooling. She compared both countries’ values in education and chose the appropriate one for each situation whenever she needed to decide for Siwon.

As to the question of her English proficiency, Young evaluated it as being at a high level. She answered, “I have no problem to communicate with others. Of course, sometimes it happened I couldn’t understand what they said to me because of cultural

difference. But, I don't care about it. Whenever it happened, I just asked them to say again.” (1st interview)

During interviews with Young, she frequently mentioned showing herself to be goal-oriented and strong-willed in relation to helping Siwon's schooling. Once she set a goal, Young did not hesitate nor vacillate. For example, she believed it was needed for Siwon to develop social abilities during childhood. Corresponding to her belief, Young tried to develop Siwon's social abilities in many ways, such as inviting other children to her house for play dates, getting Siwon to join a soccer team, and doing Boy Scout activities. The following narrative illustrates her attitude toward the education of Siwon:

(To the question about whether she had any problems doing those activities for Siwon)

Of course, sometimes it is hard for me, too! (Chuckles) However, I always think I can do everything, even very hard things, for Siwon. If there is something that is really difficult but beneficial to Siwon, then I will do it for him. There is nothing that I cannot do for my son. Why couldn't I do it? (1st interview)

Perception of Schooling

Young perceived schooling as including things related to education, which include academic, social, and emotional training. To support Siwon's schooling, Young taught him English and math at home, registered him at a math study center, volunteered at school, and helped him to do Boy Scouts and sports.

However, Young added that those activities were mainly for helping Siwon to have confidence. She believed having confidence was the most important attribute for Siwon, in order to equip him to succeed in school and--even more--in the future. So,

according to her, it was the best support for Siwon's schooling that she helped him to acquire confidence.

Young had concerns about how she helped Siwon in this society. She asserted that it would not be easy for Siwon as a minority to succeed in the United States, and that he would confront harsh situations including discrimination while he grew up. She started talking about her belief with a grief-stricken smile,

Even if I try to help him not to be aware he is a minority, it is a certain reality which cannot be avoided, so I think it is needed to encourage him to do something more faithfully, instead of just hiding him from the world. I think it is a reality that we cannot deny. It is certain that my son will be looked on as an immigrant, even though he was born here and speaks English fluently. Because we are not White [I expect to experience discrimination], I believe, it will be necessary for my son to develop pride in himself as a Korean-American, so he can protect himself in any [unfair] situation. It would be better than my trying to just protect him from tough realities. I hope that he can accept his situation without having a psychological complex about it. It may help to tide him over during his struggles if Siwon has confidence. If [he can have confidence], then he will be superior to others, even though he is a minority. (1st interview)

Young was aware of the unequal system of society and also believed Siwon, as a marginalized immigrant, would need to overcome struggles against the society. To gain power in order to achieve victory, she considered self-confidence as an important attribute for immigrant children. Throughout the interviews, she admitted the goal of her schooling supports for Siwon was ultimately to promote his self-

confidence and the activities she helped to promote his self-confidence could be understood as her way of school involvement.

Examination of Involvement Practice

Home

Young insisted good sports ability and friendships were the most important factors in his early years, so she supported Siwon for those activities. Also, she believed helping Siwon to study is a way for her to participate in supporting his schooling. To help Siwon's studies, Young taught him English and math, and they read books together every day.

Since Young has a master's degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language) in America, there was no problem for her to teach Siwon English. She felt pretty confident in her academic support for Siwon, but she did not forget to add this wistful remark:

I have no problem yet to teach Siwon English but someday, about 3rd or 4th grade, I think, I need to find an English tutor for him. When he becomes a 3rd or 4th grade student, writing will be the main part of English, and it will be a little hard for me to teach him. Of course, I may be able to teach him, but it will be good to find a professional tutor to teach him better than me. Since many [international] mothers consider the same option [hiring a tutor], if I don't do that, Siwon will be behind. (1st interview)

Young had heard about the difficulty of upper-grade English classes, so she worried about it. She considered hiring a tutor for Siwon to substitute for her role in the future, as other "international mothers" usually do. To the question of why she

decided to hire someone to teach Siwon, even though she could teach him if she tried, Young answered:

I don't think I have to teach Siwon by myself. It is not important who teaches him. Of course, I may teach him if I try, but why I need to do it without taking a more effective way? Even American mothers sometimes hire tutors for their children. The most important thing is not who is going to teach, but who can better teach. I will hire a competent tutor for Siwon when I need to do that. (1st interview)

Young was not bothered by the thought of hiring a tutor. Instead of being disappointed or deploring her lack of ability to teach like Kyung, she accepted the situation and was satisfied with the alternative way that she could take; this is similar to Jae and Jiwon's approach. To improve Siwon's ability to compete with others, Young insisted she would find the best option for him each moment.

Since Siwon was still young, Young believed building friendships was more necessary for him during elementary school. To help Siwon to build friendships with other children, Young often invited his friends to her house. She regarded play dates as one of the most important activities for supporting Siwon's schooling so she actively tried to make play dates. She usually called Siwon's friends' mothers and arranged play schedules with them. Sometimes she had play dates at the playground beside the school, but usually she invited his friends to her house. However, it was not like now at first, when Siwon entered school:

Actually, there was a crucial point when I realized a play date is important for Siwon. In the beginning of kindergarten, Siwon had 2 friends so the 3 of them played together. One day, I knew they had had a play date with each other, but

Siwon could not join in the date and he had gone to after-care due to my school schedule. The two friends are getting closer, and Siwon started to not play well with them. So I thought I needed to arrange a play date for him. (1st interview)

In the beginning of the semester, Siwon got along with other two friends; however, one day Young realized the closeness between her son and the other two children was different from the closeness between the two children with each other. She found out the reason from the play dates that they were having without Siwon. Young confessed, “It was like I got a clout across the back of my head because I never thought about play dates before.” Even though she knew about the play dates before, she did not consider at all whether she should arrange them for Siwon, so she felt guilty about Siwon.

To the questions of “Why did you feel guilty? Do you think working mothers or student mothers like you feel guilty about their children?” Young explained:

Of course, Siwon did not join in the play date because he was supposed to go the after-care center. But, that was not the true reason, but actually a superficial one. I felt guilty because I am an immigrant, so I did not consider the play dates to be such an important support for Siwon. (1st interview)

Young believed it was because she is an immigrant who is not used to American culture. She thought Siwon had a disadvantage because of having an immigrant mother like her. Because of that, she had eagerly tried to make play dates with other children to compensate for Siwon’s relationship with the two previously mentioned friends. So, Siwon was recovering his friendships with other children, and Young affirmed that she had no concern about it.

According to Young, she had no uncomfortable feeling about calling American mothers and inviting American friends into her house. When I asked her if she was comfortable with her own interactions with American mothers during play dates, she said:

I think there are certain differences between them and me. It may be because of the different interests or the different perspectives [that may arise from our different cultures]. There is a certain issue beyond the language issue...but I always think there is nothing that I cannot do for my son. Some Korean mothers avoid American mothers because they feel they are strangers, but, if getting along with them is beneficial to their children, then they should overcome the feeling. I think! (1st interview)

Young used her abilities such as her fluent English skills and her active character to support Siwon, and she was satisfied with herself about her contributions to his schooling as a mother. She also admitted there was a certain issue beyond language and rather relevant to cultural differences. Even though she had no problem communicating in English with other American mothers, she also felt differences between her and other American mothers. Not only the language issue, but also cultural differences obstruct communication between immigrant mothers and classroom teachers, other mothers, or school personnel, and many immigrant mothers hesitate to participate in their child's school because of the uncomfortable feeling caused by differences (Koh & Shin, 2006; Sohn & Wang, 2006).

However, Young asserted without hesitation that she was ready to confront any difficulties for Siwon's sake--different from "some Korean immigrant mothers" who "avoid American mothers because they feel they are strangers." Young was

confident about her support for Siwon and considered other Korean immigrant mothers' hesitation to get along with other American mothers as their fault, related to their lack of will power.

School

Young volunteered as a workroom mother last year, and she volunteered whenever school related events were held, but she did not volunteer regularly this year because of conflicts with her own graduate school schedule. However, even though she could not volunteer on a regular basis, she tried to participate in as many special events as she could.

To the question as to why she volunteers, she answered "It is for my son. I want to hear how people think about Siwon, and also I want to get information from them [American mothers]." (1st interview) The aim of her volunteering was to watch Siwon--whether he does well at school--and to make a connection with other people including Siwon's teacher.

However, in contrast to her active attitude toward volunteering at other school jobs, Young did not show any interest in the PTA. To the question of why she was not involved in PTA work, she attributed it to her personality as well as her busy schedule because of her graduate school studies. She explained:

I don't like to stand out from the rest of group. I prefer not to be a leader; I try my best in my position. (Chuckles) Actually, I am too busy to join the PTA because of my graduate school schedule. But, even if I were free, I am not sure whether I would join the PTA. I think such as work room volunteering is an appropriate job for me. If I had the available time, then I would want to volunteer for the work room or the library. (2nd interview)

Young confined her job to not being “a leader,” but being supportive such as by being a work room volunteer. Meanwhile, although Young was satisfied with her current devotion to volunteering, she also admitted her wish to acquire from the volunteering, some more human resources to help her—she calls them “manpower”. According to her, she was just a newcomer in this city; she had not only no relatives but also no close friends and or even acquaintances here. This led to disturbing her access to information about the school and the city. So, it was hard for her to gather information about the school before Siwon started on the soccer team and Boy Scout activities with other children in the same school.

This lack of human resources has been reported by research studies (Kim, 1985; Vega, Kolody, Valle, & Weir, 1991) relevant to immigrant parents. Different from American mothers who have family or friends in the United States and can use their help whenever they need it, some immigrant mothers are struggling to find help (Vega, Kolody, Valle, & Weir, 1991). For example, according to Kim (1985), some low income immigrant mothers cannot attend parent conferences because they cannot find someone to take care of their younger children. Young felt the needs not only because of the physical aspect, but also because of the information aspect. Even though she had a master’s degree and teaching experience in the United States, because she did not live here while she was young, she confessed, “Sometimes I need someone whom I ask for information” (see Lareau, 1989).

Young believed volunteering for the PTA board would be helpful for her, in order to know more “important” people who participated in directing school activities. According to her, while interacting with other PTA board mothers who were “core” members of the school, she could get access to valuable information that was not

revealed to outsiders, such as which teacher was well-known for a certain quality, what present the teacher liked, or why the after-school program had only one activity (different from other schools), etc.

She also believed a mother who volunteered for the PTA board could have close relationships with teachers, and that this would work as a great advantage for her child. If the mother gets close to her child's teacher, the teacher can better understand when the child has a problem. Young regarded a parent's close relationship with a teacher as the most important support that is needed for immigrant children, and the importance is greater when an immigrant child is younger. She regretted not joining the PTA because, if she were a PTA board member, she could be close to Siwon's teacher, so that he could get more attention from his teacher.

To complement her regret, Young tried to be close to Siwon's teacher. She chose sending e-mails or memos to the teacher often, and shared opinions and knowledge about Siwon with his teacher, as an alternative to volunteering as a PTA member.

Community

Young supported Siwon in his Boy Scout activities, and she believed that participating in Boy Scouts would be helpful to develop Siwon's social abilities and that he would learn American cultural codes through the activities. She considered the Boy Scout activities as a compensation for her lack of human resources. Through Boy Scouts, Young had met many American mothers who actively volunteered on the PTA board as well. Recently, while she had been talking with those mothers, Young has been able to get large amounts of school information that she had never heard before when she was an outsider. Because of these merits of Boy Scout activities,

Young gave priority to these activities over other activities: She attended every meeting for Boy Scouts, sometimes forcing it despite having to cancel other activities.

Young was convinced that it was the best decision for Siwon to start Boy Scouts because “I have become acquainted with many important people who are eagerly volunteering for the PTA board. They have a lot of information and I can access the information at Boy Scout meetings.” So she believed it was enough for her to support Siwon and that she did not need to even do the PTA board. She was satisfied with the activity and with herself as well.

To the question of whether she had any difficulty doing the Boy Scout activities, Young answered:

Well. It really demands time and energy, so it was hard for me to make time for those activities. Also, I am not used to those activities; it took time to orient myself to them. But, now I have no problem. I think it is a good activity for Siwon to develop co-operation, and also I can meet many people at the meeting.

(3rd interview)

Young struggled to make time and to understand the required activities at first, when Siwon started Boy Scouts. Even her time concerns were not resolved yet, but she felt much more comfortable about the activities that Siwon needed to perform through their trial and error.

Throughout our interviews, Young emphasized that having confidence is the most important thing for an immigrant child such as Siwon to succeed in his school. She stated helping Siwon to have confidence was ultimately her form of school participation. To encourage Siwon’s confidence, Young focused on teaching sports to Siwon. According to Young,

I try to make him to play as many sports as he can. Well. There is an Asian stereotype of a small boy wearing glasses who is good at math. Actually, many Asian mothers force their children to succeed in their studies--different from many American mothers, who stress sports during elementary school. But, I don't want Siwon to have that image. Rather, I hope Siwon grows into a man who is good at all areas--not only studies, but also sports and even the arts. But, first of all, sports are the best thing to help a boy to have confidence. If a boy is good at all sports, then he can be popular among his friends. Also, sports help boys to grow. So I let him practice sports. (3rd interview)

She believed for him to be a perfect man, Siwon needed to get not only excellent grades--as other Asian immigrant mothers stress--, but also good athletic abilities, and that this would contribute to his showing himself to be superior to others. Young asserted that this athletic ability was especially important in order for him to escape from the stereotype about the Asian boy who is good at math but is a passive, silent person.

Young commented that the stereotype about Asian students who wear glasses and are good at math was beyond help for Siwon, that she would do her best to make him a versatile person. She implied that her way was different from that of other Asian mothers, saying, "Many Asian mothers force their children to succeed in their studies. But, I don't want Siwon to have that image." While Young rejected using the method that "many Asian mothers" use for supporting their children, she used her way to support Siwon, which was a way of combining both Asian and American styles. Since Young knew about differences of each culture—Korean and American--, she used each cultural way--or sometimes a compound way—properly for each

situation. In the above narration, she created “a man who is good at all areas,” using a compound way, and was convinced that that gave confidence to Siwon.

Siwon was involved in the soccer team, and the majority of the members of the team were Boy Scout friends from his school. Young loved this soccer team because she could get a lot of information from the American mothers who were active volunteers in PTA or for the Boy Scouts for their children while she waited for Siwon. She believed that participating in these activities such as the soccer team and Boy Scouts would be a good opportunity for Siwon to get along with other American friends. Since she believed that Siwon had to live and succeed in the world in which two cultures—Korean and American—overlap, he needed to be accustomed to both cultures and both kinds of people if he was to grow into a person who had an influencing power in this society.

In accordance with her expectations for Siwon, Young had tried to get acquainted with other mothers while she waited during his practice. Based on her fluent English skills and active outgoing personality, she became close to some mothers in the team.

Young asked the other American mothers many things--whatever she did not know--, such as about famous sports teams, competent tutors, or school policies, while she waited for Siwon during soccer practice or play dates, and she got information from these women. According to Young, the information that she got from them was very valuable and she could barely have access to it unless she had lived in America over generations.

They [American mothers] are different [from us]. While I meet Korean mothers, we tend to talk about things relevant to our children’s studies or extra activities,

and with American mothers, we talk about community festival events, camping, or cultural things. Many of them have lived in Hope City for a long time or at least have friends who have lived here. So they have a lot of information that I did not know; for example, they let me know about Hope City's oldest bakery or small town festival. Sometimes, they gave me information about special museum services, such as free gifts to children. If I don't know these people, I would never get that information. (3rd interview)

Young classified information sources according to cultural differences—the Korean group and the American group-- and asked different kinds of questions to each group: asking Korean mothers about tutors or academic textbooks, and asking American mothers about events, museums, or school policies. She explained that each group had strengths of its own, and she assured herself that she was enjoying the benefits from each group because she was close to each group.

The last activity which Young considered her school involvement to entail was Korean language school. She believed speaking Korean was closely related to maintaining Siwon's Korean heritage. She explained that Siwon, through keeping his language, could keep in mind he had a Korean heritage and be proud of their ethnicity. So she registered Siwon at the Korean language school last year, but due to schedule conflicts, she did not register him this year. However, she taught Korean to Siwon at home. As for teaching him Korean, she narrated her belief:

Young: I always tell Siwon about the Korean language. I said to him, "Even if you speak English, people consider you as not American but Korean. Look at you. Even your food, your lifestyle, and your grandparents all are Korean. It is not shameful that you are different from others, but it is a thing to be proud of

because you have one more culture than other people have.” I want Siwon to have pride in his culture and ethnicity.

Interviewer: Does any possibility exist that Siwon may feel he is a minority by stressing his Korean heritage too much?

Young: That may be possible, but, in contrast, he tries to keep at his work to overcome his minority status. Actually, he is a minority, and that is the reality that cannot be denied. Even though he is a citizen and speaks English perfectly, others see him as an immigrant. Unless our color were white... (sighs) So I think I need to teach him not to freeze up because of his skin color, to accept his reality but not have a complex about it. Like “I am of Korean heritage, but I can do better than you.” Whether person has confidence or not is quite different. (3rd interview)

Since Young believed having confidence is the most important issue for immigrant children in the United States, teaching Korean was an activity to help Siwon to have pride as a Korean.

In sum, Young had a firm pedagogy and specific goals for Siwon, as she had a goal for her life. Since she had studied in America and worked as an ESL specialist before, Young was familiar with the American school system. Young knew both Korean and American knowledge, so that she could use that knowledge as a resource on each occasion when she supported Siwon.

Young considered schooling to include all the things that are relevant to education, including academic, social, and emotional training. To help Siwon’s studies, Young purchased several workbooks and taught him English, math, and Korean by herself and encouraged him to read books at home. Since Young was a

graduate student, she could not volunteer this year, but she did volunteer for the workroom last year. Young believed having a good athletic ability is an important factor to help schooling for boys, especially immigrant boys, so she registered Siwon for the soccer team and basketball team. Also, Young helped with Siwon's Boy Scout activities, and she believed it is helpful for a child to build a friendship and then get to know a network of friends, and to learn leadership.

Although Young had no problem communicating with other American parents with her English ability, she also felt there was a definite difference between Americans and her, but she thought it was not at all an issue for her. Young was very confident about her ability to support Siwon. However, she also admitted that she lacked a network of connections to use for Siwon because she is an immigrant.

Resourceful: I can use both cultural references for my son.

Young was using a strategy integrating the two different cultures for her involvement in Siwon's schooling, and she showed relatively high satisfaction with her ability. This is congruent with the research finding that immigrant mothers who show a high level of acculturation report high levels of psychological adjustment (Costigan & Koryzma, 2010).

For example, Young asked academically-related questions of Korean mothers, while she asked community- and school-related information of American mothers. This resulted in Young having two sources of information, so that she had more information resources not only than other Korean mothers, but also than American mothers. Young admitted these dual informants resources were beneficial for her school involvement (Muller & Kerbow, 1993).

According to Young, Siwon should be superior to other American children in order to succeed as a minority in America. To be superior in this society, Young believed Siwon needed to arm himself with both sets of cultural strengths, to not only be familiar with Korean cultural code but also with the American code. Her belief is in accord with Lisa Delpit (1988)'s idea that children of color need to learn the cultural code of the White middle class, since their code dominates American school culture. She was familiar with both cultures, especially the school cultures, so that she could use the appropriate strategy for each situation, to support Siwon's schooling.

While Young took advantage of her expert knowledge of both cultural codes, she also confessed her limitation as an immigrant, in that she had a relative shortage of human resources, such as people who would help with childcare in an emergency situation or those who could give her information about American culture. However, she complemented her lack of human resources through Siwon's community-based school involvement, such as with Boy Scout activities and the soccer team.

Young's school involvement was partially similar to that of Kyung and Jae and even to Jiwon's—although she did not believe learning Korean was not related to schooling--in terms of their regarding the maintaining of their children's Korean cultural identity as important for their school success and the use of Korean cultural references as a useful strategy to support their children's schooling. Also, she had set the middle-class American way of school involvement as her standard--like Kyung, Jae, and Jiwon.

In contrast, Young is distinguished from Kyung, Jae, and Jiwon in that she had American informants who shared school information with her.

Her story is a good comparison with Emily's story--which will be introduced next--in terms of her attitude toward using American reference sources for school involvement. Emily became an immigrant when she was 4, so she had no experience of Korean schools--not only as a parent but also as a student herself. She supported her children, based on American cultural references only.

EMILY'S STORY

Background

Emily immigrated to the United States when she was 4. Since Emily came to the United States too early to get any education, she has no experience of school in Korea. She had been educated in the United States from kindergarten through university. Her husband David also immigrated with his family when he was 13, after he finished elementary school. They have 3 children: 5th grade Andrew, 2nd grade Jacob, and 4-year-old Angel. Both Emily and David immigrated with their families, so their other family members are all in the same city. Their family members frequently visit each other, and sometimes Emily's parents or parents-in-law take care of her children.

Both David and Emily graduated from university in the United States. David is an engineer and works for a company. Emily had been a full-time home-maker after marriage; however, Emily started a daycare center business recently. Due to her business, it was hard for Emily to take care of her children like other home-maker mothers. However, her business was relatively flexible, so she tried to spend time with children.

Emily appraised her Korean ability as medium-high, and she had no problem in daily life to communicate in Korean. Even though both Emily and David felt more comfortable speaking English, they could speak Korean well; Emily speaks Korean better than David. However, their family used English in their daily life, except when their parents visited them.

Excellent Elementary School is the second school for Andrew. Emily and David have lived in Hope City since they were married. However, the family moved

inside the same Hope City school district two years ago, and Andrew has transferred his school to Excellent Elementary. Jacob started his kindergarten year at the Excellent School. Emily confesses that school was not easy--even for her, who was educated in the United States-- and for Andrew to adjust to the new school at first, because Excellent School was very different from Andrew's last school.

As the interviews have progressed, Emily has showed a changed attitude toward Excellent Elementary: In the first interview, she expressed her rage about Excellent Elementary, that it was too closed toward newcomers. However, in the second interview, her attitude had changed to a more conciliatory attitude toward the school, and she defended the school's stance about the closed policy.

She was the only mother among the participants who uses an English name. Even though she used her Korean name at times, usually she introduced herself with her English name. Also, she was the only mother who had been educated in a series of U.S. public schools --not only elementary school, but also middle school, and even higher education--whereas she had had no education experience in Korea. Accordingly, she was the most knowledgeable person about the U.S. school system.

Perception of schooling

Emily perceived schooling to be things relevant to academic things and to building friendships. However, when I asked whether she participated in her children's schooling, she shook her head.

Not at all! I think kids need to play! It is enough for them to study at school!

Some Korean mothers look like they are stressing an academic focus on their children, so they urge their kids to study and register them in an academic institution. However, I do not teach them [her children] English or math. Of

course, I check whether they finish their homework, but after that, I let them play. I don't know how Korean mothers do it for their children. But, I believe children need to play--especially when they are young, like elementary students. (1st interview)

While she stated schooling involves both academic and social areas together, in answer to the last question about school concept, to the question of schooling support, she mentioned only academic things. She asserted it is enough for children to study at school while they are elementary students. Based on her belief, she monitored whether Andrew and Jacob finished their homework, but she did not teach them herself nor hire tutors for extra study.

When she was reminded of her remark about social aspects, Emily assured she considered building friendships as the most important thing for children at these ages, and believed children should experience playing with their friends and negotiating their different opinions as much as possible.

Emily believed a mother should help her children to develop their social abilities by volunteering in school and making play dates at home. In accordance to her belief, Emily actively volunteered--not only for events, but also for the PTA activities of Excellent Elementary. She also tried to create opportunities for her children to play with other kids.

Examination of Involvement Practice

Home

Emily had a firm belief that children need to explore many activities and play as much as they can while they are young. Since she believed that academic matters

were not helpful at that age, she did not teach her children at home nor hire private tutors for them.

I don't teach them like other parents [Asian parents]. Andrew and Jacob are only elementary students. During elementary, children need to play, not to study. (1st interview)

However, this did not mean that she was disinterested in her children's academic area. Indeed, she monitored Andrew's and Jacob's academic progress and their homework.

During the interview, she continued to show that she did not agree with other Asian--especially Korean—mothers' way of supporting their children. However, she did not criticize them; rather she chose denial of their commonalities. Emily has frequently used "them" whenever she mentioned other Koreans, and she has insisted that she has different beliefs from those of other Asians, including Koreans.

Instead of academic matters, Emily focused on developing her children's social abilities, so she tried to visit or invite her children's friends into her house whenever she was available to be there with the children.

When I did not have a business before, I used to have play dates for Andrew.

(Sighs) But [because of my business], recently it's very hard for me to arrange to have play dates for Jacob with other kids now. So I feel sorry for Jacob about that. (1st interview)

When Andrew was younger, Emily was a full-time home-maker, so she devoted herself to Andrew and got him as many play dates as she could. However, 3 years ago she started her business, and, due to the business, it was hard to arrange a schedule for Jacob with other children's mothers. Emily felt guilty about Jacob

because she could not support him as she did for Andrew before. To get over her time conflicts, Emily sometimes invited other children into her daycare to play together with Jacob. She used her daycare as her resource to support Jacob.

Even though I rarely invite other kids into my home, I have a good place for them.

This daycare [her business] is an attractive place for kids so I can use the place instead of my house [to compensate for my disadvantage of being busy with work]. I think kids, at least up to now, love here more than my house. Also, my kids have no discontent with it yet. (1st interview)

Emily used her resource (daycare) to complement her lack of time successfully. Although sometimes she felt guilty about her children because of her busy schedule, she was also confident for supporting her children well.

School

Three years ago, because Emily's family moved, Andrew was transferred to Excellent School, and Jacob entered kindergarten at the same school. Emily volunteered vigorously at Excellent School and was a member of the PTA.

However, Emily's volunteering has not been active from the beginning. When I interviewed her about volunteering at the first interview, she struggled to adjust to her children's new school atmosphere, which was different from that of the last school. Raise Elementary, which Andrew attended before, was open to all parents' visits, while Excellent Elementary restrained parents from visiting the school without a specific purpose.

When Andrew was at Raise, I got lots of invitation letters that informed me about school activities, but I did not get any information about that [from Excellent Elementary] except by listening to my son. If Andrew had not told me about the

classroom party, I would never have known about that. Last year, I really wanted to help with the classroom party, but I could not go because I did not know when and where they had a party. Here, if we want to volunteer for school, then we need to hunt up the information for it by ourselves. After I met several people and said that I wanted to volunteer, they slowly contacted me and finally got me inside the group. This school is really unique. They are so closed to people who are outside. Actually, they are planning for next year, but they don't ask for any help from others. They already mailed out the information and assigned the jobs only to the people who were originally connected to the school--but not to other people. (1st interview)

During the first interview, she was resentful about her frustration with the volunteer system that she could not participate in. She criticized the system as “closed to other people” and operating only within an insiders’ network. As one of the outsiders, she did not even know about a classroom party before Andrew told her about it. Even though she was eager to volunteer, she did not know whom she should contact to participate in the PTA for the first time. She criticized that this closed system blocked new people’s access and fortifies the connections between the insiders.

At the second interview, after pertinacious efforts to get in, Emily finally entered the PTA and currently volunteered as a PTA member. She was in charge of the field-day event for next year, and she helped with the field-day event this year to practice. At the second interview--which was performed one semester after the first interview--, she continued to talk about her PTA experience.

Emily: I am not a board member yet, but still just one of the members.

Interviewer: Do you believe becoming a board member has any advantage for you and your child?

Emily: Yes. I think if the opportunity is available, then becoming a board member is a good opportunity.

Interviewer: Can you explain why you think so?

Emily: 2 weeks ago, I had a brunch at the Country Club with PTA board member, even though I am not a board member, but I joined. It was a special experience. The majority of them have been at Excellent Elementary for a long time. Almost all the parents have 2, 3, or even 4 children, and they have worked since their first child was here; one mother has been at Excellent for 10 years. They have a special affection for Excellent Elementary School. They also know each other and share a strong bond with each other.

Emily: After attending the brunch meeting, I could understand more about the system of this school and the PTA. They have a strong unity and have been familiar with each other for a long time, so they don't need to ask other people to help with their work. As they had done before, they can split up the work and each do their own part of the work. That is their way.

Interviewer: Then, why do you believe being a board member is good chance?

Emily: I can better understand about the school system and can meet the mothers like them.

Interviewer: Did you have any problem working with them at first?

Emily: Well, because I am just a beginner while they share many years, I feel a little like a stranger. But, if I continue volunteering when Jacob or Emily is in the 5th grade, then I may share a bond with them.

Interviewer: How about the work? Isn't it difficult?

Emily: Now, I am not in charge of anything yet. I am learning from one mother whose child is in 5th grade. When her child graduates, then I will do the work. She always says to me, "You need to learn how to do this, so you can take care of this next year". This is the pass-down system. If Emily enters this school, then I will take on more work because I can have learned more by that time. But minority parents barely participate in the PTA. (2nd interview)

Emily, although she struggled to enter into this "closed system" of the PTA at first, she finally broke into this system, and she was satisfied with the PTA. Different from her first impression about the school and the PTA Board, she could better understand about them and stood up for their position. Her perspective has changed from outsider to an insider since she joined the group.

This is also seen in the terms she used. At the first interview, she used "the other person" even for herself, in contrast with a PTA person. However, at the second interview, she divided herself from the other Korean mothers by using "minority parents who barely participate in PTA."

While she was interviewed the second time, Emily was excited because she had entered the heritage system that was passed down from the experienced people to the novices. The feeling of belonging to the special group inspired her to volunteer at Excellent School more enthusiastically--not only as a PTA volunteer, but Emily also tried to attend as many events as she could. Even though she did not volunteer to be a room mother, she always helped with the classroom parties and the year-end party.

As to the question of why she eagerly volunteered, she answered firmly as in the following:

Of course, for my children. Children really like it when their mothers come to school. Actually, the kids know whose mother comes to the school. Whenever I come to school, Jacob's classmates say to Jacob, "Jacob, your mom is here." When their mothers come to school to work, the kids feel confidence. Also, a mother gets to know the teachers and the other people who work in the school, she has more advantages than disadvantages. If a teacher knows that the kid's mother volunteers enthusiastically for school, then isn't it natural for her to not ignore the kid? Of course, this does not influence the children's academic scores (Laughing), but at least they show more interest in the kid. Anyway, Asians barely come to school. (2nd interview)

She also mentions the reason of her volunteer, during the second interview. I want Jacob to get closer to his friends. I volunteer for Jacob because he is shy and is not talkative. I think some children don't need their mother's support (volunteering), but some children need it. So I intentionally volunteer for him. If I volunteer for Boy Scouts and PTA, the parents can become closer to each other, and then that will influence their children's friendships. So I arrange Jacob's social activities. (2nd interview)

Emily insisted the purpose of her volunteering was for Jacob. She believed Jacob could have confidence and more attention from teachers through her volunteering, because her presence in school gave a power to Jacob over his friends and teachers. Emily believed her volunteering helped Jacob to have a better school life, and that it especially promoted friendship. She pointed out that the parents' network, which she could build through her volunteering, influenced Jacob's friendships. Her active volunteering can be explained by the research that says that

parents who believe their involvements help their children to succeed in their schooling tend to participate in their children's schooling more than their counterparts (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

She was concerned about Jacob, who was shy and less sociable, so that she volunteered now more than she did for Andrew. Indeed, Emily did not volunteer at all for Andrew because she believed that Andrew did not need her to volunteer any more since he is in 5th grade. This is in accord with the research finding that parents are inclined to get involved more in their children's schooling when their children are younger (Crosnoe, 2001; Reynolds, Weissberg, & Kaspro, 1992).

Emily evaluated her volunteering as an effective endeavor for Jacob, and he got many friends because of it. Even though it was hard to balance her schedule between her business and volunteering, she was content to do it because her sons got enough benefits to reward her for it—they received recognition from their friends and their teachers.

While Emily explained about her reason to volunteer, she ended up unintentionally adding remarks regarding Asian mothers. She argued that volunteering influenced her children positively, even though there was no direct relationship with their academic scores. She again stressed she had different concerns--such as the social/emotional abilities issue--while other Asian mothers were interested in academic scores. This was not the first time for her to mention minority parents' less participation. During the interviews, Emily frequently addressed this so I decided to ask her idea about that issue.

Interviewer: You told me before, that Asian mothers don't show up to volunteer.

Emily: Yeah! It is true.

Interviewer: But--even many American mothers don't volunteer. Right?

Emily: Right! That is true, but think about the demographic ratio of our school. Considering the ratio, it does not match the demographic ratio between the volunteer parents and children. According to the ratio of Asian children to non-Asians, there are supposed to be more Asian mothers, but we don't have it like that.

Interviewer: Then, what do you think why they don't volunteer?

Emily: Well (slightly shrugs her shoulder). It may because they did not learn to volunteer when they were young. I don't know why. Actually, America emphasizes the importance of volunteering, and I have grown up here, so I have learned to volunteer. But, I don't know if Korea is the same way. I have never been to Korea. Also, they may be busy earning money or they may not know the school system so...[they don't volunteer as much].

Interviewer: Do you think that, if they don't know about the system, then it is hard to for them to volunteer?

Emily: If they don't know, then it may be hard to volunteer. (Pause.) Also, even if they volunteer, nobody gives them money. Actually, it is hard to volunteer. Right? It requires spending lots of time. So, if some people are selfish, then they don't want to spend time, and, in addition, they cannot speak English well and there is no friend [to help them]...So they don't want to come. I am not sure, but I think so.

Interviewer: What do you think about the communication problem?

Emily: It may be one of the reasons. If they cannot speak English, then it will be hard for them. Actually, I have seen Japanese mothers who cannot speak English

at all. I was invited to a birthday party, and I met some Japanese mothers. When I talked to them, they could not speak English at all. If they go to volunteer, then they cannot help at all. But, in most cases, volunteering does not require great English skill. If they cannot speak English well, then they can help make copies or put mail into each child's Thursday folder. (2nd question)

For the question of possible obstacles to block immigrant parents' volunteering, Emily keeps the attitude that she does not understand the immigrant parents. Even though she nods about the possibility of several obstacles to make immigrant parents hesitate to volunteer, Emily believes those are excuses rather than real causes. Rather, Emily believes immigrant parents do not volunteer because it is not directly related to the financial profit or academic benefit of their children or they are too "selfish" to spend their time to volunteer.

Throughout the interviews, she did not understand Korean mothers' less volunteering participation, and tried to differentiate herself from other Korean mothers by using "they" or "them."

Community

Emily helped with the Boy Scouts for Jacob and believed it was related to his schooling. She complained that Boy Scouts was a demanding job, but she thought Boy Scout activities would be helpful for Jacob's social ability. Also, she took Jacob and Andrew to soccer team activities. Other mothers who worked with her in the PTA recommended these two activities.

She believed her participation in both activities was a support for Jacob's schooling, because those activities provided more play time for Jacob with his friends, so that he could be more social. She added that the activities would be helpful--

especially for Jacob, who was shy, compared to Andrew, who was active and social. Also, since many of the members of his Boy Scout pack and soccer team overlapped, she believed Jacob easily got familiar with other children in both groups.

Since Emily had joined the Boy Scouts, she had become close to many other mothers in the group, and their children had many play dates together. She believed this was a good chance for Jacob, because, if parents became friends, then it would be easy for their children to become friends with each other. She was sure about her contribution for Jacob by creating a human network.

Emily did not think Korean language school is not helpful for schooling. She confesses she tried to enroll her children in the school before, but she dropped it after one month, because her children did not want to go. She described Korean language school and learning Korean:

Learning Korean language is a different issue from schooling support for Jacob. Actually, I hope my children learn Korean because they have a Korean heritage. Just as I can speak Korean, I want my children to be able to speak Korean, so I registered them for Korean language school. I have many Korean friends in my church who immigrated when they were young, and some of them cannot read even a Korean menu in Korean restaurants. Whenever I see them, I feel sad thinking that my children will be like them in the future. But I have no option because they did not want to study Korean. (1st interview)

Emily regretted that her children had no interest in their Korean heritage-- including Korean language--, but she decided to drop the program because her children complained they were uncomfortable in the Korean school. She still regretted it, but she had no will to try to teach them Korean language again.

In sum, Emily immigrated when she was 4, so she has studied all her education in the U.S. system. She owned her own business, an all-day childcare center, but her work was flexible, so she had no problem volunteering at school.

She believed schooling to be the things that are relevant to academic things and relevant to building friendships. However, Emily showed strong denial about the question as to whether she supported her children's studies. Emily believed that elementary school children should play with their friends during their younger years, rather than developing their academic abilities.

Emily volunteered actively as a PTA member and tried to be involved in as many school activities as she could. She was also actively engaged with the soccer team and Boy Scouts activities for Jacob, because she believed Jacob could make friends and build network throughout those activities.

However, when she tried to get involved in PTA activities, she had struggled to find a way to join in. During the first interview that was done in the beginning of semester, Emily showed her uncomfortable feeling about this school system and the PTA's cliquish attitude toward newcomers. For the second interview, she finally got into the PTA system and was satisfied with the system and her status as one of the 'inner group personnel.' Except for the first interview when she was struggling to enter the PTA, she showed her great confidence for her support of Jacob's schooling and had been satisfied with her experiences.

Repudiation--Refusal to identify with the other Koreans: Since I am used to American volunteering culture but they are not...

Emily's story is distinguished by her consistent refusal to identify herself with Korean mothers. She used a contrasting word--"they"--when she mentioned Korean

mothers, instead of “we.” While Emily was interviewed, she made a dichotomy between Korean mothers and herself, and she pitted herself against other Korean mothers.

While she repudiated identifying herself with other Korean immigrant mothers, Emily explained the different attitudes toward volunteering between herself and other Korean mothers, as being the result of her familiarity volunteering: She was familiar with the volunteer culture through her American education; the Korean mothers were not. While she criticized other Korean mothers in that they volunteer passively, she was satisfied with her own school involvement.

This was also evident considering her effort to repudiate the idea that she supported her children’s academic aspects, even though she monitored her children’s homework at home. Emily considered Korean mothers’ helping with the “academic thing” as taking benefit only for them without any contribution to the school. In contrast, school volunteering is something that she regarded as part of American mothers’ participation pattern. It seemed sure that Emily was satisfied with her school involvement by using the American mothers’ strategy.

Another distinctive feature of her story is the process of changing her perspective from an outsider’s to an insider’s. In the first interview, when she could not join the PTA, she criticized the school system for its closed system--from an outsider’s perspective. However, in the second interview, once she had entered the system, she gradually changed her attitudes to those of an insider. Finally, in the third interview, she was an insider and supported the school system. While this metamorphosis has progressed, the relationship between herself and other Korean mothers has shifted to the dichotomy of “me vs. them.”

Emily is the only mother among the participants who had gotten her full education—from kindergarten through university--in America. Different from other mothers who found alternative ways when they were disempowered because of their inability to support their children's schooling, Emily did not seek an alternative method; rather, she achieved her goal through repeated trials.

Also, it is different that she used only American cultural reference sources, in contrast to the other mothers, who used both American and Korean cultural strategies, even though the ratios of each reference source were different. Indeed, she is the only mother who was assimilated in this study, and her evaluation about her school involvement as a mother was highest among the Korean mothers. Her practices, which were based on American culture, brought out her high self-efficacy as a mother, compared to the other Korean mothers. The high self-efficacy contributed to her having high satisfaction and low anxiety (Costigan & Koryzma, 2010).

To show the differences among the participants, I introduced each mother's perceptions about schooling and parental involvement, her attitudes about Korean identity, her struggles, whether she used the Americanized standard, and how she empowered herself in Table 2.

	Kyung	Jae	Jiwon	Young	Emily
Theme	Resilience	Reconciliation	Respite	Resourceful	Repudiation
Perception of Schooling	Everything relevant to a child including academic and social abilities	Studying, building friendships, and learning rules that a child needs to follow	All activities related to “school curriculum from math to P.E.”	All things related to education, which include academic, social, and emotional training	All things relevant to academic things and to building friendships
Perception of Parental Involvement	Comprehensive involvement	Comprehensive involvement	Comprehensive involvement	Comprehensive involvement	Comprehensive involvement
Korean Identity	Guilt Pride	Guilt Pride	Guilt Pride	Guilt Pride	Unconcerned Unconcerned
Struggles	Cultural Differences	Cultural Differences	Cultural Differences	Cultural Differences	Closed System
	Language	Language	Language		
	Pressure of Finances/Time	Isolated feeling/ Unwanted feeling	Isolated feeling		
Americanized Standard	Used for herself and others	Used for herself and others	Used for herself and others	Used for herself and others	Used for herself and others
Effort to Empower	Direct way	Opt out		Direct way	Direct way
		Alternative way	Alternative way	Alternative way	

Table 2: Comparison of Findings

Chapter 4.2

THE PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOLING

The Korean mothers who participated in this study believed that parents' involvement is strongly related to children's schooling, just as other research studies have revealed (Dornbusch & Wood, 1989; Epstein, 1991; Sohn & Wang, 2006) that immigrant mothers have reported. Even though the areas they wanted to develop for their children through their participation were different, the Korean mothers all agreed on the positive effects of parents' involvement in their children's schooling. The Korean mothers in this study believed children can have better school lives if their mothers participate in their schooling; the children's lives are improved through having more friends, getting more attention from teachers, maintaining good academic performance, etc.

For the question of "What do you think schooling is?" all the Korean mothers in this study agreed that they considered schooling as acquiring abilities relevant to having a better school life.

However, for the specific abilities required to get a better school life, the parents' responses were slightly different. Academic ability and social ability are the only areas that all the Korean mothers in this study agreed that children need to develop. Kyung and Emily answered that schooling is related to acquiring academic and social abilities such as building friendships. However, other mothers believed there are more activities relevant to certain qualities included in schooling besides academic and social abilities. Young added an emotional aspect; especially, stating that having confidence was the most important quality that her son needed to get from schooling. Jae believed that learning the rules of the group to which an individual

belongs is one of the important concepts of schooling, in addition to academic and social abilities. Jiwon perceived schooling as including all the activities relevant to the curriculum. For her, schooling has a comprehensive meaning that includes academic things as well as physical health, friendships, and attitude.

Even though their perceptions about schooling were slightly different, the Korean mothers in this study agreed with the concept of schooling as having an inclusive meaning, not being confined only to academically-related abilities, but also covering the acquisition of other developmental abilities.

Also, they all believed parental involvement should be examined not only from within the school, but also from out-of-school contexts, such as arranging play dates with other children, Korean language school, or after-school activities.

THE PERCEPTIONS AND THE PRACTICES OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

It was a principal purpose of this study to examine how the Korean mothers got involved in their children's schooling, as well as their perceptions of parental involvement. First, to inquire into the Korean immigrant mothers' knowledge relevant to supporting children's schooling, the question of "Through what kinds of activities can parents participate in their children's schooling?" was asked.

Then the question of how they supported their children's schooling in practice was asked, to examine whether their practices were in accord with their beliefs or not.

Accord : The beliefs between schooling and parents' involvement in schooling.

For the question of "Through what kinds of activities can parents participate in their children's schooling?", the Korean mothers described several activities: helping or teaching children to study, monitoring homework, guiding study habits—attitudes--, volunteering at school, building friendships through arranging play dates, enrolling

their children on sports teams, registering their children in Korean language school, and preparing healthy snacks after school.

Their belief about a comprehensive concept of schooling was reflected in their ideas about supporting activities that parents could use for their children. The Korean mothers perceived that parental involvement in schooling is not confined to the school but is expanded to the home and community. According to them, if a certain activity is to help children's schooling, then it should be considered parental involvement in schooling, regardless of the places in which the support occurs. For example, if a mother helped with a child's homework at home, then her activity should be considered to be participation in the child's schooling, even though she did not come to the school itself. Their argument is supported by recent research trends.

Researchers insist that it is needed to consider school involvement from a more comprehensive perspective—including the home, school, and local community domains (Epstein, 1982; Levin & Belfield, 2002).

Also, the question of "How do you support your children's schooling in practice?" was asked of each participant to compare their beliefs about parental participation with their practices of it. For the question, the Korean mothers described the activities that they used to participate in their children's schooling, and those were identical to their ideas about possible parental involvement activities: helping or teaching children to study, monitoring homework, guiding study habits—attitudes--, volunteering at school, building friendships through arranging play dates, enrolling their children on sports teams, registering their children in Korean language school, and preparing healthy snacks after school.

In sum, the Korean mothers' participation practices seemed to square with their belief in the comprehensive aspect of parental involvement. They participated in their children's schooling at various places; their support was not confined within the geographical limitation of the school.

Discrepancies

Even though their participation practices were identical to their ideas in terms of the various places in which their participation occurred, there is a discrepancy between each individual's ideas and her practices when one delves into each individual's statements.

For example, Jae and Jiwon believed building social skill is closely related to children's schooling, and that parents can support their children by arranging play dates. However, they did not have play dates for their children in reality--different from their belief. Also, Kyung wanted to register Grace for extra activities, but she could not do so due to her economic and time limitations.

As another example, Young believed that her getting involved in PTA activities would be helpful for Siwon, but she did not get involved in the PTA. Different from Jae and Jiwon, it was not a inability issue for her but a personal preference issue for the activity: Later, she got involved in Boy Scout activities and the soccer team, and she believed those activities were complementary to PTA. Just like Young, Emily did not get involved in supporting her children's academic area--different from her belief about schooling, i.e., that it includes academic ability and social ability. Even so, she denied the connection between her children's homework and her involvement in supporting their schooling.

These discords between their beliefs and practices occurred mainly because they could not get involved or did not get involved in what they believed they should do, due to various reasons. Although those reasons were different, depending on the participant, it is certain that these mothers felt disempowered and guilty or incompetent when they could not get involved because of their inability.

In sum, the Korean mothers in this study showed differences between their beliefs about possible involvement and their practices. These mothers could not or did not get involved in certain activities, even though they believed the involvement was needed for their children's schooling. The 'cannot' mothers felt disempowered while the 'do not' mothers did not.

EMPOWERMENT AND DISEMPOWERMENT DURING INVOLVEMENT

Throughout their school involvement, the Korean immigrant mothers continuously interacted with others and became empowered or disempowered. While I was interviewing them, I found some distinctive features related to their empowerment/disempowerment processes. Those features are as follow:

Korean Identity as a Source of Guilt vs. Pride

The Korean mothers in this study had contradictory feelings toward their identity as Korean mothers. They--except Emily--had a guilty feeling about their being Korean immigrant mothers in the United States. They believed their children could not get appropriate support from them because they are immigrants. However, they also believed their identity as Korean was an important tool to empower their children and their family, so they wanted to keep their identity.

Guilt for Being an Immigrant Mother

The Korean mothers in this study tended to attribute all the faults to themselves whenever they confronted barriers. They--except Emily--deplored their inability to support their children, and they believed their children had a disadvantage because their parents are immigrant. So they--except Emily--had a sense of guilt about their children for being immigrant mothers.

Kyung is the mother who expressed the strongest sense of guilt among the participants. These excerpts show how she felt:

Actually, I have been thinking that, if I were American, then my children would get better support, so I feel very sorry for them. For example, when Tiffany was young, similar-aged children came to my grocery store, and they sang a nursery song. I thought my daughter could sing a song like them, so I wanted to teach her. But I did not know any American nursery songs, so I went to buy a cassette tape to learn one myself first. Everything is the same way. Because I am a foreigner, to teach something to my children, I need to learn it myself and then take time to teach it to them. That means my children learn everything later than other American children. Also, regarding the school information, other mothers graduated from school here, so they have knowledge about each stage throughout school. They know about what is needed for this stage and for the next stage. I have been feeling guilty about my children, especially Tiffany. I could not give her advice. When she decided to go to a university, I could not give her any advice (miserable face). Actually, I wanted to help her so I tried to search for information from the Internet, and I realized it was beyond my control. So, Tiffany did everything for herself. (1st interview)

As she confessed, Kyung believed that, because she is an immigrant, her children could not get timely, proper support from her. According to Kyung, her children were delayed in learning from her whenever they needed access to something, because she herself had to learn it first in order to teach it to them. Also, they could not get appropriate advice when they had profound need.

Jae is the only mother in this study who opted out of adjusting herself to the middle-class-American mothers' involvement standard, and she found her way through focusing on her own capacity to do things. However, she also felt a sense of guilt about being an immigrant.

Of course, I don't want to raise them in the American way; however, sometimes I feel guilty about them, that, if I did that, it would be easier for them to adjust here. I have pride that I am Korean, but sometimes I am sorry for my kids for not being American. (1st interview)

During interviews, Jiwon--who had recently immigrated--kept supposing her involvement would have differed from the present if she were in Korea.

Actually, I was not a person like that...(She looks at the empty air and sighs)...

In my case, if I were in Korea, I could do things the same way as Young, but my English is not good...(3rd interview)

Jiwon also expressed her frustration as "I feel like I have clipped my wings a bit by myself" and blamed herself for not supporting Chan like other American mothers.

I cannot get rid of the feeling that that is my fault. Different from Cooper's and Jacob's mothers, who support their children to build strong friendships, I cannot

help Chan, and, because of my inability, my son lost his chance to get along with his friends. (1st interview)

Although she has a master's degree and teaching experience in the United States, Young was not an exception to feeling guilty about being an immigrant. She blamed herself because she did not seriously consider making play dates for supporting Siwon's friendships, even though she knew how helpful that could be. Young believed it was because she is an immigrant, so she was not familiar with American cultural practices.

Of course, Siwon did not join in the play date because he was supposed to go the after-care center. But, that was not the true reason, but actually a superficial one. I felt guilty because I am an immigrant, so I did not consider the play dates to be such an important support for Siwon. (1st interview)

This guilty feeling about their being immigrant parents has been reported by scholars who examined immigrant parents.

Since the Korean mothers--except Emily--attributed their struggles to their own fault, that their inabilities were caused by their being immigrants, their sense of guilt was aggravated when they experienced struggles.

Korean Identity as a Source of Pride

Paradoxically, while they felt guilty about their immigrant status, these Korean mothers were proud of their Korean identity at the same time.

"Of course I don't want to raise them in the American way; however, sometimes I feel guilty about them, that, if I did that, it would be easier for them to adjust here." (Jae, 1st interview)

“I have pride that I am Korean, but sometimes I am sorry for my kids for not being American.” (Jae, 1st interview)

These are excerpts from the interview with Jae. During the interview, she expressed the contradictory feelings of her frustration and pride at the same time, for being a Korean immigrant herself.

The contradictory feelings about their Korean identity were also found from interviews with Kyung and Young. They believed Korean identity could be a safeguard for their children and even their family, not something to disempower them, while, at the same time, they felt a sense of guilt for being Korean immigrant mothers.

These mothers considered that helping their children to maintain their Korean heritage and to have pride in their being Korean descendants was one of their most important involvements in their children’s schooling. Learning Korean was a representative activity that these mothers considered to be relevant to maintaining their children’s Korean heritage.

Kyung, as an experienced mother of three children—one university student, one high school student, and one 1st -grader —insisted on the importance of minority children having a positive self-identity when they confront an identity issue. She connected learning Korean to having a positive self-identity as part of her children’s Korean heritage. The following is an excerpt from our interview:

Kyung: I think learning Korean is important for children. Language is strongly connected with the emotion of the nation. Jacob and Grace were born here, and Tiffany came when she was very young, so they do not have any memory about Korea. So I plan to let them know about Korea because it is their parents’ country. They need to know about the country and a Korean’s emotion if they are to

understand us [parents]. And learning Korean is the best way to teach about Korea.

Interviewer: Do you think understanding Korea and learning Korean is helpful for Grace's schooling?

Kyung: Of course! For my children, Korea is not only my country but also their country too. It may sound strange, but they always keep in mind that they are of Korean descent. Korean language school helps them to maintain their identity as Koreans and to have pride in that. Having pride in their ethnicity, so they have a good self-identity, not shame about their ethnicity, is an essential factor for immigrant children to succeed in this country. (1st interview)

Kyung assured that her children maintained their Korean heritage because she believed it connected them to her and her husband. By learning Korean, according to Kyung, children did not only maintain their heritage but also had a positive self-identity, and this gave them power to overcome struggles in the future.

As introduced in the beginning, Jae also expressed her contradictory feelings in one sentence: "I have pride that I am Korean but sometimes I am sorry for my kids for not being American." (1st interview) She added:

Learning Korean may not be useful for the present, because they [her children] are in a U.S. school. However, I believe language is bound up with emotional communication. Actually, if I speak something emotional in English, then it may not deliver my subtle meaning to her. I wish my children can feel the same thing that I feel. Also, considering their family--not only us but also their grandparents... [They need to learn Korean]. Actually, only we are here. Other family members are in Korea. If they [my children] cannot speak Korean, they

are detached from us [Korean heritage]; then they are nothing--neither American, nor Korean. If they have a firm identity as Korean descendants, it will help them overcome struggles when they confront any issues relevant to their identity. (3rd interview)

Like Kyung, Jae regarded learning Korean as an essential thing to deepen their familial bond. She believed that, if her children could not speak Korean, they would lose their Korean heritage, and they would be “nothing” because they could not belong to any other culture. Also, Jae agreed with Kyung in her belief that, by learning Korean, children maintained their identity as part of their Korean heritage, and that it would be a source of strength for them to overcome struggles.

Young is another mother who insisted on the importance of learning Korean to develop Siwon’s positive self-identity.

Young: I always tell Siwon about the Korean language. I said to him, “Even if you speak English, people consider you as not American but Korean. Look at you. Even your food, your lifestyle, and your grandparents all are Korean. It is not shameful that you are different from others, but it is a thing to be proud of because you have one more culture than other people have.” I want Siwon to have pride in his culture and ethnicity.

Interviewer: Does any possibility exist that Siwon may feel he is a minority because of stressing his Korean heritage too much?

Young: That may be possible, but, in contrast, he tries to keep at his work to overcome his minority status. Actually, he is a minority, and that is the reality that cannot be denied. Even though he is a citizen and speaks English perfectly, others see him as an immigrant. Unless our color were white... (Sighs.) So I

think I need to teach him not to freeze up because of his skin color, to accept his reality but not have a complex about it--like “I am of Korean heritage, but I can do better than you.” Whether a person has confidence or not is quite different.

(3rd interview)

Like Kyung and Jae, Young wanted Siwon to have a positive self-identity as part of his Korean heritage and to be proud of his culture. Learning Korean was one of the important activities by which she could help him to know about Korean culture.

These mothers –Kyung, Jae, and Young--believed learning Korean was closely relevant to maintaining their children’s Korean heritage, and, again, it helped their children to have a positive self-identity, so that they could overcome struggles in the future.

While they mentioned about helping their children to have a positive self-identity, it was obvious that they were conscious of their children’s ‘minority’ status and even worried about their children’s future struggles: “They are part of a minority here, so it might be worse.” (Kyung), “our Korean children” (Jae), and “...he tries to keep at his work to overcome his minority status.” (Young). They—Kyung, Jae, and Young—chose helping their children to have pride in their Korean heritage as their strategy to prepare the children for the anticipated struggle—the identity issue.

However, different from the other mothers, Jiwon and Emily did not consider maintaining their children’s Korean heritage as relevant to their own involvement in their children’s schooling. Even though she did not believe teaching Korean was related to her school involvement, Jiwon registered her children in Korean language school. According to her, because Chan is Korean, he should speak Korean as well as

speak English in the United States. She considered speaking Korean to be an extra skill for Chan to get an advantage in his schooling, compared to monolingual children.

Emily registered her children in Korean language school before, but she dropped it because her children did not like to go to the school. As for the experience, she regretted it and hoped her children could speak Korean “because they have a Korean heritage.” (1st interview) She regretted that her children did not want to learn Korean and stated her worry:

I have many Korean friends in my church who immigrated when they were young, and some of them cannot read even a Korean menu in Korean restaurants. Whenever I see them, I feel sad thinking that my children will be like them in the future. (1st interview)

She deplored the possibility of her children losing their Korean heritage; however, this ended in just deciding that she did not need to force them to learn Korean. Also, she did not think it was related to her children’s schooling.

Their Struggles

The Korean mothers in this study were active participants in their children’s schooling. While they enthusiastically got involved in their children’s schooling, they also confessed their struggles with involvement. These struggles that the immigrant mothers suffered have been reported in other studies: communication problems because of language and cultural differences (Carreon, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Koh & Shin, 2006; Sohn & Wang, 2006); differentiation, and isolation (Costigan & Koryzma, 2010; Sohn & Wang, 2006) or an unwelcomed feeling (Turney & Kao, 2009).

Even though the types and degrees of difficulty were different, all the Korean mothers had experienced struggles to participate in their children’s schooling, and

Emily was not an exception. Emily struggled to join the PTA at first, because Excellent Elementary School was different from her son's prior school. However, since Emily was familiar with American school culture and English, she succeeded in breaking through the "closed system" and got herself accepted into the powerful clique.

Different from Emily, who had gotten all of her education in America, the other Korean mothers had struggled to participate in their children's schooling due to their lack of knowledge about American culture, especially school culture. Many immigrant mothers struggle with the American culture and school system, which are different from those of their own countries. For example, Jae confessed, "When I went to the PTA meeting, I could not speak out at all-- not only because of my English skill but also because I had no knowledge about the topic." Jiwon, also, found the reason for her struggle in the cultural differences.

Cultural differences have caused the Korean mothers to delay learning the information needed for supporting their children. Kyung had a sense of guilt about her inability to teach her daughter adequately. According to her, she could not teach Tiffany when the necessary time came, because, first, she herself needed to learn in order to be able to teach Tiffany, and that took time. As Jae pointed out, "All the information I desperately try to find out is sometimes just a basic part of their lives. Also, even the quality of the resources we can access is different!", immigrant mothers spend more time to find information, in relation to American mothers, due to their lack of cultural knowledge (Turney & Kao, 2009).

English skill was another concern of the Korean immigrant mothers when it came to participating in their children's schooling. This language concern is also

reported from other research studies relevant to immigrant parents (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Turney & Kao, 2009). Except Young and Emily, both of whom had high or native English skills, the other mothers--Kyung, Jae, and Jiwon--struggled with their English skills. Concern about their English ability was raised the most when they participated in large group meetings, such as PTA activities or room mother gatherings for school events. These Korean mothers were relevantly comfortable with communicating at the personal level, such as at a one-on-one meeting like a parental conference (Yang & McMullen, 2003).

Also, the ability to teach English to their children was a concern for all the Korean mothers except Emily, when the issue arose of helping with the homework of their children above a certain grade.

Exclusion, such as differentiation and feelings of alienation, were reported as obstructions to their school participation (Sohn & Wang, 2006). Jae explained her feelings of differentiation as "It seems like there is an invisible line. If you go over the line, you are looked at as doing too much and being obtrusive," and the line demarcates each mother's boundary for participation, between the American mothers and the minority mothers. Jiwon also experienced alienation while she worked for the PTA. She said, "...although White American mothers are nice to me and answer me whenever I try to ask something, I can feel there is a certain wall that is invisible. I cannot be fully assimilated into the group. I am eager to volunteer to support my children; however, more and more I feel too tired to try and that drives me to booze."

The unwanted feeling was an obstacle that impeded the Korean immigrant mothers' involvement in their children's school activities (Turney & Kao, 2009). In this study, the mothers that felt unwelcomed by the school tended to connect their

volunteering to a useless feeling about their involvement. From her prior volunteering experiences for Sora, Jae felt her volunteering was not valued by the teacher as much as that of other, American mothers. This experience evoked her decision to suspend her volunteering efforts.

These difficulties are interwoven with each other, so when disempowerment occurred for the Korean mothers in this study, it used to be a product of the complex interaction of their difficulties. For example, Jae and Jiwon were disempowered because they could not accommodate play dates for their children. The reason for their hesitation to invite the friends of their children to their homes was that they worried about communicating with their parents, who would accompany their children. In this case, they had anxiety about arranging play dates because of their English skill and worrying about topics to talk about with other, American parents who were accompanying their children.

However, other difficulties, such as discrimination (Sohn & Wang, 2006), which have been reported by other researchers, were not found in this research.

In sum, the Korean immigrant mothers in this study experienced difficulties when they supported their children's schooling, and this was evident especially when they were involved in school activities. Whereas they reported cultural differences and English skill as their difficulties in the home and community settings, they reported differentiation, feelings of alienation, and an unwanted feeling, in addition to cultural differences and English skill, as their difficulties in the school.

Americanized Standard to Evaluate Their School Participation

Evaluation Standard

The Korean immigrant mothers in this study showed different degrees of satisfaction with their involvement for their children. While some mothers were satisfied with their involvement, other mothers undervalued their school involvement, even labeling it “inaction.” (Kyung) Their evaluations about their supports were based on the judgment of whether or not their supports were in accord with those of White American upper-middle-class mothers.

It has been raised that the cultural knowledge of the upper-middle class dominates the school culture in America (Delpit, 1988; Lareau, 1989). The Korean mothers in this study recognized that there is a dominant cultural code in the school, and it belongs to the White upper-middle-class.

While I was doing interviews with them, these Korean mothers frequently mentioned White American mothers’ school involvement and showed their awareness of White upper-middle-class mothers’ strategies, such as “If you look at American mothers who support their children...”(Jae), or “...many American mothers, who stress sports during elementary school.” (Young)

Based on their awareness of the White-upper-middle-class-mothers’ culture, they set White middle-class American mothers’ strategies as their standard to succeed in America. For example, “even American mothers hire tutors for their children” (Jae); “They invest more time and money in their children.” (Jae); “Different from Korea, children need to do various things other than study here.” (Jiwon); “American mothers, who stress sports during elementary school.” (Young); and “America emphasizes the importance of volunteering, and I have grown up here, so I have

learned to volunteer.” (Emily); showed how they continued to adhere to the White middle-class’ values. Their feature resembled “the oppressed” that Freire (1983) mentioned as the people who are colonized. The oppressed internalizes the image of the oppressor, introjects cultural myths, and adopts the oppressor’s guidelines (Freire, 1983).

In addition to identifying themselves with White upper-middle-class mothers, the Korean mothers judged their participation based on their perceived upper-middle-class-American standard. Since volunteerism has been considered a valued American tradition of participation, many American mothers called to mind volunteering as their school participation (Christie, 2005). This influenced the Korean mothers’ evaluation of their school involvement. When the Korean mothers evaluated their school involvement, it tended to focus only on volunteering, and the evaluation of their entire school involvement was based on the standard of whether their volunteering was successful or not.

However, this standard which the Korean mothers adopted to succeed in this society, paradoxically, could be used as a tool of oppression. The Korean mothers in this study evaluated their participation according to only the standard of whether their school involvement was in accord with that of upper-middle-class American mothers or not, regardless of how actively they got involved in their children’s schooling.

Indeed, Jae devalued her entire involvement because she opted out from school volunteering, even though she currently attended all other school events and successfully helped with Yura’s studies at home. Just like Jae, Kyung has not recovered fully her sense of self-efficacy, despite her current active volunteering.

While Jae and Kyung had disempowered feelings because of using the colonized standard, Young, Emily--and even Jiwon, who did not volunteer currently--evaluated their participation as being their helping with their children's schooling. Young, who volunteered as a work-room mother before and currently was an active member of the Boy Scouts team, believed she supported Siwon quite well. Even though she regretted her lack of human resources, Young found fulfillment of her need in other activities such as the soccer team and Boy Scout activities, so she was quite satisfied with the situation. Young pressed her advantage as an expert in both Korean and American cultures when she participated in Siwon's schooling. While she accessed Korean information resources as a Korean, she also performed her school involvement according to the Americanized standard. The two standards that she used enabled her to be evaluated as an active participant by the other Korean mothers, as well as by herself. However, by using the colonized standard, while Young was satisfied with her involvement, she criticized other Korean mothers' inability by saying "some Korean mothers avoid American mothers because they feel they are strangers."

Emily internalized American mothers' standards, and this is revealed by her using "we" when she indicates "American mothers' to include herself, and using "them" to indicate other Korean immigrant mothers. Since she had no Korean cultural references, it might be natural for Emily to use the American mothers' strategies; however, she also used the standard to judge other Korean immigrant mothers' participation strategies. Emily believed the reason Korean mothers are inactive volunteers is because of their "selfishness" and because they do "not get money from the volunteering."

Both Young and Emily attributed the inability of Korean immigrant mothers to participate in school involvement, to their passiveness or selfishness, rather than finding the structural inequality of the school context. As Freire (1983) points out, the oppressed internalizes the oppressor's image and wants to be like the oppressor, rather than to be free from oppression: Young was satisfied that her current involvement came up to the standard, rather than being aware of the context of social inequality.

Jiwon also evaluated her last involvement as valuable. She was the only mother who considered her volunteer participation valuable, even though she had been disempowered through her volunteer experiences. She was an active volunteer at first, but, after that year, she had not volunteered and explained "I will resume volunteering someday when I am ready for a challenge again. But, not this time. I need a rest." (2nd interview) Even though she hesitated to resume her volunteering, she was proud of her last volunteering because she tried and completed the room mother job. She added, "Anyway, I think I am awesome. (Smile) I was the only non-American mother in the PTA except one Mexican mother, who immigrated a long time ago. Nobody [other immigrant mothers] did volunteer for PTA except me." (2nd interview) The self-confidence that she felt was in contrast to her disempowered feeling during her volunteering experience. This contradictory feeling was caused by her using an upper-middle-class-American standard. She got depressed during her last volunteering because she felt that she did not fit into the culture, language, and color of the dominant mother group in the PTA. However, despite her disempowerment, Jiwon was proud of herself because she at least achieved the "standard," in contrast to the other minority mothers' inability. Similar to the oppressed who wanted to be "bosses over other workers" (Freire, 1983, p. 23), Jiwon was satisfied with her

superiority--which met the White upper-middle-class standard--over the other minorities, who could not meet that standard and were not aware that they also were oppressed (see Freire, 1983).

In sum, the Korean immigrant mothers in this study perceived White upper-middle-class mothers' strategies as the dominant code in school and tried to reach the same level as those mothers. However, the strategy they adopted to succeed in the United States oppressed them themselves. The Korean mothers evaluated their school involvement only depending on whether and how much their performance was similar to that of the American mothers. When they evaluated their involvement, they only focused on their volunteering aspect among their various types of school involvement. So, regardless of how they successfully involved themselves in their children's schooling in various places, it was important to them that they volunteered like upper-middle-class Americans. It was obvious that the Korean mothers in this study were disempowered temporarily or permanently by using the standard.

Furthermore, the standard they adhered to forbade their awareness of the context of social inequality and encouraged the Korean immigrant mothers to internalize the standard.

Efforts to Empower Themselves

All the Korean mothers in this study experienced disempowerment in the present or the past. Kyung felt self-inefficacy while she interacted with the school teacher and helped her children when she participated for her older children. Jae and Jiwon had been disempowered through their volunteering experiences, especially through the PTA activities, and they still were in a disempowered condition. Young had been disempowered due to her lack of cultural knowledge to support Siwon's

play dates. Also, she felt frustrated because of her lack of a human network, and she believed this was because she is an immigrant. Emily--even though she got all of her education in the United States--had felt disempowered at first, when she transferred to this school.

Meanwhile, the Korean immigrant mothers in this study tended to find ways to empower themselves when they felt disempowered, rather than remaining discouraged. Their efforts appeared in two coping strategies: They tended to find a way to break through their struggles, to empower themselves when they felt disempowered, or to find alternative methods to optimize their participation, such as finding other ways or other areas, instead of limiting their efforts to just the disempowered area.

Some mothers tried to break through the obstacle directly when they experienced disempowerment. For example, Emily felt disempowerment when she could not join the school PTA, and she blamed the “closed system against outsiders” for the problem. To empower herself, she did not cease her efforts to join the PTA. She “told people--whomever she met--that she wanted to join the PTA” and “finally got a call from a PTA mom.”

Similar to Emily, Young resolved her disempowerment for play dates with other children by using a direct method. After realizing the necessity of play dates, she actively engaged in arranging play dates and tried to gather with other, American parents.

Kyung also empowered herself by overcoming her obstacles. She felt disempowerment because she could not help her children’s schooling at all--such as by teaching English or communicating with a teacher. Even though it had taken time,

she learned language skills and school culture, so that she made herself ready to support Grace.

Some Korean mothers found alternative ways to empower themselves if they were not able to execute a certain job. For example, Jae hired a tutor for Sora because she could not help her study. Jae admitted her inability without any negative feeling and found an alternate way to substitute for her inability.

Young also used an alternative method to overcome the disempowerment feeling connected with her limited relationships with other, American mothers. She felt the lack of human resources who could help her physically and share information about the American system with her, in contrast to other, American mothers. To redeem her deficiency in a human network, she believed participation in PTA would be helpful. However, due to her school schedule as well as her personality, it was hard—for practical reasons--to engage in PTA activities. Young did not despair over the situation; she found other activities, like Boy Scouting and the soccer team, to fill her need for a human network.

In addition, some mothers found other areas to complement their defects in a certain area. It is obvious that their feelings of disempowerment with respect to a certain support did not always influence their other supports. For example, while Jae opted out of school volunteering, she eagerly participated in Yura's studying at home and was satisfied with the support. Jiwon also felt disempowered about her school volunteering, but she was confident about her participation in Chan's schooling at home.

However, there was no determined disposition for the decision when a Korean mother chose a method to empower herself. Rather, the Korean mothers chose various

methods, based on the situation they perceived. For example, Young used a direct method when she realized she did not support play dates for Siwon. She called the mothers of Siwon's friends and arranged play dates. This is compared to the reality that she used an alternative method to fulfill her need for a human network by using Boy Scouts and the soccer team, instead of PTA. The difference was based on her perception of whether she could control the event or not.

In sum, the Korean immigrant mothers in this study tried to empower themselves when they were disempowered. They found direct methods to break through the struggles or alternative methods to support their children better and found other areas where they could participate, to make up for their deficiency in an area.

DISCUSSION

Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications

FINDINGS REVISITED AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to understand how Korean immigrant mothers perceived parental involvement and how they got involved in their children's schooling. The process of how the Korean immigrant mothers were empowered and disempowered throughout their involvement was also explored. These research questions were examined through in-depth interviews with the Korean immigrant mothers.

Prior to examining their concepts of parental involvement, I asked the Korean immigrant mothers about their concepts of schooling. This was based on my assumption that their practices of parental involvement in their children's schooling could be different, depending on their concepts of schooling (Lareau, 1989). The Korean immigrant mothers agreed with the concept of schooling as acquiring abilities relevant to having a better school life, but their ideas about specific abilities were different. Despite their differences about the specific abilities connected with schooling, all the Korean mothers in this study were in accord with the concept of schooling as having an inclusive meaning, not only being confined to academically-related abilities, but also covering the acquisition of other developmental abilities.

Corresponding to their perceptions of schooling, the Korean mothers had a comprehensive concept of parental involvement in their children's schooling. They believed all supportive behaviors for their children's schooling--not only parents' attendance at school but also other activities occurring at other places such as the home or community--should be counted as parents' involvement.

While the Korean immigrant mothers showed their agreement mostly on the concepts of schooling and involvement, there were discrepancies in the mothers' perceptions and involvement practices. Some mothers did not get involved in certain activities which they believed would be helpful for their children's schooling. Approaching the reasons for the discrepancies allowed me to explore their empowerment/ disempowerment experiences during their involvement in their children's schooling.

The Korean immigrant mothers in this study experienced empowerment as well as disempowerment while they were involved in their children's schooling. Some cases of disempowerment were overcome or others still continued.

Their disempowerments were caused by prior participation experiences, a lack of language and cultural knowledge, and the standard they used to judge their involvement. While they were disempowered, the Korean mothers tried to empower themselves with diverse strategies. However, their efforts did not seem to empower them in reality, as long as their standard was the same as that of White-upper-middle-class parents.

Now, I will address what these findings mean. Then, I will suggest what these findings imply for educators, school administrators, and Korean immigrant mothers.

Perceptions of Parental Involvement

All the Korean mothers in this study agreed that schooling is acquiring abilities relevant to having a better school life. As for these abilities, they also agreed that the abilities should be inclusive--not only being confined to academically-related abilities, but also covering the acquisition of other developmental abilities.

Accordingly, they believed that all parental involvement occurring in various milieus, not only at school, should be counted as parental involvement in their children's schooling. The Korean mothers' comprehensive perception of involvement is in accord with recent trends in research about immigrant parents.

Criticizing that the existing research trends confining the boundaries of parental involvement to include only the schools alienated and marginalized minority parents' school involvement, researchers proposed that parental involvement should be considered from a broader perspective, rather than a narrowed perspective including only the school (Hidalgo, Siu, & Epstein, 2004; Williams & Chavkin, 1985). The Korean immigrant mothers in this study believed their supporting activities occurring other than at school should be counted as involvement activities, too.

However, when I looked over their practices, there were disparities between their practices and perceptions of parental involvement in schooling. The Korean mothers did not get involved in certain areas or activities, even though they believed that that would be helpful for their children's schooling. This practice also conflicted with their comprehensive perception that all activities occurring in various places should be counted as parental involvement.

Considering that the main reason for the discrepancy is their inability to conduct certain activities, it is needed to examine their involvement experiences and how they became disempowered, in order to understand the discrepancy.

Empowerment and Disempowerment During Involvement

The concept of empowerment has been defined by many scholars in different academic fields. For this study, I borrowed Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba's (1991) definition of empowerment as "the possession of power to act or to affect something

by participating in a given activity” (p.138) and disempowerment as the opposite state of empowerment, in order to analyze the Korean immigrant mothers’ empowerment/disempowerment processes.

While they were involved in their children’s schooling, the Korean immigrant mothers experienced empowerment and disempowerment, and those experiences influenced their decisions on future involvement. Therefore, it is needed to explore their empowerment/disempowerment experiences to understand their involvement in their children’s schooling.

Distinctive Features of their Empowerment/Disempowerment Experiences

The Korean immigrant mothers in this study showed distinctive features of empowerment/ disempowerment procedures during their involvement in their children’s schooling. They experienced empowerment and disempowerment in sequence or at the same time; they were active participants during the empowerment process, and their empowerment/disempowerment processes were not a product but a continuing process.

Empowerment/Disempowerment Occurs at the Same Time or in Sequence.

The notion of dichotomizing between empowerment and disempowerment has been a long trend in the research area. Researchers have conceptualized independence and empowerment versus dependence and disempowerment (Ashcroft, 1987; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Freire, 1983).

While the terms of empowerment and disempowerment have been used discretely in the education field, the Korean mothers experienced empowerment and disempowerment in sequence. The process was not distinct, but, rather, it was an indiscrete procedure. The Korean immigrant mothers were empowered in a certain

activity or area, while disempowered in another activity or area. This is different from the idea that polarizes “power with independence and powerlessness with dependence” (Wray, 2004, p. 23). My argument is not intended to refute the White-upper-middle-class mothers’ relative privileges in the education field, but rather to reconsider whether immigrant mothers should be considered only deficit beings who are always disempowered.

In my findings, the immigrant mothers were empowered and disempowered at the same time. For example, Jiwon was empowered from teaching her children at home, whereas she was disempowered to support play dates at home. She was empowered and disempowered at the same time--even at the same place. Young also showed empowered feelings toward her involvement using her teaching ability to help with Eric’s studies, while she showed disempowered feelings toward finding information for her possible further involvement. In Young’s case, she showed empowered feelings at home, but disempowered feelings in the community area. This means empowerment and disempowerment are not always discrete according to different areas or different times, but, rather, both conditions may occur in the same area and at the same time.

Some empowerment and disempowerment procedures in this study occurred in sequence. The Korean immigrant mothers were disempowered when they experienced their inability to get involved in their children’s schooling, but they also tried to empower themselves at the same time. For example, when Young realized Siwon was at a disadvantage in the relationship with his friends because she did not support his play dates, she called the mothers of Siwon’s friends to start play dates, so

that she amended her disempowerment condition. The mothers' efforts to cast off their disempowered conditions entailed empowerment when those efforts succeeded.

In sum, different from prior notions of empowerment/disempowerment, these Korean immigrant mothers experienced empowerment and disempowerment at the same time or at least in sequence during their involvement in schooling. This finding is supported by recent research trends, in which empowerment represents multitudinous power relations. Researchers have recently raised questions about the belief in mutually-exclusive attributes of empowerment and disempowerment, and they consider that both can occur at the same time (Park, 2008; Wray, 2004).

Active Participants in Their Empowerment Process

The second feature of the Korean mothers' empowerment/disempowerment experiences is that they were active participants in their empowerment process. The Korean immigrant mothers in this study tried to cast off their disempowerment whenever they confronted the condition. Even though they sometimes chose alternative ways to break through their disempowered condition rather than using direct ways, the Korean immigrant mothers contributed to their empowerment process.

This concept of parents as the main agents contributing to their own empowerment process was insisted on by Ruiz (1991). While raising concerns about the prior idea regarding the subject of empowerment that considered the passive meaning of being empowered, Ruiz stressed the importance of parents' agency to empower themselves (Ruiz, 1991).

Different from the passive concepts of empowerment that have been used in research studies (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Freire, 1983) about marginalized people, the Korean mothers in this study tried to achieve their own goals, and devised alternative

strategies when they confronted obstacles to the goals. They played an active role in their empowerment process. As to the aspect of active beings who participate in their empowerment process, the Korean immigrant mothers in this study as active agents getting involved in their empowerment process are in accord with Ruiz's (1991) idea.

On-going Process

Empowerment is considered a multidimensional process to acquire ability, not a completion (Delgado-Gaitan, 1991; Kabeer, 1999). This is supported in the finding that, while the Korean mothers tried to empower themselves, they came close to empowerment. As they tried to empower themselves, they experienced recurring patterns of disempowerment and empowerment.

However, some mothers' involvement practices seemed to continue in a disempowerment condition. In Jiwon's cases, she suspended her volunteering after experiencing negative feelings during her involvement. According to Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba's (1991) definition of disempowerment, her current condition can be considered a state of disempowerment, since she lost her ability to volunteer. However, Jiwon stressed that her suspension of involvement was a temporary decision, not a permanent one. Jiwon assured that she would volunteer again someday, when she is ready for it. Even though she suspended her volunteering, she tried to complement her inability to support volunteering for Chan through alternative methods such as teaching his study more in order for him to succeed academically. Also, she learned English because she believed English was the most important tool to empower herself. Through her multi-dimensional efforts, she was in the process of empowering herself to volunteer again.

Regardless of the result of empowerment, the Korean immigrant mothers were in the midst of empowering themselves by using direct or alternative methods. Throughout recurring procedures of empowerment and disempowerment, their empowerment was an on-going process.

The Factors Influencing Empowerment/Disempowerment

During the interviews, the Korean immigrant mothers stated their disempowerment experiences and that that state was in progress or had been overcome. To better understand the Korean immigrant mothers' empowerment experiences, it is needed to discuss what influenced their empowerment/disempowerment processes.

Prior Participation Experiences

One of the most powerful factors determining the Korean mothers' empowerment/ disempowerment is their prior participation experiences with the same activity. Kyung, Jae, and Jiwon are cases that were disempowered through their prior negative participation experiences.

For example, Kyung was disempowered when she could not support her children for teaching them their studies, communicating with teachers, and guiding their academic careers. This aggravated her anxiety about school involvement, so that she could not try to be a school volunteer for her older children. She deplored her inability to help her children, but she could not start volunteering, even though she believed it was an important activity to support her children's schooling.

Even though they were different from Kyung in terms of their current empowerment conditions, for Jae and Jiwon, participation experiences created negative influences on their future decisions about getting involved. Both Jae and

Jiwon had been involved in PTA activities and were room mothers before, but they did not get involved in those activities any more. Different from Jae, who contrived alternative ways to free herself from disempowerment, Jiwon ceased her involvement, even though she stressed that the cessation was temporary. Even though the reasons they suspended their involvement were different, it is certain that their prior experiences influenced their disempowerment.

This finding is contradictory to the common belief that mastery experiences promote self-efficacy; however, it is supported by Bandura's (1997) idea that having repeated experience of failure lessens people's motivation. Jiwon, especially, suspended her involvement in PTA, even though she had almost come to understand PTA work through her prior experiences. Compared to her initial ambitious attitude toward involvement—even though she did not know about the American school system at that time—, Jiwon lost her confidence through her negative experiences (See Bandura, 1997).

However, their stories should be compared to those of the other mothers—Young and Emily. The mothers'—Kyung, Jae, and Jiwon—experiences are different from those of Young and Emily in terms of their persisting conditions of disempowerment. While Young and Emily experienced disempowerment during their involvement, the experiences did not influence their subsequent involvement decisions.

To inquire into their differences, it is needed to pay attention to their empowerment experiences. Both Emily and Young empowered themselves when they experienced disempowerment, while Kyung, Jae, and Jiwon did not.

Therefore, it seemed sure that the prior experiences that situated these mothers in disempowerment and did not resolve that condition, influenced the Korean immigrant mothers to step back from their involvement.

However, the negative influences did not seem to last the same for all the mothers. Different from Kyung, who recently overcame the disempowerment condition and started volunteering, Jiwon still remained in the condition. Also, for Kyung, her negative prior experiences made her disempowered at first, but later they worked as a momentum for her to learn English and acquire cultural knowledge, so that she could get involved in Grace's schooling. However, considering that it required about 12 years to take Kyung to empowerment from disempowerment, the lasting influence of prior negative experiences should certainly be addressed by long-term study.

The questions about how long the influence lasted and what momentum influenced the mothers' empowerment efforts were not revealed in this study; and should be addressed separately in subsequent studies.

Language and Cultural Knowledge

Another factor determining the Korean mothers' empowerment/disempowerment is language skill and cultural knowledge. In the case of Kyung, she struggled with her lack of English skill and cultural knowledge about America and felt disempowered. Kyung narrated that she was able to get involved in Grace's schooling after she acquired those abilities during her efforts with her older children. Also, Jae and Jiwon blamed their disempowerment mainly on their English skills, as well as their lack of cultural knowledge. Young, despite her fluent English skill, based her disempowerment to support Siwon's play dates with his friends on her lack of

cultural knowledge. Emily, who is familiar with American culture and language, in contrast with the other mothers, could empower herself from a disempowered situation.

Language skill and cultural knowledge have been mentioned as the main factors influencing the immigrant mothers' school volunteering and self-efficacy (Chavkin & Williams, 1989; Lee, 1995; Turney & Kao, 2009). The Korean mothers in this study also supported this assertion. For example, Kyung and Jiwon decided to not get involved and suspended their school volunteering due to their lack of English skills and cultural knowledge. Jae also deplored her inability to support her children and blamed her disempowerment on her lack of language and cultural knowledge. Contrariwise, Young and Emily, who had those knowledge resources and abilities, were satisfied with their involvement. Even when they were disempowered, they were able to easily overcome the situation, using their abilities—in contrast with the other Korean mothers.

There is the firm relationship that a lack of language skills and cultural knowledge are likely to disempower immigrant mothers.

The Standard of Evaluation for Their Involvement

The Korean immigrant mothers in this study were actively involved in their children's schooling. They got involved at diverse locations, like the home, school, and community through various activities. The activities that they were involved in were similar to those of White-upper-middle-class mothers (Lareau, 1989).

The reason why the Korean immigrant mothers adopted that framework is because the mothers noticed that the White-upper-middle-class mothers' ideology dominated the school (see Delpit, 1988). All the Korean immigrant mothers--except

Kyung--had bachelor's degrees and belonged to middle-class backgrounds. By using as their point of reference what the mothers had learned from their school experiences in Korea, they were able to perceive what was the mainstream culture in American schools.

However, paradoxically, the standard they adopted from others to succeed alienated them from themselves. When they experienced their inabilities to support their children according to that standard, they tended to be disempowered. For example, Jae, even though she actively volunteered for Sora, when she realized she could not do the same as other, American mothers in the same school did, she stopped her volunteering and finally opted out from all school-related volunteering work.

CRT scholars who have criticized the attempts by minorities to adopt others' cultural references to judge their children's success, have warned of the potentially catastrophic consequences. They argued that, while teaching the White-middle-class cultural code to children (Delpit, 1988) could not empower minority children, only the minority children's own culture could enable them to empower themselves (Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Yosso, 2005). It is in this same context that the standard which the Korean immigrant mothers adopted from another culture could not bring about their empowerment.

While the standard oppressed the Korean immigrant mothers, at the same time, it also true that it encouraged the Korean mothers to participate actively. In this study, the Korean mothers tried to empower themselves by their efforts to match their involvement to the standard, whenever they confronted disempowerment.

Their endeavors to reach the level of White-upper-middle-class mothers encouraged them to devise various strategies to overcome their disempowerment

states. For example, Jae hired a tutor for Sora when she realized she could not help Sora's studies any more. For the disempowered situation that she could not teach Sora's subjects, she found a solution in hiring a tutor. Also, in Kyung's case, she was disempowered when she could not volunteer, communicate with school teachers, and guide her older children. However, after she equipped herself with English skills and cultural knowledge, Kyung could have confidence about her involvement. Through direct strategies like Kyung's or alternative strategies like Jae's, the Korean immigrant mothers strived to make their involvement resemble that of White-upper-middle-class mothers.

By using this standard, although the Korean immigrant mothers could acquire hints of effective strategies for involvement in schooling, the standard eventually aggravated their disempowerment condition. Therefore, the standard "empowers them in certain ways but exacerbates their oppression in other ways" (Park, 2008, p.232).

Trapped in an Inextricable Maze

However, there are limitations for the Korean immigrant mothers to empower themselves by copying the White-upper-middle-class mothers' standard. Since the Korean immigrant mothers in this study evaluated their participation based on whether their participation was the same as the Americans', the mothers who experienced disempowerment could not empower themselves, as long as their participation was evaluated as not being the same as that of the middle-class American mothers or at least having the same effect as theirs.

When the Korean mothers were disempowered, they tried to empower themselves. The efforts spurred them to develop the tools to empower themselves. The empowerment tools they used were various, varying with each participant. Kyung

and Jiwon believed English skill and cultural knowledge could be tools to empower them. Jae used the strategy of opting out of school volunteering as her reaction against her disempowering experience. The tool is her passive resistance toward the dominant school culture. Also, Jae used hiring a tutor as her tool to empower herself when she realized she could not teach Sora any more. Young found Boy Scouts and soccer activities as her tools to compensate for her limited human network. Emily, when she felt guilty about Jacob for not arranging play dates with his friends at her home, used her business as a tool to overcome her inability.

However, even despite their continual attempts, their efforts did not always result in succeeding to empower themselves. For example, even though Jae resisted through her opting-out strategy, the tool itself did not empower her, because she had judged that her involvement was “useless,” and she deplored her inability to participate well at school like other, American mothers. Similar to Jae, the other Korean mothers--except Emily-- who had disempowering experiences in this study did not evaluate their participation as valuable, unless their involvement was the same as that of White-upper-middle-class mothers. This negative judgment persisted, even after the mothers had resolved their difficulties by using alternate strategies.

This recurring pattern of disempowerment and subsequent attempts to empower themselves but failing, was caused by their lack of awareness that the standard they adopted from American mothers oppressed them. The empowerment process should involve “critical reflection on the nature of oppression” (Sapon-Shevin & Schniedewind, 1991 p. 178). However, the Korean immigrant mothers were not aware that they were constrained by the standard, and, rather, they believed the standard was their key to success. Due to the Korean immigrant mothers looking at

their involvement in terms of the White-upper-middle-class mothers' standard, if their involvement was not identical to that of White-upper-middle-class mothers, they considered it "useless."

Accordingly, their attempts to empower themselves were another means of trying to change their identity to that of White-upper-middle class mothers; the Korean immigrant mothers were becoming disempowered because they were losing their Korean identity by applying this White American standard more and more to their involvement, in spite of their efforts to maintain their Korean identity. Like a maze from which they could not escape, the standard they obsessed over covered the Korean mothers' eyes and led them always back to Square One--a disempowerment condition.

Korean Nationality

In this study, the Korean immigrant mothers' attitude toward their nationality was another distinguishing feature about their empowerment and disempowerment processes. Their Korean nationality worked as a disempowerment factor and an empowerment factor at the same time. All the Korean mothers except Emily blamed their Korean nationality and their status as immigrants in the U.S for their disempowerment state.

For example, Jae confessed her guilty feeling as, "I am sorry for my kids for not being American," while she deplored her inability to teach her children in American mothers' ways.

However, the Korean mothers were also proud of their nationality at the same time, and tried to maintain their Korean identity and, further, to use it as a strategy to

empower themselves. They had registered their children in Korean language school currently or at least once.

The main reason they felt guilty about their Korean nationality in the United States is strongly related to their perceptions and standard of parental involvement. The Korean mothers all agreed that parental involvement in schooling was to support their children to succeed in their school and, further, to succeed in America as immigrants. To carry out their support, the Korean mothers adopted White-upper-middle-class mothers' strategies: hiring tutors, doing extra activities, teaching their children, and monitoring homework and studies. According to Lareau (1989), White-upper-middle-class parents used differentiated involvement strategies from other, marginalized parents. However, in this study, the Korean immigrant mothers who were the marginalized in this society chose the dominant group's strategies for supporting their children.

Since they wanted to identify their involvement with White-upper-middle-class mothers' ways, they blamed their Korean immigrant status whenever they encountered disempowerment. The Korean mothers in this study considered that their inability was caused by their Korean nationality, instead of considering it as a resource that they could use.

Why did the Korean mothers identify their nationality with inability, rather than with a resource? For that question, Freire's (1983) idea of the oppressed may be an answer. Freire, in his research study, realized that oppressed farm workers were not aware of their oppression. They followed the dominant group's rules and did not want to be free from the oppression. Rather, they wanted to be like an oppressor or sub-oppressor.

The same as the workers on the farm, the Korean immigrant mothers were not aware that their standard of school involvement was colonized. Since they continued to use the White-upper-middle-class mothers' involvement strategies, they evaluated their own involvement through that standard, rather than making independent evaluations.

However, the Korean mothers, in contrast to their guilty feelings toward their nationality, tried to maintain their children's Korean identity and language. They--except Emily--believed maintaining their Korean identity was especially important for immigrant children who are marginalized in the United States. They were concerned about the struggles their children would confront in the future. For example, Young expressed her anxiety: "Siwon will be confronted with struggles in the future because he is a Korean minority here." To protect Siwon from this anticipated struggle, Young chose developing Siwon's pride in his identity as a Korean.

They believed having a firm Korean identity could be a strong means of supporting their children--even those who were born in the United States--when they had difficulties due to their minority status.

Based on their beliefs, they encouraged their children to establish positive Korean identities. To register their children in Korean language school was the strategy all the Korean mothers in this study adopted for helping their children keep that identity. They asserted that language is interwoven with the identity issue. For example, Jae stated her idea about language:

If they cannot speak Korean, they are detached from us [Korean heritage]; then they are nothing--neither American, nor Korean. If they have a firm identity as

Korean descendants, it will help them overcome struggles when they confront any issues relevant to their identity. (3rd interview)

This self-contradictory feeling toward their Korean identity should be addressed. The Korean immigrant mothers--except Emily--admitted that Korean identity created a safeguard when their children struggled with their minority status. However, they also deplored their Korean immigrant status. They believed their inability to provide proper support for their children was because they were immigrants.

The Korean immigrant mothers in this study accepted their Korean identity as an inability for themselves--different from thinking of it only as a safeguard for their children. The reason why the Korean immigrant mothers could not accept their Korean identity as only a safeguard for themselves is entangled with the standard they used. The standard blinded the Korean mothers' "conscientization" (Freire, 1983) about their Korean identity, so that they considered it a source of their inability.

IMPLICATIONS

Teachers

A growing collection of resource materials has pointed out that parental involvement should be examined from a comprehensive perspective, rather than one confined to the geographic meaning of school. This approach insists that the narrow perspective of parental involvement which considers only attendance at school as parental involvement alienates immigrant mothers' involvement.

Due to their unfamiliarity with American language and culture, immigrant parents tend to hesitate to get involved as school volunteers--in contrast to their active involvement at home. Therefore, if educators judge immigrant mothers' school

involvement only by Westernized standards, the efforts of these Korean immigrant mothers—especially Jae and Jiwon--will be considered null involvement.

Also, teachers' requests and a feeling of being wanted were some of the most powerful factors that influenced the Korean immigrant mothers' decisions to volunteer at school (see Sohn & Wang, 2006). Jae, when she volunteered for Sora, initiated her volunteering because of the teacher's request. Also, Jae's volunteering for Multicultural Night--even after she had suspended all other her volunteering efforts--may also support this assertion. She explained the reason she volunteered only for the activity:

“Well...because someone was needed who could organize the Korean team at that time. And nobody [no Korean mother] volunteered for it so Jiwon and I decided to volunteer at first, and we asked Hyo and Chae if they wanted to volunteer. (Laughing) (2nd interview)

This creates implications for teachers who need help from (Korean) immigrant mothers. Due to the different culture and language, many Korean immigrant mothers are not confident about whether their involvement will be helpful for the teacher or for the PTA. A teacher's request for help can impress the Korean immigrant mothers that their volunteering is valuable, so that they are encouraged to get involved.

School Administrators

This study offers implications for school administrators. Considering that the language issue was mentioned as the strongest impediment to involvement, school administrators need to provide a translator when official school events, such as orientation or teacher-parent conferences, are held. Bilingual Korean mothers who are fluent in English can be used for translators.

Also, the Korean immigrant mothers who had no school experience in the United States narrated their difficulties about getting involved in their children's schooling due to their lack of knowledge of the school system and the culture. This difficulty may be resolved by providing handouts in Korean about the school system or possible volunteering, so that they can create a blueprint of the American school system.

Encouraging Korean immigrant mothers to gather regularly with school personnel and to share information about schooling may promote Korean immigrant mothers' involvement to include more varied ways.

Korean Immigrant Mothers

This study can provide insight into a Korean immigrant population that has remained in an oppressed condition. In this study, the Korean immigrant mothers used White-upper-middle-class mothers' involvement strategies because they recognized the White middle-class code as the dominant cultural code (Delpit, 1988) used in American schools. Moreover, these strategies were connected to school success. However, they did not realize they oppressed themselves by using others' standard to judge their involvement.

The oppressed cannot be aware of their oppressed condition, because they are colonized by the oppressor's culture, and they lose their ability to be conscious of their oppression (Freire, 1983).

According to Sapon-Shevin and Schniedewind (1991), to empower themselves, the oppressed need to realize their oppression first, then to think about alternative visions and to implement the visions. This study can contribute to Korean immigrant

mothers' realization of their oppression; that should help create a condition for them to move to the next step to empower themselves (Ruiz, 1991).

SUGGESTIONS

This study explored Korean immigrant mothers' school involvement and their empowerment and disempowerment processes during their involvement, based on Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba's (1991) definition of empowerment/disempowerment. Due to the definition focused on the mothers' "ability to "perform" the involvement activity, I ought to devote my analysis to their performance.

However, while I interviewed the Korean immigrant mothers, I also witnessed there were things beyond the performance issue. Regardless of their performance, the mothers had feelings about their involvement. This was expressed in Kyung's case; she struggled with her guilty feelings about her older children or was easily depressed whenever she confronted a difficulty, even when she currently performed well her volunteering work for Grace. Also, this could be represented in Jiwon's case: She was proud of herself despite her decision to suspend her volunteering. These examples show that the empowerment process needs to be considered from inner psychological processes as well.

Since this study is the first step of the exploration of Korean immigrant mothers' empowerment/disempowerment processes during their school involvement, I examined only their performance, based on a general feature of empowerment: "the ability." However, I suggest for future researchers to examine how the psychological features relate to the Korean immigrant mothers' empowerment/disempowerment processes.

While I analyzed the interview data, it was also seen that an acculturation process occurred during their involvement. When the Korean immigrant mothers initially got involved in their children's schooling, conflicts between their Korean cultural references and American cultural references developed, and they adjusted themselves by selecting one of four adaptation modes: integration, assimilation, separation, or marginalization (Berry, 1990). However, the acculturation model is a theoretical framework that should be addressed separately. Therefore, I suggest that future study examine how Korean immigrant mothers pass through an acculturation process over time while they are involved in their children's schooling.

Also, in this study, all the Korean immigrant mothers except Kyung have bachelor's degrees. Kyung--even though she has no bachelor's degree--compensated for her lack of school experience through her experiences with her older children. For future research, investigating diverse SES Korean immigrant mothers' school involvement is needed to compare how prior schooling experiences contribute to adjusting to a new culture.

CONCLUSION

"The deference toward teachers or school authority" or "Confucianism" has been pointed out as the one of the most salient features by researchers who studied Korean immigrant mothers' school involvement. They believe Korean immigrant mothers tend to hesitate over active school volunteering due to their beliefs (Oh, S. K., 2004; Sohn & Wang, 2006).

Even though this may be partially true, nonetheless, we also admit, this colludes to mask Korean immigrant mothers' eagerness and struggles to get involved

in their children's schooling, their experiences as they step back from their involvement, and how they overcome their difficulties.

However, in this study, the Korean immigrant mothers grasped the distinction between American school culture and their Korean culture, rather than deferring their involvement due to their Korean cultural references. They also realized the next step to take—active involvement--, and they tried to get involved in their children's schooling according to their realizations. This is also found from research studies regarding Korean immigrant mothers (Sohn & Wang, 2006; Yang & McMullen, 2006).

To understand Korean immigrant mothers' involvement, we need to focus on what is going on in their experiences while they are involved in their children's schooling. In this study, the Korean immigrant mothers showed—through their stories--their eagerness to get involved, as well as their negotiation as they were involved with the realities facing them. The Korean immigrant mothers were eager to get involved in their children's schooling, but they experienced struggles that obstructed their involvement. Not only struggles, the Korean immigrant mothers were confined by the standard of involvement which they adopted for their involvement, so that they experienced recursive disempowerment.

The shared experiences contribute to our understanding the Korean immigrant mothers' struggles and efforts to empower themselves behind the superficial features of Korean mothers that 'respect Authority based on their Confucianism,' are 'overly focused on academic success,' or do 'not share their part in school work.'

Appendix A

Samples of Interview Questions for the First Interview

1. What do you think that schooling is?
2. What kinds of activities can be related to schooling?
3. Do you believe parents should get involved in their children's schooling? Then, tell me why you think so. If not, please tell me the reason.
4. How can parents support their children's schooling?
5. How do you get involved in your child's schooling? Please describe all the activities you are involved in to support your child's schooling.
6. Are you satisfied with your involvement? Please, tell me what part you are satisfied with. Or what part you are not satisfied with.
7. Do you believe your involvements contribute to your child's schooling? If so, why? If not, why not?
8. How can parents get involved in their children's schooling in general at home?
9. How do you get involved in your child's schooling at home?
10. Are you satisfied with your support at home?
11. Can you share your experiences of while you were involved in your child's schooling at home?

Appendix B

Samples of Interview Questions for the Second Interview

1. With what kinds of activities do you think parents can get involved in their children's schooling at school in general?
2. Then, in what kinds of activities do you get involved for your child's schooling?
3. (If she does not get involved in certain activities that she believes would be helpful) Can you explain why you do not get involved in that activity?
4. Are you satisfied with your support at school? Please tell me why or why not.
5. Do you believe your involvements at school contribute to your child's schooling? If so, why? If not, why not?
6. Can you share your experiences of while you were involved in your child's schooling at school?

Appendix C

Samples of Interview Questions for the Third Interview

1. What kinds of activities do you think parents can get involved in for their children's schooling in the community (other than at home and at school) in general?
2. Then, what kinds of activities do you get involved in for your child's schooling in the community?
3. (If she does not get involved in a certain activity that she believes would be helpful) Can you explain why you do not get involved in that activity?
4. Are you satisfied with your support in the community (other than at home and at school)? Please tell me why or why not.
5. Do you believe your involvements in the community (other than at home and at school) contribute to your child's schooling? If so, why? If not, why not?
6. Can you share your experiences of while you were involved in your child's schooling in the community?

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