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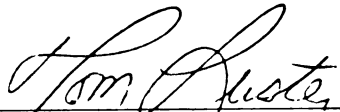
**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ADJUSTMENT OF KOREAN
CHILDREN WHO LIVE IN THE U.S.**

presented by

Sun-Jin Oh

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Masters degree in **Child Development**


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**FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ADJUSTMENT OF KOREAN CHILDREN
WHO LIVE IN THE U.S.**

By

Sun-Jin Oh

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ADJUSTMENT OF KOREAN CHILDREN WHO LIVE IN THE U.S.

By

Sun-Jin Oh

The purpose of this study was to identify factors influencing the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. Specifically, this study examined the following predictor variables: English proficiency, peer relationships, family relationships, and school experiences. Forty seven Korean children who were attending the Korean Language School and their parents participated in this study. Pearson Product Moment Correlations indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. and their English proficiency and school experiences. There was no statistically significant relationship between the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. and their family relationships and their peer relationships. However, the relation between adjustment and peer relationships approached significance with a two-tailed test and was significant if a one-tailed test was used. Additionally, according to the results of a regression analysis, English proficiency did not significantly predict the adjustment of Korean children when school experiences were controlled. However, the effects of English proficiency on adjustment were mediated through the school experiences. School experiences had a direct effect on the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Culture, a very powerful force in young children's lives, shapes representations of childhood, values, customs, child-rearing attitudes and practices, family relationships and interactions. Rodd (1996) said that children's development could be fully understood when it is viewed in the larger cultural context. When individuals move from their native culture to another, they invariably experience environmental and psychological stresses.

Children living in the U.S. after living in another culture and society not only face the initial stress and expected adjustment problems of all children, but also face an entirely different cultural environment. The problems, including language barriers, difficulties in social connections and networks such as peer relationships and interactions, and cultural differences, can discourage their efforts to adapt to the new social environment and culture.

According to the 1990 U.S. Census, children and adolescents under age 20 made up 34.9% of the total number of Koreans living in the U.S. Among them, 67% were born in the U.S. Because of their parents' immigration to study or work, minority children often came into or were born in the U.S. They may suffer from adjustment stresses in school and inadequate communication between school and parents. In addition to other losses, they experienced leaving their friends, extended family, and all the familiar surroundings of their home land (Kim, Kim & Rue, 1997). Stresses faced by Korean children in an alien culture would be even greater because of their lack of English proficiency and the cultural differences between Korea and America (Koh & Koh, 1988; Ho, 1992a).

However, many minority children are able to cope with these problems and achieve competence and find satisfactory ways to adjust to a new cultural environment. Therefore, the concern of this study is factors that are associated with the positive or negative adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S.

Because Chinese and Japanese have represented the largest Asian populations in the U.S., most studies of Asians in the U.S. are based on their samples. There is a paucity of Korean studies in general, but even more scarce are data on Korean children who live in the U.S. Thus, this study will explore the current status of Korean children in America and will contribute to the literature related to them.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to identify factors influencing the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. Adjustment is defined as “a function of the degree to which the environment fulfills a person’s needs and goals and it is reflected directly in feelings of satisfaction with various areas of life” (Taft, 1973, p. 20 reported in Taft and Steinkalk’s 1985 study). Specifically, this study will investigate different factors influencing the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S., by examining the following variables: English proficiency, peer relationships, family relationships, and school experiences.

Significance of the Study

First, this study offers practical guidelines to Korean parents who want to help their Korean children adjust successfully to life in the U.S. This study can encourage parents to seek more ways to help their children succeed in American society. In addition, this study is useful to teachers who have Asian students in their classes. To increase

effective teaching practices, it is crucial for teachers to understand how different variables, such as language and choices of peers, influence student behavior and learning. Also, the results of this study could be used to help policy makers assist Asian students.

Conceptual Model

Ecological Perspective

The theoretical framework is adopted from an ecological perspective. In the ecological perspective proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986), “the developing person is viewed not merely as a human being on which the environment makes its impact, but as a growing, dynamic entity that progressively moves into and restructures the milieu in which it resides” (p 21). The ecology of human development involves the process of the interaction between a person and the environment. The ecological environment is conceived as an arrangement of structures such as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem.

Ho (1992b) suggested the following four levels to assess minority children, based on the ecological perspective: (1) At the individual level, the assessment is focused on the bio-psychological endowment of each child, including physical appearance, personality strengths, cognition, problem-solving skills, level of acculturation and language skills. (2) The family-level focus is on family-life style, immigration history, culture, family organization, gender-role structure, affective styles, and traditions. (3) At the cultural level, the focus should be on understanding the value systems, belief systems, and societal norms of the main-stream culture. (4) At the environmental level, the assessment should be based on understanding the economic, social, and political structures of American society that discriminate and oppress individuals in minority groups.

According to the ecological perspective, a child's problems or difficulties are "understood as a lack or deficit in the environment, as adaptive strategies such as culture shock and conflict" (Ho, 1992b, p 17). If children adjust well in and interact effectively with their current environment, their problems may disappear. Therefore, the assessment of the interaction between the child and the environment, such as family, school, and peer group, is important in research on ethnic minority children. If there is a mutually beneficial interaction between minority children and their environment, this should improve their ability to adjust to a new culture and to adapt to stressful social conditions (Ho, 1992a).

This study, shown as in Figure 1, will examine portions of the child's microsystems. A microsystem is a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). That is, this study will investigate the interaction among these systems potentially affecting the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. The independent variables such as English proficiency, peer relationships, family relationships, school experiences, and the length of stay in the U.S. may influence the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S.

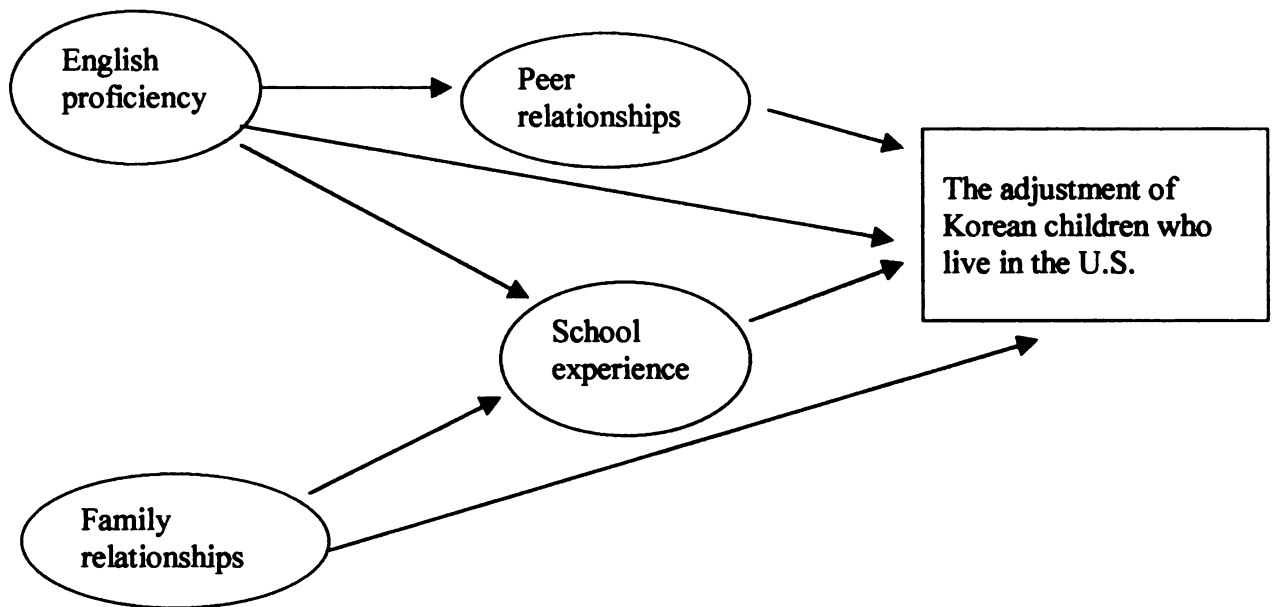


Figure 1. Possible influence on the adjustment of Korean children in the U.S.

Research Questions

1. Is there a relationship between the adjustment and the English proficiency of Korean children who live in the U.S.?
2. Is there a relationship between the adjustment and the family relationships of Korean children who live in the U.S.?
3. Is there a relationship between the adjustment and the peer relationships of Korean children who live in the U.S.?
4. Is there a relationship between the adjustment and the school experiences of Korean children who live in the U.S.?
5. Do school experiences mediate the relation between English proficiency and the adjustment of Korean children?

6. Do peer relationships mediate the relation between English proficiency and the adjustment of Korean children?
7. Do school experiences mediate the relation between family relationships and the adjustment of Korean children?

Conceptual and Operational Definitions

Dependent Variable

The following section provides the conceptual and operational definitions of the dependent variable. The dependent variable in this study is the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S.

Conceptually, **adjustment of Korean children** refers to Korean children's subjective feelings of being in harmony with their environment, while living in the U.S.

Operationally, the adjustment of Korean children will be measured by asking Korean children to complete the Adjustment Scale that include the following subscales: Desire to Reside in the U.S., Self-esteem, Depression Scale, and Self-confidence (Hightower, 1987; Simpson, 1992; Rumbaut, 1994; Eshel & Rosenthal-Sokolov, 2000).

Independent Variables

The following section provides the conceptual and operational definitions of the independent variables which are English proficiency, peer relationships, family relationships, school experiences, and the length of stay in the U.S.

Conceptually, **English proficiency** refers to Korean children's self-reported ability to speak, understand, read, and write English.

Operationally, English proficiency will be measured by asking Korean children to complete the English Proficiency Index (Rumbaut, 1994).

Conceptually, **peer relationships** refer to Korean children's self-reports about how they feel about their relationships with peers and acceptance by peers.

Operationally, peer relationships will be measured by asking Korean children to complete a modified version of the Interpersonal Social Skills measure (Hightower et al., 1987).

Conceptually, **family relationships** refer to Korean children's perceptions about whether the relationships with their parents are characterized by warmth, control, or conflict.

Operationally, family relationships will be measured by asking Korean children to complete a modified version of the Parent-Child Conflict Scale (Rumbaut, 1994) and the Family Warmth measure (Vergne, 1982).

Conceptually, **school experiences** refer to Korean children's subjective feelings of satisfaction with their relationship with teachers, the school system, and their academic success.

Operationally, school experiences will be measured by asking Korean children to complete a modified version of the School Experiences measure (Simpson, 1992).

Research Assumptions

These are the following assumptions related to this research:

1. Children's beliefs and behaviors are influenced by the current culture in which they live.
2. Korean children from first grade to 6th grade are generally able to understand the instructions and items given to them to measure their adjustment.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Children's perceptions of adjustment

Taft (1973 as reported in Taft and Steinkalk's 1985 study) defined adjustment as a function of the degree to which the environment fulfills a person's needs and goals and it is reflected directly in feelings of satisfaction with various areas of life. Where the person is generally satisfied with life one might expect a feeling of well-being which would be reflected in emotional stability, competence in dealing with the environment, and a positive self-concept (p. 20).

Adolescents who successfully integrate and accept their past culture with their current culture, and successfully own their cultural roots, are considered adjusted in the host society (Eshel, 2000; James, 1997). According to James (1997), adjustment and adaptation occur through the process of acculturation, not assimilation. "Assimilation" and "acculturation" are different. Assimilation usually forces people to give up valuable beliefs and behaviors to become part of the mainstream culture. For example, children and adolescents face pressure to assimilate into the new culture, acting as if the past culture never existed (James, 1997). Conversely, in acculturation, children and adolescents change their behavior, social and work activities, thinking patterns, values, and self-identification as a result of contact with the host society culture, without discarding past meaningful traditions and values (Eshel, 2000; James, 1997). If children and adolescents can be helped to accept both cultures, they can develop an integrated sense of self (James, 1997).

Vergne (1982) studied the positive adjustment of 45 foreign-born children ages 6 to 10 to a new school and culture. He pointed out that the child's attitude towards school, friends and peers, and to the U.S., maintenance of ethnic/national origin identity, and length of stay in the U.S. were all related to cultural adaptation. Particularly, the child's attitudes towards friend and peers were significantly correlated with a few variables such as self-esteem, child's attitude towards the U.S., and the length of stay in the U.S. Moreover, the length of stay in the U.S. not only correlated with school adjustment but also with self-esteem, the child's attitude toward school, and home adjustment (Vergne, 1982).

Rutter (1987, cited in Canino & Spurlock, 2000) suggests four specific coping mechanisms in children that act to protect against stress among children exposed to a new culture, that is: (1) the ability to reduce the impact of stress, (2) avoid negative chain reactions, (3) establish self-efficacy and self-esteem, and (4) seek new opportunities.

English proficiency

It is important to assess the degree of fluency in English because this factor may affect competence in schoolwork or relationships with family and peers. The lack of English proficiency exacerbates virtually every problem area of Asian Americans (Ho, 1992a). Asian Americans' general lack of proficiency in the English language and problems of miscommunication still may occur because the Asian culture's de-emphasis of verbal skills in meaningful interpersonal exchanges and because they do not have parallel vocabularies or may not know various meanings of words (Ho, 1992a; Ho, 1992b).

Children who are not fluent in the language of the host country may experience degrees of culture shock in the school setting. They may become depressed, confused, and hopeless about fitting into the American peer groups, if they do not understand the language well. James (1997) mentioned that even when a child has learned conversational aspects of the second language, it might take more than five years, on average, to learn those aspects of language involving cognitive functioning and academic achievement.

According to Canino and Spurlock (2000), in a school setting, lack of English proficiency is rarely considered as a possible cause for achievement difficulties, and frequently a child undergoing the acquisition of a second language is diagnosed incorrectly as a learning-disabled child. They mentioned that children become alienated from school when the classroom teacher points out that minority children's linguistic style is inferior to Standard English.

Korean American children reared by primarily Korean-speaking parents may have difficulties with socialization in the new culture and early learning experiences (Ho, 1992a; Ho, 1992b; Kim, Kim & Rue, 1997). Parents tend to depend on their children to speak for them in situations requiring fluent English because children and adolescents are often more fluent in English than their parents. James (1997) said that this practice results in role reversal, placing both the parent and child in difficult positions. The child, as the interpreter, is exposed to some information reserved for parents. Parents may become angry because of both their dependence upon and the involvement of the child in adult business. Consequently, these children are confused since they must constantly switch

from an adult's role to a child's role and back and feel obligated to learn English quickly to help their parents (James, 1997; Chiang, 2000; Bhattacharya, 2000).

Ethnicity is experienced and persists through language. Even though a native language provides a psychic bond or uniqueness that influences membership in an ethnic group, many minority children's school problems and family conflicts are related to language problems (Ho, 1992b). If the language is different between children and their parents, the generational and cultural rift may widen within Asian American families (Ho, 1992a).

Cheng et al. (2000) said that "families which cherish cultural heritage and ethnic cultural values seem more likely to require that their children preserve ethnicity by learning the family language and thus put greater pressure on minority children" (p. 465). They noted, citing Portes's 1994b study, that first generation immigrants are usually quite loyal to their ancestral languages. However, second generation immigrant children are often asked to speak their mother tongue at home and communicate with others in English outside of the family. They seem to experience more problems and conflicts in family relationships, as well as social connections and networks.

Yu and Kim (1983) suggested that social reinforcement and parental encouragement are necessary for bilingual and bicultural children to develop both languages in verbal and written form without apparent loss of proficiency in either language. Bilingual children have the advantage of being able to establish a more positive ethnic self-identity and self-acceptance as well as being able to appreciate bicultural enrichment in later years.

Peer relationships

Some Korean children may perceive their physical appearance as short and small, with black hair and black eyes and may recognize their skin color as ugly, inferior or shameful. This negative perception may be reinforced by peers who tease them. Also, this perception may have an effect on their personality or adjustment in an unfamiliar environment (Yu & Kim, 1983).

Peer association is a common experience of children and adolescents across cultures. Social networks that children establish and maintain with peers may play a significant role in social support for children to cope with emotional stress and adjustment difficulties. According to the study of Chen et al. (2001), peer sociability makes positive contributions to children's social and emotional development and school adjustment beyond the impact of socioeconomic status. In contrast, peer aggression contributes to children's learning problems and is negatively related to children's school competence. They mentioned that the contributions of peer social functioning to children's adjustment might be due to the direct contact and mutual influence among group members. Constant peer evaluations and reactions, based on culturally prescribed group norms and values, may serve to regulate and direct children's behaviors and, thus, affect normal developmental processes (Chen et al., 2001).

In studies of children's self-perceptions of abilities, researchers have found that elementary school-aged children were able to accurately assess their competencies in various domains, as well as to assess their peer acceptance (Cillessen & Bellmore, 1999). Children who lack meaningful interactions with peers will not have the information that is necessary to make accurate judgments about themselves. Therefore, to acquire the

formation and refinement of adaptive behavior, especially in the school setting, children's interactions with others are necessary (Cillessen & Bellmore, 1999). They found that children with poor peer relations (rejected and controversial children with peers) had low self-other agreement scores. Namely, self-understanding may depend on the quality of interactions and relationships with significant others. Children who were more accurate at perceiving which peers liked them most were also more accurate at perceiving who liked them least. However, children correctly identified twice as many peers who liked them as who disliked them (64% vs. 35%) (Cillessen & Bellmore, 1999).

Aboud (1988) mentioned, based on studies of White majority children's attitudes toward other groups, that White children as young as 3 years of age expressed negative attitudes toward Blacks. Prejudice among 4 year olds becomes considerably more prevalent, and is well documented. Three to five year-old White children often choose a Black person as looking 'bad,' as having negative qualities or as being least preferred as a playmate. Particularly, over 2/3 of children from 5 to 7 years claimed that an Asian, Black, or Native Indian person is bad or disliked (Aboud, 1988).

Family relationships

Korean parents tend to get involved positively in many kinds of activities with their children, especially academic performance. They don't hesitate to sacrifice everything to provide a good educational environment for their children. Many Korean children in the U.S. live with both their biological parents. Such stable family life positively influences the children in the training of growth-promoting values and emotional stability (Yu & Kim, 1983).

According to Fagen et al. (1996), parental warmth is positively related to children's self-image, social competence, and self-regulatory abilities. They indicated that children who perceived their parents as warm have better social skills and meaningful interpersonal relationships. Because children have internalized social roles and regularities, they can better ask for support and help from relevant others in stressful situations (Fagen et al., 1996).

Sun (1992a) measured perceived parental control and conflict with their parents, the level of adolescent's acculturation, and many other variables with 83 Korean American adolescents. She found that the Korean adolescent's acculturational variables had a significant relationship with maternal control and conflict. The author assumed that the Korean-American mothers who were less acculturated than their children could pressure their children to maintain aspects of the Korean culture, even though Korean American fathers may emphasize bicultural ability because most fathers were employed in American society (Sun, 1992a).

The parents' attitudes toward their heritage in a dominant society are important in the child's cognitive functioning and mental health by emphasizing their culture of origin in children's attitudes and behavior, especially in competition with non-supportive socializing agents such as the school (Ou & McAdoo, 1999). They found that parents' attitudes toward Chinese culture, language usage with the child, and the length of stay in the U.S. were correlated with the child measures, such as self-concept, racial/ethnic attitudes, and Chinese language ability. Parents whose young children use both Chinese and English showed more positive attitudes toward Chinese culture than parents whose children mainly use English. Parents may assist children to balance their abilities in

English and Chinese because young children may feel the dual pressure of doing well in school and of keeping their native language.

Gonzales et al. (1995) studied the mother-daughter relationship for each of 60 African American and Asian American families. Three aspects of the relationship were examined: maternal warmth/support, maternal restrictive control, and parent-adolescent conflict. Their research indicated that warmth and control in Asian American families correlated with the family's level of acculturation. The more acculturated families scored higher in warmth and lower in control (Gonzales et al., 1995).

Okagaki and Frensch (1995) examined the beliefs of 82 parents of 4th and 5th grade Mexican American children, focusing on parents' educational values and expectations, parents' own ability to help their children with schoolwork, parents' perceptions of racial barriers that their children might encounter in life, and many other measures. They found that the parents of high achievers in school achievement tests were more confident about their ability to help their children in school. Moreover, parents of high achievers disagreed with the racial barrier items more than did the parents of low achievers. They more strongly affirm that their children will not encounter barriers to their success in life because of their ethnicity. Consequently, Okagaki and Frensch (1995) suggest that parental help in understanding school tasks and in adapting to the social context of the classroom plays a significant role for minority elementary children in the United States.

Immigrant parent-child conflicts are significantly increased in cases where the children prefer English and also have a poor command of their parents' native language (Ho, 1992a; Sun, 1992a; Rumbaut, 1994). Asian children who live in the U.S. are

expected to obey parents and maintain family honor. On the contrary, dramatic and painful value conflicts with their parents emerge when American-born children defy and reject their ancestors' way of living. Their significant trouble is often caused by balancing the demands of becoming Americanized according to society and the desires of the parents to adhere to the values of their ancestors (Ho, 1992a; Sun, 1992a; Sandhu, 1999; Kibria, 2002).

Some Asian American children might think their parents' expectations are unreasonable and at odds with the American way of living. In particular, they might speak disapprovingly of the psychological pressures and tactics exerted by their parents. This widened gap and intergenerational culture clash in the values of parents and children are a psychologically painful wound among all the members in immigrant families (Sandhu et al., 1999; Kibria, 2002).

Children's psychosocial adaptation is mostly shaped by the family context. The assimilation into the current culture is moderated by parental ethnic socialization, social status, and parent-child relationships. Parent-child conflict may emerge as the strongest determinant of poor self-esteem, depression, and isolation from their parents (Rumbaut, 1994; Sandhu et al., 1999).

School experiences

Children's beliefs and behaviors are influenced by school experiences. The importance of school as an institution for the socialization of children is considered by some to be second after the family. School is "an arena where minority children first experience cultural conflict and behavioral adjustment problems" (Ho, 1992b, p. 20). The American school system can influence the educational achievement and behavioral

adjustment of an Asian child (Ho, 1992a; James, 1997). The impact of social change as part of the acculturation process is most likely to be experienced by foreign-born children in the school setting. A lack of acceptance by peers and teachers may foster a sense of being different (James, 1997).

By group discussions with Puerto Rican adolescents and their mothers, Fennelly, Mulkeen and Giusti (1995) found that both mothers and daughters were concerned that their teachers' lower expectations for Latino youth stemmed from a view that Puerto Rican students were incapable of doing well in school. They cited a comment of one girl who participated in the discussions. She said, "American teachers put us down; they talk to us like we're not gonna make it. They do not believe that Puerto Ricans can succeed" (p, 374). Several adolescents added that teachers equate difficulty with English with a lack of intelligence. Several of the mothers perceived that White teachers punish students differently based on their ethnicity. Ogbu (1987, cited in Fennelly et al.'s 1995 study) mentioned that the relationship between minorities and White Americans who control the public schools is often characterized by conflict and distrust.

Parents of Asian American children suggested that academic achievement was a way of overcoming the racial exclusions and barriers in the United States. They said that the message to do well at school was offered as a racial strategy, a way of overcoming the obstacles of race. Doing well at school was presented as an effective means to achieve socioeconomic status and rewards in the United States (Kibria, 2002).

Bhattacharya (2000) examined the school adjustment process of 75 school children and their parents who had immigrated to the U.S. from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. He identified some factors that protect children of all ethnic groups from

dropping out of the school. The first factor is a strong link between children's parents and teachers as two primary socialization agents. Their congruent message about the importance of education facilitates children's school adjustment. The second factor is parents' positive expectations which encourage children to have goals, and to recognize that education is the mechanism for helping them acquire the right direction in life. Also, Bhattacharya (2000) revealed several barriers to the school adjustment of South Asian children living in the U.S. He insisted that pressure from parents to uphold the family's reputation and guilt over the failure to fulfill family expectations may cause low self-esteem or the desire to associate with deviant peers.

The teaching format designed to provide a better education for White American children was based on the American mainstream curriculum with little awareness of cultural diversity (Chiang, 2000; Canino & Spurlock, 2000). They note that teachers and parents tend to differ on specific values, such as self-direction or conformity in children's education and guidance. Such value disparities between parents and school staff may affect the quality of their relationship and may increase the likelihood of interpersonal conflicts between teachers and children who come from other culture. These conflicts, in turn, may result in lower school achievement, a lower self-concept, and higher school dropout rates among foreign-born children (Ho, 1992a; Kim, Kim & Rue, 1997; Canino & Spurlock, 2000).

Canino and Spurlock (2000) suggest that the classroom teachers should acknowledge and appreciate children's home cultures, offering opportunities for children to express individual and cultural differences. The curriculum should include the cultural and racial diversity of our society. The school should provide children an opportunity to

learn skills that are not parts of their native culture but that are necessary to achieve practical success in the U.S.

Additionally, social class is another dimension that describes and defines the child's world by ascribing a particular position and value to his family's socioeconomic status. A child or adolescent from a low-income family will experience a restricted range of opportunities, choices, and challenges in particular social contexts (Ho, 1992b).

The length of residence in the U.S. and the developmental stage of children when the family immigrates will affect their adjustment and development in the new environment. Kim, Kim and Rue (1997) mentioned that the longer the child lives in the U.S., the more he or she is acculturated. That is, the younger the age at immigration, the higher the level of the immigrant's assimilation into the English language and American culture. For example, a 9 year old is more easily acculturated than a 15 year old. However, the younger the age at immigration, the less likely the child is to develop true bilingualism and biculturalism.

Rong and Preissle (1998, cited in Chiang's 2000 study) studied Asian American children and found the following: (1) Increasing length of U.S. residence reduces dropout rates among youth who have developed oral English proficiency: (2) Among Southeast Asian children from low-income families, the bilingual speaking children have significantly lower dropout rates than monolingual English speaking children from the same region.

To summarize, prior research provides support for the view that the adjustment of Korean children living in the U.S. is likely to be influenced by several factors. The

factors include: English language proficiency, family relationships, peer relationships, and school experiences.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study was designed to investigate factors influencing the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. In order to carry out the objectives of this research most effectively, a non-experimental survey research design was used. It was a cross-sectional and local study in nature. The unit of analysis in this study was the Korean children from the first grade to the sixth grade in elementary school and their Korean parents. The age of the children ranged from 61 months to 156 months. Surveys were administered to Korean children who are attending the Hanmaeum Korean Language School and were sent to their parents in the greater Lansing, MI area.

Research Sample

The primary subjects in this study were Korean children living in the U.S., and their parents. All children of Korean parents were collectively referred to as “Korean children,” whether they are American-born or Korean-born, as long as they have two Korean biological parents. Lists of all Korean children and their parents were provided by the Hanmaeum Korean Language School located in Lansing, Michigan. Korean children who are attending the Hanmaeum Korean Language School on Sunday are also attending American public schools during the week. Prior to contacting any subjects, the research proposal was reviewed by The University Committee on Research involving Human Subjects (UCRIHS). Upon approval of the protocol, the investigator contacted the principal and teachers of the Korean Language School and explained the purpose of the study in order to acquire lists of Korean parents and children who met the qualifications

of this study. Then, the investigator directly contacted Korean parents and children who agreed to participate in this study and visited their home. Over 90% of the families who were contacted participated in the study. The researcher was able to keep track of how many surveys were distributed and how many surveys were returned.

Research Instruments

The following research instruments or adapted versions of these instruments were used in this study: (1) Adjustment Scale, (2) English Proficiency Index (Rumbaut, 1994), (3) Interpersonal Social Skills (Hightower et al., 1987), (4) Parent-Child Conflict Scale (Rumbaut, 1994) and Family Warmth (Vergne, 1982), and (5) School experiences (Simpson, 1992).

The Adjustment Scale (outcome variable)

The perceived cross-cultural adjustment scale was compiled by the investigator for this study. This measure incorporates items that were selected from the following measures: 1) Desire to Reside in the host culture designed by Eshel (2000), 2) Child's self-esteem developed by Simpson (1992), 3) Depression Scale developed by Rumbaut (1994), and 4) Self-confidence designed by Hightower et al. (1987).

The Desire to Reside in the host culture scale used Likert-type scales (1 = do not agree at all, 5 = totally agree) to investigate Russians' subjective perceptions of adjustment to Israel (e.g., "I feel at home in Israel"). For this study, children responded to five items (e.g., I wish to live in the U.S.). Possible responses ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. High scores on this scale indicate that children want to reside in the U.S. Child's self-esteem, developed by Simpson (1992), was derived from the Family, Friends, and Self (FFS) Assessment Scales for Mexican American Youth. Self-

Esteem, which was originally designed to assess the psychological status of youth, contains five items (e.g., How often do you think of things that you like about yourself?). Response scales for these items have the following scores: (0) never, (1) rarely, (2) sometimes, (3) often, and (4) almost always. High scores indicate high self-esteem. Depression symptoms, developed by Rumbaut (1994), were measured with a four-item subscale from the Center for Epidemiological Studies-Depression (CES-D) scale. The scale assess how often the respondents experienced symptoms of depression (e.g., “I felt depressed”) during the past week. Possible responses ranged from 1 = rarely to 4 = most of the time. High scores indicate that the Korean children were experiencing many depression symptoms. Self-confidence, designed by Hightower et al. (1987), measures perceptions of sureness about one’s school abilities. The scale contains eight items (e.g., I like to do schoolwork) and each item in the scale is scored from usually no to usually yes. High scores on this measure indicate high levels of self-confidence. For the purposes of the current study, the perceived cross-cultural adjustment scale was revised to be suitable for Korean children. Cronbach’s α for this measure was .83.

An English Language Proficiency Index (predictor variables)

An English language proficiency index was developed by Rumbaut (1994), using four items measuring the respondent’s self-reported ability to speak, understand, read, and write English. Each item in the index is scored from 1 to 4 (1 = not at all; 2 = not well; 3 = well; and 4 = very well), with an overall index score calculated as the mean of the four items. This English proficiency index was strongly correlated (.42, $p < .0001$) with the objective Stanford reading achievement test score, providing evidence of its validity. High scores indicate good English proficiency.

Peer Relationships Scale (predictor variables)

Interpersonal Social Skills is one factor from the Child Rating Scale (CRS) designed by Hightower et al. (1987). The CRS is composed of four factors: Rule Compliance/Acting Out, Anxiety/Withdrawal, Interpersonal Social Skills, and Self-confidence. The Interpersonal Social Skills scale is utilized to assess perceptions of interpersonal functioning and relationships with peers. The sample item for this study is "I have a lot of Korean friends." For this study, children responded to seven items. Possible responses range from strongly agree to strongly disagree. High scores indicate that children have good interpersonal social skills ($\alpha = .52$).

Family Relationships Scale (predictor variables)

The Parent-Child Conflict Scale was developed by Rumbaut (1994). The scale consists of 3 items (e.g., My parents do not like me very much), with responses ranging from 1 to 4 (1 = Not true at all, 4 = Very true). High scores indicate that conflict is high between parent and children. Family Warmth is a modified version of the Child's Attitude towards Family Scale designed by Vergne (1982). The Child's Attitude towards Family Scale originally consisted of nine items with an estimated reliability of .45. For this study, children responded to four items (e.g., My parents love me a lot). Possible responses ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. High scores indicate that children more frequently feel family warmth. Family Warmth and Parent-child Conflict items were combined to create an overall indicator of the children's perceptions of family relationships. The reliability coefficient for this measure was .75.

School Experiences Scale (predictor variables)

The School Experiences Scale was adapted by the investigator from the Family, Friends, and Self (FFS) Assessment Scales for Mexican American Youth which was developed by Simpson (1992). The School Experiences Scale ($\alpha = .79$), which was originally designed to assess opinions about quality of school life and relationships with teachers, contains four items. For this study, children responded to five items (e.g., I have positive relationships with teachers). Possible responses ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. High scores indicate that children have good school experiences.

Additionally, a Family Demographic Data questionnaire designed by the investigator was used to measure the length of stay in the U.S., the primary language spoken at home, primarily speaking language with their parents at home, occupation, and education. This measure was completed by the parents. Parents also provided information on the children adjustment. They were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding their perceptions of their child's adjustment to life in the U.S. They responded to eight items about the child's satisfaction with his/her life in the U.S., peer relationships, teacher relationships, school experiences, and language proficiency (e.g., "He / She is satisfied with his/her life in the U.S.").

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection began on February 9, 2003 and ended on February 23, 2003. The Adjustment scale was administered to Korean children who were attending the Hanmaeum Korean Language School on Sunday. The investigator presented versions in two different languages (Korean and English) to aid the understanding of the young children. The survey questions were administered individually to first and second grade

students by the primary investigator. To better explain to them what each question is asking and what each answer is describing, the investigator presented a colorful card that included symbols representing each possible response (big blue circle and small blue circle, big red circle and small red circle). Each circle has a corresponding caption indicating strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree. The first and second grade students were able to respond to each item by pointing to the appropriate circle to indicate how they felt about each question. The Parent Survey Questionnaire and Family Demographic Survey were sent to parents and were directly returned to the investigator who is a teacher at the Korean Language School. To encourage participation, the investigator directly contacted Korean children and their parents who met the qualifications of this study and visited them in their home. Each survey was identified by a code number for the purpose of the data analysis. All data were confidential. The final sample size was 47 Korean children and their parents.

Data Analyses

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the family demographic data, such as the length of stay in U.S., parents' educational level and occupational status. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients was computed to analyze the relationship between adjustment as reported by Korean children and English proficiency, peer relationships, family relationships, and school experiences. A t-test was used to analyze a difference in parents' perceptions of their child's adjustment to life in the U.S. between children who spoke English and children who spoke Korean with their parents at home (ADD). Multiple regression analysis was used to determine which predictor variables were related to the outcome variable when the other predictor variables were controlled.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Demographic characteristics of the sample were obtained by the Parent Survey Questionnaire which was administered to parents who have Korean children living in the U.S. A summary of sample characteristics is presented in Table 1. Frequencies were run for each demographic variable, which gave the mean, standard deviation, and range.

All of the children who participated in the research have attended Hanmaeum Korean Language School on Sunday, and both mothers and fathers also participated. The data collected through the Parent Survey provided information about the child's age, gender, birth place, the length of stay in the U.S., primary language at home, and communication language with parents. Additionally, the survey showed the education level and occupational status of both parents.

The total subjects of this study consisted of 47 children and their parents. Of the children, 43% were male and 57% were female. The age of the children ranged from 61 months to 156 months with a mean age of 96 months. Of the parents who responded to the Parents Survey, 66% (n = 31) were mothers and 34% (n = 16) were fathers. Of the Korean children who were participated in this study, 72% were born in Korea and 28% of the children were born in the U.S. The mean length of stay for the children in the United States was 57 months, with a range from 1 to 156 months.

Table 1. Family Demographic Characteristics (N = 47)

	Percent	Mean	SD	Range
Child's age		96	25.1	61-156
Child's length of stay in the U.S.		57	37.5	1-156
Child's gender	male 43% female 57%			
Child's birth place	Korea born = 72% U.S born = 28%			
Child's primary language at home	English 38% Korean 47% Bilingual 15%			
Communication language (between parents and child at home)	English 11% Korean 89%			
<u>Mothers' education</u>				
Less than bachelor's degree	2%			
With bachelor's degree	66%			
More than bachelor' degree	32%			
<u>Fathers' education</u>				
With bachelor	9%			
More than bachelor	91%			
<u>Mothers' employment status</u>				
Unemployed	77%			
Employed	33%			
<u>Father's occupational status</u>				
Unemployed	23.4%			
Skilled worker	23.4%			
Administrative personnel, small independent business	2.1%			
Business managers, proprietors of medium sized business	36.2%			
Major professionals	14.9%			

In this study, 47% of Korean children were speaking Korean as their primary language at home; 38% of them were mostly speaking English, and 15% were speaking both Korean and English equally at their home. Also, 89% of the Korean children were primarily speaking Korean with their parents at home and 11% were speaking English with their parents.

In regards to the parents' education level, both parents of Korean children were relatively well educated people. Over 90% of the fathers had more than a bachelor's degree, such as a master's or doctoral degree. As far as the education of the mothers was concerned, 66% of the mothers had a bachelor's degree, while 32% had a master's or doctoral degree.

The research surveyed Korean parents whose children were attending the Korean language school. The Korean language school is affiliated with the Korean Student Organization at Michigan State University. Thus, most parents of the Korean children who participated in this study were students at Michigan State University. Koreans have great respect for learning and consider education as the mechanism for achieving goals and for fulfilling their dreams. It's one of the main reasons why parents of Korean children move to America.

In regard to the parents' occupational status, 77% of the mothers were unemployed while 23.4% of the fathers were unemployed. Specifically, 23.4% of the fathers were skilled workers; 2.1% of the fathers were administrative personnel, or small independent business owners; 36.2% were business managers, or proprietors of a medium sized business; and 14.9% were major professionals.

Relations among the total score of the Parents' ratings about the children's adjustment and Family Demographic Variables

The respondent parents were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding their perceptions of their child's adjustment to life in the U.S. They responded to questions about the child's satisfaction with his/her life in the U.S., peer relationships, teacher relationships, school experiences, and language proficiency.

Bivariate correlations identified that the total score of the parents' perceptions about their child's adjustment to the U.S. was positively and significantly related to child's length of stay in the U.S. Parents responded that the longer children have lived in the U.S., the better they have adjusted and acculturated in the U.S. ($r = .52$, $p < .01$)

In this study, 72% of Korean children were born in Korea and 28% were born in the U.S. A t-test showed that there was a significant difference in parents' perceptions about their children's adjustment between children who were born in Korea and children who were born in the U.S. Parents reported that children who were born in the U.S. were better adjusted than Korea born children. This finding is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. T-Test for Differences between Two Groups of birth place in the total adjustment score of the parents perceptions about their children's adjustment

	Birth Place		t-value	df	P value.
	Korea (n=34)	U.S (n=13)			
The total adjustment score Of the parents perceptions	31 (2.6)	34 (3.2)	4.1	45	.01

Additionally, a one-way ANOVA was used to test for differences in adjustment scores among children who spoke Korean, English, or both languages at home. Of the total sample, 47% (n = 22) of Korean children were speaking Korean as their primary language at home; 38% (n = 18) were speaking English, and 15% (n = 7) were speaking both Korean and English equally. There was a significant difference among the three language groups in parents' perceptions of their children's adjustment. Parents reported that children who were primarily speaking English tended to be better adjusted in the U.S. This finding is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. One-way ANOVA results for parents' perceptions about their children's adjustment

Language	Mean adjustments scores on the parents survey		SD
English (n=18)	33.22	^{a,b}	3.1
Korean (n=22)	30.59		3.2
Both language (n=7)	30.43		1.5

Groups	Mean Squares	df	f-value	Prob.
Between	40	2	4.5	.02*
Within	8.9	44		

Note. Results of post-hoc test

- a. English language group had higher adjustments scores than Korean language group
- b. English language group had higher adjustments scores than bilingual group

Also, a t-test identified that there was a significant difference in parents' perceptions of their child's adjustment to life in the U.S. between children who spoke English and children who spoke Korean with their parents at home. Of the total sample, 89% (n = 42) of the Korean children used Korean as their primary language with their parents at home, and 11% (n = 5) used English as their primary language with their parents ($t = 3.1, p < .01$). Parents reported that children who used English as their primary language with their parents at home tended to be better adjusted in the U.S. This finding is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. T-Test for Differences between Two Groups of primary language with parents in the total adjustment score of the parents perceptions about their children's adjustment

	Children's primary language with parents		t-value	df	P value.
	English (n=5)	Korean (n=42)			
The total adjustment score	35	31	3.1	45	.01
Of the parents perceptions	(4.2)	(2.8)			

Relations between the Adjustment of Korean children and independent variables

Research Question 1: Is there a relationship between the adjustment and the English proficiency of Korean children who live in the U.S.?

For the outcome variable, children were asked to respond to questions about their adjustment, such as desire to reside in the U.S., self-esteem, depression, and self-confidence. Also, the Korean children filled out the English Proficiency Index (e.g., "How well do you speak English?"). Over 90% (n = 44) of Korean children responded "well or very well" on the question of "How well do you speak English?" A Pearson Product Moment Correlation indicated a statistically significant correlation between the

adjustment and the English proficiency of Korean children who live in the U.S. ($r = .38$, $p = .008$).

Research Question 2: Is there a relationship between the adjustment and the family relationships of Korean children who live in the U.S.?

Korean children were asked to respond to questions about their family relationships. The scale about family relationships was divided into two sub-scales: Family Warmth (e.g., “My parents love me a lot”) and Parent-Child Conflict (e.g., “I’m often in trouble with my parents because of our different ways of doing things”). A Pearson Product Moment Correlation was computed to see if there was a relationship between the two variables. The test showed no significant relation between the adjustment and the total family relationship scores of Korean children who live in the U.S. ($r = .13$, $p = .386$). Also, Pearson Product Moment Correlations were computed to see the correlations, based on sub-scale scores. The results showed no significant relations between the children’s adjustment and Family Warmth ($r = .10$, $p = .51$) and Parent-Child Conflict ($r = .13$, $p = .40$).

Research Question 3: Is there a relationship between the adjustment and the peer relationships of Korean children who live in the U.S.?

Korean children were asked to respond to questions about their peer relationships (e.g., “I make friends easily”). A Pearson Product Moment Correlation showed no significant relation between the adjustment and the peer relationships of Korean children

who live in the U.S. ($r = .26$, $p = .083$). However the correlation approached significance; children who made friends easily tended to be better adjusted.

Of the total sample, 36% ($n = 17$) of the Korean children scored higher than the mean score on the Interpersonal Social Skills scale. Notably, 80% of Korean children who had lived less than one year in the U.S. had a score that was lower than the mean score for the sample. They expressed some problems and difficulties making American friends. However, all the parents (100%) who participated in the Parent Survey responded “agree” (62%) or “strongly agree” (38%) to the item, “Your child gets along well with American friends.”

Research Question 4: Is there a relationship between the adjustment and the school experiences of Korean children who live in the U.S.?

Korean children were asked to respond to questions about their school experiences (e.g., “I have positive relationships with teachers”). Of the total sample, 96% ($n = 45$) of Korean children in this study responded “strongly agree” or “agree” to the item, “I have positive relationships with teachers.” Also, 87% ($n = 41$) were satisfied with their school achievement.

A Pearson Product Moment Correlation was computed to see if there was a relationship between these two variables. There was a significant relation between adjustment and the school experiences of Korean children who live in the U.S. ($r = .59$, $p < .01$). Children who reported positive school experiences tended to be well-adjusted.

The relation between the predictor variables and the parents' ratings of their children adjustment

The respondent parents were asked to fill out a questionnaire regarding their perceptions of their child's adjustment to life in the U.S. They responded to questions about the child's satisfaction with his/her life in the U.S., peer relationships, teacher relationships, school experiences, and language proficiency. Pearson Product Moment Correlations showed no significant relations between the parents' ratings of the children's adjustment and the predictor variables (English proficiency, peer relations, and school experiences) completed by the children. However, school experiences were positively related to English proficiency and peer relationships. Refer to Table 5 for the results.

Table 5. The relation between the predictor variables and the parents' ratings of the adjustment

	The parents' ratings of adjustment	English Proficiency	Peer relations	School Experiences
The parents' ratings of adjustment	1.000			
English Proficiency	.27	1.000		
Peer relations	.03	.22	1.000	
School Experience	.13	.44**	.42**	1.000

Note: ** $p < .01$

Multiple predictors of the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S.

This section presents the findings of a regression analysis that was done to determine which of the predictor variables (English proficiency, family relationships, peer relationships, and school experiences) are related to the adjustment outcome

variable, when the other predictor variables were controlled. The analysis demonstrated that school experiences were significantly related to children's adjustment, while English proficiency, and family relationships were not related. Refer to Table 6 for the results.

Table 6. Multiple Regression Analysis: Predictors of the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S.

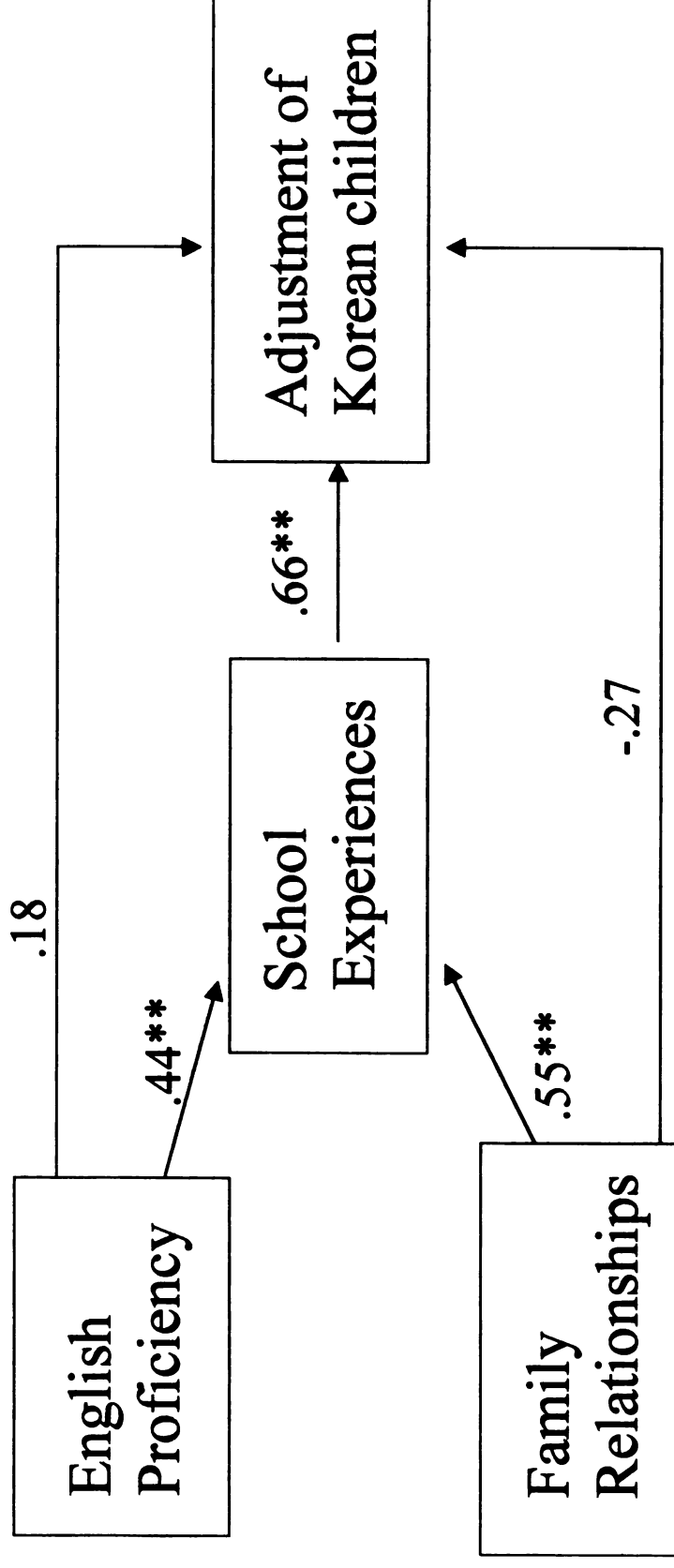
Outcome: The total adjustment scale score of the children			
Predictor variables	Betas	t-Statistic	Prob.
English proficiency	.18	1.4	.18
Family relationships	-.27	-1.9	.06
School experiences	.66	4.4	.01
R sq = .42			
F-Ratio	10.2		.01

Path analysis, which relies on multiple linear regression, attempts to isolate the separate contributions to an outcome variable made by a set of interrelated predictor variables. According to the results of the path analysis, English proficiency and family relationships did not significantly predict the adjustment of Korean children when school experiences were controlled. School experiences had a direct effect on the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. However, the effects of English proficiency and family relationships on adjustment were mediated through school experiences. English proficiency and family relationships had an effect on school experiences, which in turn, predicted children's adjustment. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), a given variable

may be said to function as a mediator to the extent that it accounts for the relation between the predictor and the criterion.

Table 6 and Figure 2 present the results of multiple regression analysis and path analysis. The path model is consistent with the view that proficiency in English and good relationships with family are important for positive experiences in school, and positive experiences in school contribute to good adjustments among Korean children living in the U.S.

However, a regression analysis indicated that peer relationships did not mediate the relation between English proficiency and the adjustment of Korean children. The analysis showed that peer relationships were not significantly related to Korean children's adjustment.



Path coefficients are standardized betas.
 $^{**}p < .01$

Figure 2. Path model with a mediating variable

Summary of Results

This study was designed to examine factors influencing the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. Specifically, this study examined the following variables: English proficiency, family relationships, peer relationships, and school experiences. Seven research questions related to the adjustment of Korean children were addressed. Pearson Product Moment Correlations were computed to see if there were relationships between the outcome variable and four predictor variables. Multiple regression analysis and path analysis were computed to determine which of the predictor variables are related to the adjustment outcome variable, when the other predictor variable was controlled. The level of significance chosen was .05.

The results can be summarized in the following manner:

1. There was a statistically significant relationship between the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. and their English proficiency. Children who were more proficient in English tended to be better adjusted.
2. There was no statistically significant relationship between the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. and their family relationships.
3. There was no statistically significant relationship between the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. and their peer relationships. However, this relation approached significance with a two-tailed test and was significant if a one-tailed test was used. Positive peer relations were associated with better adjustment.
4. There was a statistically significant relationship between the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. and their school experiences. Positive experiences in school were associated with better adjustment.

5. School experiences mediated the relation between English proficiency and the adjustment of Korean children.
6. Although children who were proficient users of English tended to have more American friends, peer relations did not mediate the relation between English proficiency and the adjustment of Korean children.
7. School experiences mediated the relation between family relationships and the adjustment of Korean children.

Additionally, according to the results of regression analysis, English proficiency and family relationships did not significantly predict the adjustment of Korean children when school experiences were controlled. However, the effects of English proficiency and family relationships on adjustment were mediated through the school experiences. School experiences had a direct effect on the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. Positive school experiences are associated with better adjustment among Korean children.

Also, the parents' perceptions of their child's adjustment to the U.S. was positively and significantly related to the child's length of stay in the U.S. Parents responded that the longer children have lived in the U.S., the better they have adjusted and acculturated in the U.S.

A t-test showed there was a significant difference in parents' perceptions about their children's adjustment between children who were born in Korea and children who were born in the U.S. Parents reported that children who were born in the U.S. were better adjusted than Korea-born children. Also, a t-test identified that there was a significant difference in parents' perceptions of their child's adjustment to life in the U.S.

between children who spoke English and children who spoke Korean with their parents at home. Parents reported that children who used English as their primary language with their parents at home tended to be better adjusted in the U.S.

Additionally, a one-way ANOVA was used to test for differences in adjustment scores among children who spoke Korean, English, or both languages at home. There was a significant difference among the three language groups in parents' perceptions of their children's adjustment. Parents reported that children who were primarily speaking English tended to be better adjusted in the U.S.

Pearson Product Moment Correlations showed no significant relation between the parents' perceptions of their children's adjustment and the other predictor variables (English proficiency, peer relations, and school experiences) completed by the children.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study's purpose was to examine factors influencing the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. Specifically, this study examined several of the child's microsystems (the family, school, and peer groups). The independent variables, such as English proficiency, family relationships, peer relationships, and school experiences, might influence the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. Four research questions regarding the adjustment of Korean children were addressed, and the results are summarized at the end of the previous chapter.

The results from this study supported previous research in that two variables, English proficiency and school experiences, were significantly related to the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. Prior studies investigated how the English proficiency of foreign-born children influences their acculturation and adjustment process in the host society (Ho, 1992a; Ho, 1992b; James, 1997; Bhattacharya, 2000). These studies concluded that limited English skills frequently prevented them from interacting with other friends and from participating in various school activities.

Over 90% (n = 44) of Korean children responded "well" or "very well" to the question of, "How well do you speak English?" Most of the Korean children who participated in this study have stayed longer than one year in the U.S, and 11% (N= 5) of the Korean children have lived in the U.S. for less than one year. The children who have stayed less than one year do not speak English fluently right now. However, they might master English in the near future and quickly adjust to the new culture because young children tend to learn foreign languages faster than adults. Currently, all children in this

study are attending a Korean language school in order to acquire and to maintain their original language.

This finding is consistent with those of other studies (Ho, 1992a; James, 1997) which reported it is important to assess the degree of fluency in English and in the native Asian language because communication skills may be affecting competence in schoolwork or relationships with family and peers. Asian children may become depressed, confused, and hopeless about fitting into the American peer groups, if they do not understand the language well.

Also, the parents who participated in this study expressed that the English skills of their children played an important role in the children's acculturation into the mainstream culture. A one-way ANOVA was used to test the differences in adjustment among three groups of children: those speaking primarily Korean, English, or both languages at home. There was a difference among three language groups in the parents' perceptions of adjustment. Parents reported that children who were primarily speaking English tended to be better adjusted in the U.S.

Therefore, this finding is consistent with previous studies (Ho, 1992a; Ho, 1992b; Kim, Kim & Rue, 1997). These studies noted that Korean American children reared by primarily Korean-speaking parents may have difficulties with socialization in the new culture and early learning experiences. Many Asian children's school problems and family conflicts are related to language problems.

In this study, school experiences, such as teacher relationships, school achievement and grades, were significantly related to Korean children's adjustment in the U.S. Korean children who had good school experiences have adjusted well to their new

environments. School-aged children are spending much time bonding with their peers and teachers at school. Thus, school adjustment is a very important factor because it may enhance their life skills and make the acculturation process easier and faster in the new country.

Asian children tend to respect teachers as highly as their parents, viewing teachers as role models. Specifically, 96% ($n = 45$) of Korean children in this study responded “strongly agree” or “agree” with the item, “I have positive relationships with teachers”, and only 17% ($n = 8$) agreed with the item, “Some of my teachers are not very nice to me.”

Therefore, this finding is consistent with previous studies (Ho, 1992a; James, 1997; Bhattacharya, 2000). They suggested that the impact of social change as part of the acculturation process is most likely to be experienced by foreign-born children in the school setting and a lack of acceptance by peers and teachers may foster a sense of being different.

Additionally, the investigator ran a regression analysis to determine which of the predictor variables (English proficiency and school experiences) was related to children’s adjustment when the other variable was controlled. School experiences predicted adjustment in this analysis, but English proficiency was not related to adjustment when school experiences were controlled. The results of a path analysis showed that school experiences had a direct effect on the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S., and that the effects of English proficiency on adjustment were mediated through the school experiences. Children who had better English skills tended to have better school

experiences. Moreover, children who had better school experiences tended to be better adjusted in the U.S. That is viewed as a key finding from this study.

These results were supported by the research of Ho (1992b), James (1997) and Canino and Spurlock (2000). They stated that children who are not fluent in English may experience culture shock in the school setting, and they may be diagnosed incorrectly as learning-disabled children. Ho (1992b) noted that many Asian children's school problems were related to language problems and emphasized that school was an arena where Asian children first experience cultural conflict and behavioral adjustment problems.

Parents were asked to respond to questions about their children's school adjustment through the Parent Survey. Surprisingly, 100% (n = 47) of parents agreed that their children had positive relationships with teachers, and they were satisfied with their children's school achievement and grades. Also, only 15% (n = 7) of parents reported that their children had a difficult time adjusting to the U.S. schools.

Even though this study did not have data on this topic, according to Bhattacharya (2000)'s study, Asian parents may recognize that the school is an important socialization agent in American culture. Thus, they are willing to participate in school meetings (parent-teacher conferences) and activities in order to improve their children's academic performance. Probably, Asian parents tend to believe that the American educational system ensures all children an equal opportunity to benefit from public school instruction.

Bhattacharya (2000) revealed several barriers to the school adjustment of South Asian children living in the U.S. He insisted that pressure from parents to uphold the family's reputation and guilt over the failure to fulfill family expectations may cause low self-esteem or association with deviant peers.

Korean children were asked to respond to questions on the Family Relationships Scale. The scale was divided into two sub-scales: Family Warmth (e.g., My parents love me a lot) and Parent-Child Conflict (e.g., I'm often in trouble with my parents because of our different ways of doing things). A Pearson Product Moment Correlation showed no significant relation between adjustment and the family relationships of Korean children in this study ($r = .13$, $p = .386$). Korean children who were in the upper grades (fifth and sixth grade) tended to acknowledge conflict and dissatisfaction about their family relationships, while most Korean children who were in the lower grades were satisfied with their relationships with their parents. Specifically, 47% of Korean children in the upper grades had a score about the mean on the Parent-child Conflict scale, while 25% of Korean children in the first grade had scores above the mean on the Parent-Child Conflict Scale. Pressure from parents to achieve school success and to learn English or Korean quickly may cause alienation and loneliness.

In regards to peer relationships, Korean children in this study were asked to respond to items such as "I make friends easily". A Pearson product moment correlation showed no significant relation between adjustment and the peer relationships of Korean children who live in the U.S. However, 80% of Korean children who had lived less than one year in the U.S. had scores below the mean on the Interpersonal Social Skills scale. They expressed some problems and difficulties making American friends. However, all of the parents (100%) who participated in the Parent Survey responded "agree (62%)" or "strongly agree (38%)" with the item, "Your child gets along well with American friends."

Surprisingly, most children in this study responded “strongly agree (49%) or “agree (40%)” to the item, “I have a lot of American friends.” A Pearson product moment correlations showed a significant relation between adjustment and having many American friends ($r = .43, p < .01$). Having American friends also was positively related to English proficiency ($r = .55, p < .01$) and school experiences ($r = .48, p < .01$). Therefore, the result revealed that making American friends was an important factor in the adjustment of Korean children. Positive peer relationships with American friends may play a pivotal role in children’s social and emotional development and school adjustment.

Additionally, the parents’ perceptions of their child’s adjustment to life in the U.S. was significantly related to their child’s birth place and their length of stay in the U.S. In the present study, t-tests showed that there was a significant difference in the parents’ perceptions about their children’s adjustment between children who were born in Korea and children who were born in the U.S. Parents reported that children who were born in the U.S. were better adjusted than Korea born children. Also, parents reported, as studied by Kim, Kim and Rue (1997), that the longer children have lived in the U.S., the better they have adjusted.

Limitations

Although this research seemed to produce significant results that could be useful when studying Korean children as well as Asian-born children who live in the U.S., this study has some limitations which need to be taken into consideration when studying or applying the results. First, all of the Korean children who participated in this study are currently attending the Korean language school in East Lansing, Michigan. Most of the

children who are attending the Korean language school have stayed more than one year in the U.S; only 11% (N= 5) of the Korean children had lived in the U.S. for less than one year. Therefore, many of them were speaking better English than Korean. Because of the sampling procedure, the sample is not likely to be representative of the Korean children who live in the U.S. The study had concentrated on the adjustment of Korean children attending the Korean language school. Thus, generalizations to the population of Korean children outside this environment should be limited. To obtain the most accurate information about the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S., a sample that reflects the heterogeneity of the Korean children in the U.S. is required.

As expressed earlier, the Korean language school is affiliated with the Korean Student Organization at Michigan State University. Therefore, most parents of Korean children, especially the fathers, who participated in this study were master's or doctoral degree students at Michigan State University. Thus, their standard of living tended to be at a high level. If Korean children were selected at random throughout the state of Michigan, the results would have given a more accurate depiction of the population of Korean children who live in the U.S.

The sample size was 47 subjects in this research. This is a relatively small sample. If the sample size was larger, there would be more power available to detect relationships among the variables of interest. Also, the survey questions were conducted on a one-to-one basis for the first and second grade students and colorful cards (e.g., big blue circle for strongly agree, big red circle for strongly disagree) were used to obtain responses from the younger children.

Although, the investigator assessed each of the young children individually, Korean children in the lower grades (first, second, and third grades) did not always understand the meanings of some items, especially, those in the Self-esteem and Self-confidence Scale. For example, it was difficult for them to answer questions such as “How often do you think of things that you like about yourself?”

Also, the questionnaire had too many questions for the youngest children in the sample; they had difficulty concentrating on the task until all questions were answered. The youngest children tended to perform better on shorter questions also. Additionally, the instruments used in this study were developed for other ethnic groups, not for Korean children.

The Korean children were the primary source of information for both the predictor variables and the outcome measure. Therefore, shared method variance could contribute to significant associations between predictor variables and outcome variables.

Because of the paucity of literature on Korean children in the U.S., there was limited research to draw upon when the model was developed for this study. The literature which was reviewed for this study was often based on studies of Asian children from other countries.

Implication for the future research

The purpose of this study was to identify factors influencing the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. Thus, the subjects who participated in this study were Korean children. However, Asian children who live in the U.S. are a heterogeneous group of many different Asian cultures (e.g., Japan, China, and the Philippines). The

factors influencing the adjustment of children from other Asian groups may be different. So, it would have been a much more informative study if data had been collected from different ethnic groups across the U.S.

It would be useful to collect data from multiple informants about the adjustment of Korean children in the U.S. Therefore, data from teachers will be needed in addition to questionnaires for children and parents. A questionnaire for teachers could assess the teachers' experiences, opinions, and subjective appraisals of Korean children in their classes. It could measure the children's leadership, academic achievement, learning problems, and school-related competence from a teacher's point of view.

APPENDIX A

Consent Form

Parental Consent Form

My name is SunJin Oh. I am a second grade teacher at the Hanmaeum Korean Language School, and I am also a graduate student at Michigan State University pursuing a Masters' degree in Family and Child Ecology. I am currently investigating factors influencing the adjustment of Korean children who live in the U.S. I am inviting you and your child to participate in the study and asking your permission to survey you and your child. Your child will be asked to respond to questions about their adjustment, English proficiency, family warmth, parent-child conflict, and school experiences. This survey will be conducted at the Hanmaeum Korean Language School that your child attends. Your child can decide to participate or not to participate in this study. The survey questions will take 10-15 minutes to complete. Parents will also fill a survey out. The survey for the parent assesses: parents' perceptions of the child's adjustment to life in the U.S. and background information about the family. You can fill out this survey and return it back to the investigator who is a second grade teacher at the Korean Language School.

Your participation as well as your child is voluntary and you can discontinue your involvement or your child can discontinue his or her participation in this project at any time without penalty. All data will be kept confidential by the primary investigator. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

Your and your child's responses will provide valuable information about Korean children living in the U.S. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the participation of yourself or your child feel free to contact me, SunJin Oh, at (517) 355-1241 or my advisor Professor Tom Luster, at (517) 432-3323.

If you have questions or concerns regarding your rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of the study, you may contact-anonymously if you wish-Ashir Kumar M.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at MSU by phone (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, or regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

I/we voluntarily agree to participate in this study and give permission for my/our child/ren to also participate in this study.

Child's Name _____

Parent's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B

Children Survey Questionnaire

ID # _____

Children Survey Questionnaire

Hello, I am SunJin Oh. I'm a second grade teacher in the Korean Language School. This survey is to identify factors influencing your adjustment while living in the U.S. The following questions have no right or wrong answers. Your responses will be confidential. Please, provide candid answers. For each question, check the one response.

1. Name _____

2. Grade in the Korean Language School _____

Adjustment Scale

<Desire to Reside in the U.S.>

1) I wish to live in the U.S.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly agree

2) I wish to live in Korea soon.

4 = Strongly disagree 3 = Disagree 2 = Agree 1 = Strongly agree

3) I am satisfied with my life in the U.S.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly agree

4) I feel at home in the U.S.

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly agree

5) I am unhappy about living in the U.S.

4 = Strongly disagree 3 = Disagree 2 = Agree 1 = Strongly agree

<Child's self-esteem>

1) How often do you think of things that you like about yourself?

0 = Never 1 = Rarely 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost always

2) Are you proud of how you act and the things you do?

0 = Never 1 = Rarely 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost always

3) Do you think you have a lot to be proud of?

0 = Never 1 = Rarely 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost always

4) Are you happy and satisfied with yourself?

0 = Never 1 = Rarely 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost always

5) When you do something, do you think you do it well?

0 = Never 1 = Rarely 2 = Sometimes 3 = Often 4 = Almost always

<Children's Depression>

How often during the past week:

1) I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor.

4 = Rarely 3 = Some of the time
(1 or 2 days) 2 = Occasionally
(3 or 4 days) 1 = Most of the time
(5 to 7 days)

2) I could not "get going."

4 = Rarely 3 = Some of the time
(1 or 2 days) 2 = Occasionally
(3 or 4 days) 1 = Most of the time
(5 to 7 days)

3) I felt depressed.

4 = Rarely 3 = Some of the time
(1 or 2 days) 2 = Occasionally
(3 or 4 days) 1 = Most of the time
(5 to 7 days)

4) I felt sad.

4 = Rarely 3 = Some of the time
(1 or 2 days) 2 = Occasionally
(3 or 4 days) 1 = Most of the time
(5 to 7 days)

<Self-confidence>

1) I like to do schoolwork

1 = Usually No 2 = Sometimes 3 = Usually Yes

2) I'm relaxed when I am at school

1 = Usually No 2 = Sometimes 3 = Usually Yes

3) I feel calm when I am at school

1 = Usually No 2 = Sometimes 3 = Usually Yes

4) I like to answer questions in class

1 = Usually No 2 = Sometimes 3 = Usually Yes

5) I'm sure of myself at school

1 = Usually No 2 = Sometimes 3 = Usually Yes

6) I am unhappy at school

3 = Usually No 2 = Sometimes 1 = Usually Yes

7) I worry a lot when I am at school

3 = Usually No 2 = Sometimes 1 = Usually Yes

8) I don't like being in school.

3 = Usually No 2 = Sometimes 1 = Usually Yes

Independent Variables

English Proficiency Index

1) How well do you speak English?

1 = Not at all; 2 = Not well; 3 = Well; 4 = Very well

2) How well do you understand English?

1 = Not at all; 2 = Not well; 3 = Well; 4 = Very well

3) How well do you read English?

1 = Not at all; 2 = Not well; 3 = Well; 4 = Very well

4) How well do you write English?

1 = Not at all; 2 = Not well; 3 = Well; 4 = Very well

Peer Relationships Scale

1) I have a lot of Korean friends

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly agree

2) I have a lot of American friends

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly agree

3) Classmates tease me

4 = Strongly disagree 3 = Disagree 2 = Agree 1 = Strongly agree

4) I wish I had more friends at school

4 = Strongly disagree 3 = Disagree 2 = Agree 1 = Strongly agree

5) I wish I had more friends to play with in my neighborhood

4 = Strongly disagree 3 = Disagree 2 = Agree 1 = Strongly agree

6) I make friends easily

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Strongly agree

7) I am often lonely.

4 = Strongly disagree 3 = Disagree 2 = Agree 1 = Strongly agree

Family Warmth Scale

1) My parents and I do a lot of things together.

4 = Strongly agree 3 = Agree 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly disagree

2) My parents love me a lot

4 = Strongly agree 3 = Agree 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly disagree

3) My parents feel proud of me when I do something well

4 = Strongly agree 3 = Agree 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly disagree

4) I feel happy at home

4 = Strongly agree 3 = Agree 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly disagree

Parent-Child Conflict Scale

1) I'm often in trouble with my parents because of our different ways of doing things.

4 = Not true at all; 3 = Not very true; 2 = Partly true; 1 = Very true

2) My parents are usually not very interested in what I have to say.

4 = Not true at all; 3 = Not very true; 2 = Partly true; 1 = Very true

3) My parents do not like me very much

4 = Not true at all; 3 = Not very true; 2 = Partly true; 1 = Very true

School Experiences Scale

1) I have positive relationships with teachers

4 = Strongly agree 3 = Agree 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly disagree

2) I am satisfied with my school achievement

4 = Strongly agree 3 = Agree 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly disagree

3) I am getting good grades in school.

4 = Strongly agree 3 = Agree 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly disagree

4) My teachers care about me.

4 = Strongly agree 3 = Agree 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly disagree

5) Some of my teachers are not very nice to me.

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4 = Strongly disagree

APPENDIX C
Parent Survey Questionnaire

ID # _____

Parent Survey Questionnaire

Date: _____

Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire.

This is SunJin Oh. I'm a second grade teacher in the Korean Language School. This survey is to identify factors influencing your children's adjustment while living in the U.S. The following questions have no right or wrong answers. Your responses will be confidential. Please provide candid answers. For each question, check the one response.

Adjustment Scale of your child

Directions: Read each statement and circle how you describe your child.

1) He / She is satisfied with his / her life in the U.S.
Strongly agree Agree Unsure/don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

2) He / She gets along well with American children
Strongly agree Agree Unsure/don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

3) He / She has positive relationships with teachers.
Strongly agree Agree Unsure/don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

4) I am satisfied with his / her school achievement.
Strongly agree Agree Unsure/don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

5) He / She has positive feelings about speaking two languages.
Strongly agree Agree Unsure/don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

6) He / She would rather live in Korea
Strongly agree Agree Unsure/don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

7) He / She has had a difficult time adjusting to the U.S. school.
Strongly agree Agree Unsure/don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

8) He / She wishes he / she had more friends.
Strongly agree Agree Unsure/don't know Disagree Strongly disagree

Family Background Information

I would like to close with some general important questions about your background.

1. Child' name _____

2. Birth date _____

3. Age of the child _____

4. Grade of the child _____

5. Sex of the child: _____ Male _____ Female

6. Your child was born in: _____ Korea _____ U.S

7. How many years have your child lived in the United States?
_____ years and _____ months

8. I am the _____ Mother _____ Father

9. What is your child's primary language at home?

- (1) At home he/she speaks only English
- (2) At home he/she speaks only Korean
- (3) At home he/she speaks mostly Korean, some English
- (4) At home he/she speaks mostly English, some Korean
- (5) At home he/she speaks both English and Korean, equally

10. Which language is usually spoken in your home with your children?

- (1) We speak only English at home
- (2) We speak only Korean at home
- (3) We speak mostly Korean, some English
- (4) We speak mostly English, some Korean
- (5) We speak both English and Korean at home, equally

11. Are you currently employed?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

12. If yes, are you working full-time or part-time?

- (1) Full-time
- (2) Part-time

13. What is your job?

- (1) Unemployed
- (2) Unskilled worker
- (3) Skilled worker
- (4) Owner of small business, clerical, sales, technician

- (5) Administrative personnel, small independent business, minor professionals
- (6) Business managers, proprietors of medium sized business
- (7) Executives and proprietors of large concern, major professionals

14. What is the highest level of formal school that you have completed?

- (1) Less than High school
- (2) High school degree
- (3) Associate degree
- (4) Bachelor degree
- (5) Master degree
- (6) Doctorate / Professional (PhD, MD, JD, etc...)
- (7) Other (Please Specify) _____

15. Is your spouse/partner currently employed?

- (1) Yes
- (2) No

16. If yes, is your spouse/partner working full-time or part-time?

- (1) Full-time
- (2) Part-time

17. What is your spouse/partner's job?

- (1) Unemployed
- (2) Unskilled worker
- (3) Skilled worker
- (4) Owner of small business, clerical, sales, technician
- (5) Administrative personnel, small independent business, minor professionals
- (6) Business managers, proprietors of medium sized business
- (7) Executives and proprietors of large concern, major professionals

18. What is the highest level of formal school that your spouse/partner has completed?

- (1) Less than High school
- (2) High school degree
- (3) Associate degree
- (4) Bachelor degree
- (5) Master degree
- (6) Doctorate / Professional (PhD, MD, JD, etc...)
- (7) Other (Please Specify) _____

APPENDIX D
UCRIHS Approval

MICHIGAN STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

February 6, 2003

TO: Tom LUSTER
13 G Human Ecology
MSU

RE: **IRB# 03-040 CATEGORY: EXPEDITED 2-7**

APPROVAL DATE: February 6, 2003

EXPIRATION DATE: January 6, 2003

**TITLE: FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ADJUSTMENT OF KOREAN CHILDREN
WHO LIVE IN THE U.S.**

The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects' (UCRIHS) review of this project is complete and I am pleased to advise that the rights and welfare of the human subjects appear to be adequately protected and methods to obtain informed consent are appropriate. Therefore, the UCRIHS approved this project.


RENEWALS: UCRIHS approval is valid until the expiration date listed above. Projects continuing beyond this date must be renewed with the renewal form. A maximum of four such expedited renewals are possible. Investigators wishing to continue a project beyond that time need to submit a 5-year application for a complete review.

REVISIONS: UCRIHS must review any changes in procedures involving human subjects, prior to initiation of the change. If this is done at the time of renewal, please include a revision form with the renewal. To revise an approved protocol at any other time during the year, send your written request with an attached revision cover sheet to the UCRIHS Chair, requesting revised approval and referencing the project's IRB# and title. Include in your request a description of the change and any revised instruments, consent forms or advertisements that are applicable.

PROBLEMS/CHANGES: Should either of the following arise during the course of the work, notify UCRIHS promptly: 1) problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects or 2) changes in the research environment or new information indicating greater risk to the human subjects than existed when the protocol was previously reviewed and approved.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at (517) 355-2180 or via email: UCRIHS@msu.edu. Please note that all UCRIHS forms are located on the web: <http://www.msu.edu/user/ucrihs>

Sincerely,



Ashir Kumar, M.D.
UCRIHS Chair

AK: jm

cc: sunjin oh
1449 Spartan Village APT H
East Lansing, MI 48823



OFFICE OF
**RESEARCH
ETHICS AND
STANDARDS**

University Committee on
Research Involving
Human Subjects

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