

SOCIAL ORIGINS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG OLDER KOREAN IMMIGRANTS*

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The present study investigates the social sources of psychological well-being of older Korean immigrants in terms of social contexts and acculturation level. Data were collected from a survey of older Koreans in Chicago. This study confirms empirically the target population as a vulnerable group. Effects of social sources were examined with multiple regression analysis, and the main results are: (1) larger primary networks and independent attitudes on children's support are functional for older Korean immigrants' psychological well-being; (2) life stress is more useful for explaining current depressive symptoms; (3) residing in the ethnic community is functional for their life satisfaction; (4) age is an important predictor for the efficacy of adjustment of older persons; and (5) health status is an overall predictor of psychological well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past twenty years, interest in the social sources of psychological well-being has resurged, and the growing body of research has shown that both the cause and distribution of mental illness are frequently linked with the social world. This research interest has centered on the concept of social stress, which has its origins in the individual's social relationships and the quality of community (Liem and Liem 1978). Exploring the quality of social conditions that diminish individual psychological well-being, studies (e.g., Leighton *et al.* 1963; Murphy 1977; Srole *et al.* 1978) have reported stressful situations associated with lower economic status, urban migration, or immigration.

Immigration, particularly from a non-Western to a Western culture, has been considered a stressful condition that demands considerable readjustment and often has serious psychological effect on the individual. According to Birren and Renner (1980), differences in culture make it particularly difficult for older immigrants to leave their country of origin and spend their later

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adult years in a foreign country. These elderly often lack crucial information about the requirements of the new cultural, political, and economic realities. Thus, they tend to experience considerable problems in adjusting to the host society (Kiefer *et al.* 1985). In this regard, older immigrants have been considered to be a "high-risk" group in terms of psychological well-being. Focused on a specific population of older Korean immigrants in the United States, the present study attempts to examine social factors that are associated with the psychological well-being of this immigrant group.

As members of a recently arrived group, most older Korean immigrants might have gone through the stressful process of immigration in their relatively recent life history. The recognition of older Korean immigrants as a "high-risk" group has stimulated research interest in their adjustment process to American society (e.g., Kim and Schwartz-Barcott 1982; Kiefer *et al.* 1985; Hurh and Kim 1984). Although early studies touched upon the issue of mental health, their attention to mental health was a by-product of exploring the adjustment process rather than the main subject to be examined. Although Hurh and Kim's (1988) study focused on mental health, it was targeted to adult Korean immigrants. Thus far, little is known about the psychological well-being of older Korean immigrants, and the recognition of them as a "high-risk" group might only be a theoretical and empirical generalization implied by studies of immigrants with other ethnic origins. Given this lack of knowledge about older Korean immigrants, the need for empirical investigation of their states of psychological well-being and relevant social factors seems apparent in terms of theoretical and policy implications.

Gordon's (1964) concepts of acculturation and assimilation are useful for understanding the circumstances of elderly Korean immigrants. Gordon treats these two concepts on the basis of a distinction between social structure and culture, which are two sides of the coin of human life. Social structure refers to a set of crystallized social relationships among members of a society, and culture refers to prescribed ways of behavior or norms, values, and attitudes, and the behavioral patterns based on these categories. Focused on the cultural aspect, Gordon defines acculturation as a process of modifying attitudes and behavioral patterns. Focused on the structural aspect, he defines assimilation as a process of interpenetration and fusion of persons and groups into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society on a primary group level. In regard to the report that Korean immigrants maintain close social ties with members of their own ethnic group in types of kin, friends, neighbors, and religious group (Hurh and Kim 1984), Gordon's notion of structural assimilation seems less important for the target population of the present study. However, the distinction between cultural and structural aspects suggests a valuable conceptual framework for understanding the social conditions of

older Korean immigrants.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Acculturation and Psychological Well-Being

Two rival hypotheses have been suggested for explaining the higher prevalence of mental disorders among immigrants. First, the social selection hypothesis argues that immigration attracts individuals who are destitute and incompetent, thus more predisposed to mental disorders. Second, the social stress hypothesis holds that mental disorders among immigrants result from the stressful process of adapting to a new environment (Murphy 1977; Dohrenwend 1975). Considering the empirical suggestion that family unification has been the leading reason for immigration among the Korean elderly (Kiefer *et al.* 1985), the social selection hypothesis is less plausible for understanding the immigration process of this group.

From the social stress perspective, studies of immigrants' mental health have assumed that immigrants who have strongly internalized the values in their culture of origin can become vulnerable if they find that these values are called seriously into question in the context of the host culture (Murphy 1977). The stress associated with the adaptation process has been conceptualized as "acculturative stress." The Midtown Manhattan Studies by Srole *et al.* (1975) supported the social stress hypothesis with their finding that the first generation of immigrants, the least acculturated group, showed more adverse psychological status compared with other generations. Kuo and Tsai's (1986) study of Asian immigrants' mental health reported that as the latest arriving group, Korean immigrants (with an average of 6.9 years residence in the U.S.) showed a higher level of psychological distress than Chinese, Filipino, or Japanese immigrants. The negative effect of "acculturative stress" on immigrants' psychological well-being was supported in studies of Korean immigrants, based on the inverse relationship between the length of residence in the U. S. and mental health (Hurrh and Kim 1984; Kiefer *et al.* 1985). A more recent study (Hurrh and Kim 1988) showed a positive effect of English proficiency on mental health among older Korean immigrants.

Although longer residence and English proficiency reflect the acculturation level of immigrants, they do not necessarily indicate changes in values and attitudes. Therefore, the present study attempts to explore a direct indicator of changes in values and attitudes that is relevant to the psychological well-being of older Korean immigrants. Given the report that unification with children has been a primary reason for immigration of older Koreans, the parent-child relationship can be regarded as one of the most important social

ties. Norms prescribing the parent-child relationship in traditional Korean culture and in American culture are distinctive and conflicting. In Korean culture, the parent-child relationship is based on the Confucian value of "filial piety" emphasizing the obligation of adult children to support their elderly parents in return for the support that they received as children from parents. However, it is highly probable that adult children, who usually have been exposed to a Western culture longer than their newly immigrated parents, may have less sense of obligation than their parents expect. These adult children may have adopted Western individualism and norms concerning the parent-child relationship, called "generalized exchange," in which the care and socialization one received as a child are returned through the care and socialization of one's own children (Nye 1979). Assuming the psychological consequences of conflicting norms, the effects of acculturation will be examined with respect to the length of residence, English proficiency and the attitudes toward children's support in the present study.

Social Context and Psychological Well-Being

Most previous studies of immigrants' mental health have focused on the cultural differences and consequences of maladaptation to the host culture, while the social structure intervening between the cultural differences and individual psychological well-being has been ignored. In light of this, Liu (1986) pointed out the importance of "supportive network systems" reflecting the social structure embedded in immigrant society for understanding the role of culture in psychological well-being of immigrants. The impacts of three levels of social structure — primary, secondary and community — on older Koreans' psychological well-being will be investigated in the present study.

Although disengagement theory argues that meaningful, gratifying life patterns often result from withdrawal, most investigators consistently have reported that morale or psychological well-being in later years is positively associated with high social interaction rather than withdrawal (Rosow 1967). In particular, the importance of friends and children as primary sources of help and protection from harmful conditions has been suggested in the literature. Studies have emphasized the role of friends and children for Korean elderly immigrants' life satisfaction (Han 1986) and general well-being (Koh and William 1987). The present study adds old persons' parents to their primary social network including children and friends.

Employment and voluntary associations have been recognized as main sources of secondary relationships. With an older population, the present study focuses on the participation in the voluntary organization that has been reported as relevant to the psychological well-being of the elderly (Rosow

1967) and the general population (Pearlin and Johnson 1977). Han's (1986) study also suggests that organizational activities are important for life satisfaction of Korean elderly immigrants, particularly the male respondents with higher education.

With respect to immigrant and mental health, literature has emphasized the role of the ethnic community. Kuo and Tsai (1986) have found that Asian immigrants could live separated from the larger society because of the adaptation promoting function of dense supportive networks embedded in their ethnic communities. In this sense, the roles of the ethnic community are not exclusive to primary networks and the participation in voluntary associations but interrelated to them. However, living in the ethnic or American community *per se* is of interest for investigation in regard to immigrants' psychological well-being, because the ethnic community can provide more resources to meet ethnic needs for foods, housing, medical service, and so on. Residential confinement, often called "Korea Town," is distinctive in large cities in the U.S. (e.g., New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles), and its relevance to Korean immigrants' psychological well-being has not been investigated previously.

Life Stress and Psychological Well-Being

The preceding discussion on the social sources of psychological well-being has centered on the adaptation of older Korean immigrants to the new society. Social sources other than societal transition also should be taken into account. Pioneered by Holmes and Rahe (1967), various personal life changes (e.g., divorce, marriage, bereavement) that cause a person to readjust his/her behavior patterns have been defined as stressful life events, and studies have reported the harmful impacts of life events on the individual well-being (Dohrenwend 1975).

The initial life events formulation assumed that any events requiring readjustment are stressful. However, researchers (e.g., Ross and Mirowsky 1979) have suggested less relevancy of desirable events to health outcomes. Thus, the present study includes only undesirable life events. While life events indicated substantial or major life changes, relationships between chronic strains in daily life and health outcomes also have been suggested (Pearlin and Johnson 1977). Thus, the present study considers financial strains as well as life events as possible stressors, conceptualizing them as life stress. Though Kuo and Tsai (1986) have found harmful impacts of life events and financial strains on mental health among Asian immigrants, previous studies of Korean immigrants have not incorporated the concept of life stress.

Control Variables

Acculturation, social context, and life stress are the key concepts for explaining the social sources of psychological well-being among older Korean immigrants in the present study. Examining the effects of those key variables requires partialling out the effects of other relevant factors. Sex, age, and health status have been suggested as being related to at least one of the key variables of this study, and thus will be controlled.

METHODS

Data Source

Data reported here were a part of those collected for the 1988 Ethnic Elderly Needs Assessment Survey.¹ Detailed characteristics of the original data can be found in Yu *et al.* (1988). The target population of the present study were Korean immigrants aged 50 years or older in the City of Chicago. The sampling frame consisted of approximately 2,000 names of Korean immigrants aged 50 years or older listed in the Korean American Senior Center. From this sampling frame, a pre-sample consisting of 400 cases were selected at random. Among these, 284 cases were contacted by bilingual Korean interviewers, and 200 persons were actually interviewed between May and August 1988 with the structured interview schedule written in Korean. Although this sample may not adequately represent the population of older Korean immigrants, it was the best available list under current circumstances.

Measures

Psychological Well-Being. This study regards the level of depression, measured with the Center for Epidemiologic Studies of Depression Scale (CES-D), as a negative indicator of psychological well-being. The CES-D scale consists of 20 items measuring depressive symptoms in the preceding week, rather than major depression. Designed for tapping the prevalence of depressive symptoms with proven reliability and validity, the CES-D scale has been recommended as a feasible measure of depression in community surveys (Ensel 1986). The present study also employs level of life satisfaction and efficacy of adjustment as positive indicators of psychological well-being. We use a global measure of life satisfaction, namely; at this point in your life,

¹The 1988 Ethnic Elderly Needs Assessment Survey included 12 ethnic groups — namely, Greek, Lithuanian, Pole, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Chinese from Indo-China.

how satisfied are you with your life as a whole? (1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = not very satisfied, 3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4 = somewhat satisfied, and 5 = very satisfied.) The efficacy of adjustment was measured by summing two item scores tapping personal and impersonal adjustment. The personal adjustment item assessed a person's loneliness by asking how often a respondent feels lonely (1 = always or very often, 2 = fairly often, 3 = sometimes, 4 = almost never, and 5 = never). The impersonal adjustment item assessed a person's management of time by asking how often a respondent does not know what to do, given time on his/her hands (1 = often, 2 = now and then, and 3 = almost never).

Acculturation. The present study employed the length of residence in the U.S., level of English proficiency, and attitude toward children's support as indicators of acculturation level. Length of residence was measured in years. English proficiency measurement consisted of 18 binary items assessing the respondent's speaking and reading ability (e.g., "Can you explain to a doctor exactly how you feel? 1 = no; 2 = yes). Attitude toward children's support was measured by a binary item, namely; do you think that children should support their elderly parents financially even when the parents are self-supportive? (Yes = 0 and No = 1)

Social Context. Social network in the present study referred to the number of primary relationships, measured by summing the number of living parents, children, and close friends in the U.S. A binary item about participation in voluntary organizations (0 = no; 1 = yes) was used as reflecting secondary social relationships. Community characteristics were measured by ethnic composition. A community consisting of half or more American was considered "American" (scored 1); "Korean" community (scored 0) consisted of half or more Korean.

Life Stress. Life events in the present study consisted of nine undesirable events in the last six months: moving to a worse neighborhood; death of a spouse; divorce; death of close friends; serious injury; spouse's retirement; retirement of oneself; a child leaving home; and loss of or damage to personal property. The possible life events score ranged from 0 to 9. We used 4 items to measure chronic financial strains, namely; worry about finances; inability to afford needed food; inability to pay rent; and inability to pay a gas or electricity bill. The financial strains score could range from 0 to 4. An index measure of life stress was formulated by summing standardized scores of life events and financial strains.

TABLE 1. DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

Characteristics	N	Groups	Frequency	Percent
Sex	199	Male	75	37.7
		Female	124	62.3
Age	197	50-59	17	8.6
		60-69	71	36.0
		70-79	93	47.2
		80-89	16	8.2
Marital status	197	Widowed	107	54.3
		Divorced	3	1.5
		Separated	3	1.5
		Married	84	42.7
Educational level	198	Elementary or less	98	49.5
		High school	74	37.4
		College or more	26	13.1
Family income (per year)	170	Less than \$5,000	107	62.9
		\$5,000-\$10,000	54	32.8
		More than \$10,000	9	5.3
Urban/rural background	195	Urban	84	24.3
		Rural	111	75.7
Religion	199	Catholic	37	18.6
		Protestant	135	67.3
		Buddhist	17	7.1
		None	11	5.5
Health	196	Poor	48	24.5
		Fair	53	27.0
		Good	53	26.5
		Very good	23	11.7
		Excellent	20	10.2

RESULTS

Demographic and Selected Characteristics of the Sample

Before examining the psychological well-being of older Korean immigrants, we shall describe the demographic characteristics of the sample and some of their characteristics as immigrants. Table 1 presents several demographic characteristics of the sample. In a study of older persons, the age distribution is of interest. Although the sampling frame of the original "Ethnic Elderly Needs Assessment" survey covered persons aged 50 years or older, over 90 percent of the sample in the present research were aged 60 years or older, with the average of 71 years. Therefore, we suggest that findings from this sample are applicable to "elderly" Korean immigrants. Among the sample,

TABLE 2. SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE AS IMMIGRANTS

Characteristics	N	Groups	Frequency	Percent
Country of birth	198	Korea	195	98.5
		Japan	3	1.5
Native language	199	Korea	199	100.0
Choice of immigration	196	By choice	123	62.8
		By force or circumstances	73	37.2
Reasons for immigration	179	Political conflict	2	1.1
		Better living standard	19	10.6
		Children's education	6	3.4
		Family unification	152	84.9
Residence in the U.S.	184	0-5 years	54	29.3
		6-10 years	78	42.4
		11-15 years	40	21.7
		16-20 years	9	4.9
		21-25 years	3	1.7
English speaking	193	Very well	1	0.1
		Moderately well	5	2.6
		Can make	29	15.0
		Poorly	51	26.4
		Not at all	107	55.9

females were more represented than males. Marital status is characterized by either married or widowed, with only few cases of divorced or separated.

Two characteristics indicating the socioeconomic status of the sample are in Table 1. About half of the sample had elementary or lower educational background, and most of the sample (95%) had a family income of less than \$10,000 per year. Given these statistics, it is clear that this Korean sample can hardly be grouped into the so-called "American middle class." Urban/rural background refers to the place where a respondent mostly lived until age 18. One fourth of the sample lived in an urban area, and the rest lived in a rural area. About 95 percent of the sample has a religious affiliation. Among them, more than 90 percent espoused a Western Christian religion, either Catholic or Protestant, with little affiliation to Buddhism. Considering the specific population of older persons, self-rated health status is important for understanding their behavior. Roughly, half of the sample rated their health status as poor or fair; the other half rated good, very good or excellent.

Some characteristics of the sample as immigrants are presented in Table 2. Almost all of the sample spoke Korean as their native language and were born in Korea. That is, all were first generation immigrants to the U.S. In addition, about 70 percent of them had lived in the U. S. less than ten years,

TABLE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF THREE VARIABLES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

Variables	N	Groups	Frequency	Percent	Means
Depressive symptoms (CES-D)	194	Lower than 16	129	66.5	14.0
		16 or higher	65	33.5	
Life satisfaction	194	Very dissatisfied (1)	8	4.1	3.4
		Dissatisfied (2)	22	11.4	
		Neither (3)	73	37.6	
		Somewhat satisfied (4)	59	30.4	
		Very satisfied (5)	32	16.5	
Efficacy of adjustment	195	Low level (2-4)	31	15.9	6.2
		Medium level (5)	23	11.7	
		High level (6-8)	141	72.3	

with an overall average of 8.37 years. These statistics confirm the recognition of Korean elderly immigrants as a "newly arrived group."

Table 2 also presents some information about the immigration process of the sample. A noticeable proportion (37.2%) among them reported immigration to the U. S. as involuntary. The most popular reason for their immigration was family unification.² About 80 percent of the sample reported poor ability to speak English and no preparation for American life. To sum up, older Korean immigrants in the U.S. can be characterized as newly arrived immigrants with few resources for adapting to the American society.

General Status of Psychological Well-Being of Older Korean Immigrants

According to theoretical suggestions concerning immigrants' mental health, the characteristics shown in Table 2 reflect vulnerability of older Koreans. Even with the popular recognition of them as a "high-risk group," few empirical data on the psychological well-being of the older Korean immigrants have been reported. Table 3 presents the general status of psychological well-being of the sampled older Korean immigrants in terms of their levels of depression, life satisfaction, and efficacy of adjustment. With respect to the assumption of integrity of individual personality structure and the measurement construction, the three indicators of psychological well-being are conceptually interrelated rather than independent. As shown in Table 5 in Appendix, there are substantial correlations among the three components. Depression is negatively associated with the life satisfaction ($r = -.601$) and adjustmental efficacy ($-.638$), while life satisfaction has a positive relationship with efficacy of adjustment (.440). However, the three components can be distinguished

²The category of family unification includes cases of helping children and joining with children or other family members.

at the measurement level of the present study, in that depression reflects the depressive symptoms of the preceding week, while life satisfaction and adjustment efficacy reflect a more stable psychological status; the life satisfaction was measured as a global status, while the efficacy of adjustment was assessed more specifically. In addition to the differences in measurement level, we also adopt a multi-dimensional conceptualization of psychological well-being (Biren and Renner 1980), suggesting that one aspect of well-being is not necessarily the mirror image of other aspects.

Possible CES-D scores, measuring depressive symptoms, range from 0 to 60, indicating that the higher the score, the greater the depressive symptoms. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) of the CES-D in the present study was .87. To describe variations in the level of depressive symptoms, the sampled Korean elderly were broken down using a traditional cut-off point of a CES-D score of 16 that was suggested as indicative of a "case" of depression (Myers and Weissman 1980). According to Table 3, 33.5 percent of the sample show CES-D scores of 16 or higher. Comparing with 17 percent of the sample at or above this cut-off score for the general American population in the Albany Area Health Survey in 1979 (Dean 1986), the substantial proportion of the sample above the cut-off point calls attention to depression as a serious psychological problem of older Korean immigrants. The mean CES-D score of the sample (14.0) was a little lower than the cut-off point of 16.

Life satisfaction, measured by the respondent's evaluation of satisfaction with his/her life in general, reflects the long-term morale of older Korean immigrants. As shown in Table 3, 46.9 percent of the sample reported satisfaction with their lives and the rest reported dissatisfaction or neither. That is, about half of the sampled older Koreans showed positive psychological morale, with the average level (mean = 3.44) between "neither" and "somewhat satisfied."

Efficacy of adjustment was defined in the previous section as consisting of two elements — personal and impersonal adjustment. The score of 5 indicating a person who felt loneliness "sometimes" and had trouble with the time management "now and then," was used as a cut-off point for classifying the efficacy of adjustment among older Korean immigrants. Table 3 shows that 72.3 percent of the sample were quite free from adjustment problems, while the rest of sample had adjustment problems sometimes or often. In short, findings in Table 3 support the recognition of older Korean immigrants as a "high-risk" group in terms of psychological well-being.

Social Sources of Psychological Well-Being

Acculturation, social context, and life stress are the key concepts for under-

standing the social sources of psychological well-being of older Korean immigrants. To examine the effects of variables indicating the key concepts, we performed multiple regression analyses for each of the three components of psychological well-being, and the results are presented in Table 4. Given the limited sample size ($N = 200$), missing values in the regression equations were replaced with the means of corresponding variables.

Sources of Depression

Equation (1) of Table 4 presents the multiple regression of the level of depressive symptoms on the main and control variables. Among three variables, indicating level of acculturation, length of residence and English proficiency do not have significant effects. The non-significant effects of the length of residence and the English proficiency might be attributed to the little variation in those variables among the sampled older Koreans. However, Hurh and Kim's (1988) study of adult Korean immigrants with more variation in the length of residence and English proficiency also found no significant differences in the level of depression, measured by the CES-D. Focused on the length of residence, English proficiency, and exposure to the English media as indicators of acculturation or Americanization, previous studies found little empirical association between acculturation and the mental health of Korean immigrants.

Longer residence, better English proficiency, and more exposure to English media may reflect immigrants' adaptation to American values or attitudes. The present study takes into account the attitude about children's support that is more salient to the target population, considering the suggestion of the greater psychological implication of the more salient social conditions (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). Equation (1) of Table 4 shows the significant effect of the attitudes about children's support ($p < .01$). A negative coefficient of the variable indicates that older Korean immigrants who thought that children should support their elderly parents financially, regardless of parents' ability, showed a higher level of depressive symptoms. In other words, older Korean immigrants with more independent attitudes were better off in depressive symptoms.

In Equation (1) of Table 4, among three social context variables, participation in voluntary organizations and the ethnic composition of the neighborhood indicate no significant relationship to level of depressive symptoms. The size of social network, however, shows a significant effect ($p < .01$), and its negative regression coefficient indicates that a larger primary network is associated with a lower level of depressive symptoms among older Korean immigrants. This finding supports the traditional emphasis of the social in-

TABLE 4. MULTIPLE REGRESSIONS OF DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS, LIFE SATISFACTION, AND EFFICACY OF ADJUSTMENT OF INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Independent Variables	Equations		
	(1) Depressive Symptoms	(2) Life Satisfaction	(3) Efficacy of Adjustment
<i>Acculturation</i>			
Length of residence	-.096 (-.051) [†]	.023 (.098)	.031 (.083)
English proficiency	-.447 (-.099)	.017 (.031)	.017 (.080)
Attitudes on children's support (Traditional = 0, Americanized = 1)	-3.476*** (-.192)	.246* (.110)	.403* (.114)
<i>Social Contexts</i>			
Social networks	-.499*** (-.168)	.850*** (.234)	.137*** (.238)
Participation in voluntary organizations (No = 0, Yes = 1)	-2.147 (-.103)	.183 (.071)	.287 (.070)
Community characteristics (Ethnic = 0, American = 1)	1.280 (.074)	-.281** (-.132)	-.043 (-.013)
<i>Control Variables</i>			
Life stress	.966*** (.166)	-.075 (-.106)	-.142* (-.126)
Health status	-2.259*** (-.342)	.295*** (.363)	.212** (.165)
Sex (Male = 0, Female = 1)	2.099* (.122)	-.099 (-.470)	-.125 (-.037)
Age	.147* (.127)	.002 (.016)	-.060*** (-.268)
Intercept	14.574	1.708	8.537
Adjusted R ²	.270	.234	.216
N	186	186	186

*p < .10 **p < .05 ***p < .01.

[†]Standardized regression coefficients in parentheses.

tegration perspective on the role of social relationships for individual well-being, in general; it supports immigrant scholars' suggestion about the functions of ethnically confined close relationships for immigrants' adjustment and well-being, in particular. Given the significant effect of the social network but non-significant effects of participation in voluntary organization and community characteristics, we suggest that proximal social context is more important than distal context for predicting variations in the level of depressive symptoms among older Korean immigrants.

The positive significant coefficient ($p < .01$) of life stress in Equation (1) of Table 4 indicates that greater experience of life events or financial strains is associated with a higher level of depressive symptoms among older Korean immigrants. This finding supports the main theme of the life stress paradigm, that a life stress exerts harmful impact on individual psychological well-being. It also suggests that empirical studies for explaining the psychological well-being of Korean immigrants need to consider the concept of life stress as well as "acculturative stress."

All three control variables are significant predictors for the level of depressive symptoms among older Korean immigrants (Equation (1) of Table 3). The negative coefficient of health status ($p < .01$) indicates that positive health status is associated with a lower level of depressive symptoms. This finding confirms the usual assumption of "a sound mind in a sound body." The sex differences found in the present study ($p < .01$) correspond to the gender effect on the depression rates among the general American population, in that females show higher depression level than males (Weissman *et al.* 1984). The positive effect of age ($p < .10$) indicates that increasing age is associated with a higher level of depressive symptoms among older Korean immigrants. In sum, the results of Equation (1) suggest that attitudes or values concerning children's support, size of social network, and life stress are significant sources of variation in depressive symptoms for older Korean immigrants, taking into account the effects of sex, age, and health status.

Sources of Life Satisfaction

The same analytic strategy was used for predicting life satisfaction. In Equation (2) of Table 4, the length of residence and the English proficiency as indicators of acculturation level show no significant effect on the level of life satisfaction among older Korean immigrants. However, the attitude about children's support is a marginally significant ($p < .10$) predictor for life satisfaction, in that respondents with Americanized attitudes showed higher level of life satisfaction than those with traditional Korean attitudes. The effects of acculturation variables on life satisfaction show the same pattern found for the depressive symptoms.

Among three variables reflecting the social contexts, size of the social network is a significant predictor for the level of life satisfaction ($p < .01$), while participation in voluntary organizations is not. The significant effect of social network size suggests that larger primary networks are associated with higher general life satisfaction as well as the lower current depressive symptoms among older Korean immigrants. Interestingly, the community characteristics that make no difference in depressive symptoms show a significant

effect on life satisfaction ($p < .05$). The negative coefficient indicates that older Koreans living in the ethnic community had a higher level of life satisfaction. This finding implies that the ethnic community can provide various resources to meet the older Koreans' needs, thus promoting their psychological morale. It also supports the cultural pluralist theory of ethnic group relations (i.e., Gordon 1964), in general, and the suggestion of the importance of the ethnic community for Korean immigrants (i.e., Hurh and Kim 1988), in particular.

In Equation (2) of Table 4, life stress exerts no significant effect on life satisfaction, implying that life stress is less useful for predicting the long-term psychological status of older Korean immigrants. Equation (2) also indicates that age and sex do not make significant differences in long-term psychological status. However, we see that health status is a positive predictor for life satisfaction of older Korean immigrants. In short, the most distinctive finding in Equation (2) is that social contexts have significant implications for life satisfaction of older Korean immigrants at the distal level as well as the proximal level.

Sources of Efficacy of Adjustment

Equation (3) of Table 4 presents the multiple regression results for efficacy of adjustment. As for depressive symptoms (Equation 1) and life satisfaction (Equation 2), among the three acculturation variables, only older Koreans' attitudes on children's support predicts their efficacy of adjustment with marginal significance ($p < .10$). The positive coefficient suggests that older Koreans with Americanized values or attitudes were better off in adjustmental efficacy than those with traditional Korean values. In terms of social contexts, only primary social network size indicates a promoting effect on efficacy of adjustment ($p < .01$), without any significant effect of participation in voluntary organizations or of community characteristics.

Equation (3) also indicates a marginally harmful effect of life stress on efficacy of adjustment ($p < .10$), supporting the general assumption of the life stress paradigm. Equation (3) shows no sex differences in efficacy of adjustment among older Korean immigrants. However, health status is a significant predictor for their adjustmental efficacy. The most interesting finding in Equation (3) is the age effect on adjustmental efficacy. Compared with the marginal effect on depressive symptoms and the non-significant effect on life satisfaction, age is the strongest predictor for adjustmental efficacy. This finding suggests that age is associated with the psychological well-being of older persons, mainly hampering their efficacy of personal or impersonal adjustment.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the present study, we have attempted to examine the social sources of psychological well-being of older Korean immigrants in terms of their acculturation level and social contexts. Despite limitations in measurement and the representativeness of the sample, we found information valuable for understanding the social level of etiology of psychological well-being among the target population. In the following, we review important findings of the present study and discuss relevant issues to those findings.

First of all, the present study confirmed a popular recognition of older Korean immigrants as a "high-risk" group, given the considerable proportion of the sample with higher scores of depressive symptoms than the traditional cut-off point. The most distinguishing finding was that size of social network was significantly associated with all three indicators of psychological well-being. In other words, primary relationships — including parents, children and close friends — were valuable resources for promoting the psychological well-being of older Korean immigrants, particularly suppressing their depressive symptoms and boosting their life satisfaction and efficacy of adjustment. Overall, we found no significant effect of participation in voluntary organizations or of community characteristics. However, one interesting finding was the effect of community characteristics on life satisfaction. Older Koreans living in the ethnic community showed higher life satisfaction than those in the American community. Given these findings, we suggest that proximal social contexts have greater implication for older Korean immigrants' psychological well-being than the more distal contexts. Characteristics of distal contexts (i.e., ethnic composition) need to be taken into account for explaining their long-term morale, however.

Although a promoting role of primary networks for older Koreans' psychological well-being was stressed, the present study could not examine the mechanisms through which those networks contribute. To shed light on these mechanisms, we suggest that further research that takes into account the supports provided from social networks and examines how various supports promote the psychological well-being of older Korean immigrants.

We also found the importance of proximal contexts with respect to the acculturation level, reflecting the adaptation of values and attitudes of the new society. Length of residence and the English proficiency that might indicate general "Americanization" had no significant effects on any of the three indicators of psychological well-being in the present study. However, a more specific indicator, reflecting the traditional Korean *versus* American values on children's support for elderly parents, showed a significant effect on depress-

ive symptoms and marginally significant effects on life satisfaction and adjustment efficacy. These findings indicate that values or attitudes salient to older Koreans are related to their psychological well-being, in particular more to current depressive symptoms than to long-term morale.

Given little variation in the length of residence and English proficiency among the sample, their non-significant effects on psychological well-being in the present study must be interpreted with caution. More comprehensive understanding of the effects of acculturation on immigrant psychological well-being can be obtained in a research design permitting the comparison of various ethnic groups. The findings of variations in psychological well-being according to the attitudes on children's support among older Korean immigrants suggest implications for understanding the psychological well-being of older Koreans in Korea, since independence between parents and adult children is also an important issue to those who experience considerable changes in values or norms through modernization of their society.

Summing up the findings of the effects of social contexts and acculturation in the present study, we suggest that proximal social contexts, consisting of close networks, and the norms prescribing the proximal contexts are important sources for predicting the psychological well-being of older Korean immigrants. Although social networks and norms of children's support were the common sources of variation for all three indicators of psychological well-being, we found that each indicator of well-being had its own distinctive sources. Thus, we suggest the utility of a multi-dimensional conceptualization of psychological well-being.

To examine the effects of social context and acculturation, we took into account other relevant variables. As the first empirical attempt to incorporate the life stress concept for explaining the psychological well-being of older Korean immigrants, the present study found its significant effect on the depressive symptoms, marginal effect on the efficacy of adjustment and no effect on life satisfaction. Thus, we suggest the utility of the life stress concept, particularly for investigating its short term effect on the depressive symptoms of Korean immigrants. Among the individual characteristics, health status was significantly associated with all three variables of psychological well-being. This result suggests that health status should be taken into account when examining the psychological well-being of older persons who experience continuing deterioration of health conditions. We found marginal differences between male and female older Koreans only in depressive symptoms. While age had a marginal effect on the depressive symptoms and no effect on life satisfaction, it showed a strong effect on the efficacy of adjustment of older Korean immigrants. This finding indicates the adverse consequences of aging in the later stages of the individual life cycle.

Findings of the present study suggest possible implications for social policy. Given the finding that social networks and the ethnic community are functional for the psychological well-being of older Korean immigrants, social policy can be directed toward the cultural pluralist approach — supporting adaptation to the American culture on the one hand, and preserving ethnic integration on the other hand. In addition, various sources found as relevant to older Korean immigrants' psychological well-being can be utilized in prevention and intervention programs for this immigrant group. Finally, presenting various sources of depressive symptoms, life satisfaction and adjustmental efficacy, we would conclude that social inquiry can provide valuable knowledge for explaining and supporting the psychological well-being of older Korean immigrants.

APPENDIX

TABLE 5. ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS AMONG VARIABLES

	SEX	AGE	HTH	LNT	ENG	ATT	NTW	VOL	COM	STS	CES	LST	ADJ
SEX	1.00	-.08	-.21	.19	-.31	.02	-.18	.01	-.03	-.15	.21	-.14	-.08
AGE		1.00	-.12	.24	-.13	-.04	.06	.22	-.09	-.07	.17	.04	-.24
HTH			1.00	-.10	.19	-.01	.13	.06	.05	-.04	-.43	.40	.25
LNT				1.00	.13	.05	.10	.09	-.09	-.12	-.04	.12	.06
ENG					1.00	-.20	.10	.14	-.09	.08	-.21	.14	.17
ATT						1.00	.02	-.13	.20	.11	-.15	.07	.10
NTW							1.00	.14	.14	.05	-.25	.30	.28
VOL								1.00	.00	-.08	-.13	.14	.07
COM									1.00	-.03	-.01	-.07	.06
STS										1.00	.14	-.11	-.10
CES											1.00	-.60	-.64
LST												1.00	.44
ADJ													1.00

LNT = Length of residence

ENG = English proficiency

ATT = Attitudes on children's support

NTW = Social network

VOL = Participation in voluntary organizations

COM = Community characteristics

STS = Life stress

CES = Depressive symptoms

LST = Life satisfaction

ADJ = Efficacy of adjustment

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