SPORT PARTICIPATION PATTERNS  
AND INFLUENCING FACTORS ON SPORT BEHAVIOR  
OF KOREAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES  

by  
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ABSTRACT  

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze daily physical activity experiences and interactions in sport contexts of first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants in the metropolitan Atlanta area in the United States. First-generation Korean immigrants are of particular interest in this study because their immigration at older ages influenced subsequent changes in their sport participation and sport behavior, and their length of stay in the United States is long enough to compare their experiences of both cultures. This study was guided by an interpretive qualitative approach, and symbolic interactionism provided the theoretical framework for data collection, analysis, and interpretation throughout this study. Fourteen participants (eight males and six females) were chosen by means of purposeful sampling, and in-depth interviews with the participants, ages between 18 and 54, who have lived in the United States at least 10 years, were conducted over a two-month period and were guided by pre-determined interview protocol. Participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews with each participant, and document review were used; however, the interviews were the primary source for data collection. The grounded theory method of constant comparative analysis was employed for the data analysis.
The majority of immigrants experienced the low levels of physical activity participation during the initial adaptation period; however, the findings from the data analysis reveal an increased level of participation in various types of physical activities among the participants during the first post-settlement period. The findings of this study also suggest that the roles of the physical activity participation among Korean immigrants were three-fold: They chose one of the traditional paths in the adaptation process, either acculturating to the mainstream society or preserving their own ethnic identity, or they followed the distinct route in the adaptation process, assimilating to their own sub-culture in the United States. In conclusion, the roles of physical activity participation in the adaptation process and the internal dynamics of the Korean immigrant community are quite complex, and the Korean immigrants’ participation in physical activities helps in reinforcing their ethnic identity and strengthening ties with other members of their ethnic community.

INDEX WORDS: Immigration, Immigrant, Korean immigrants, Physical activity, Participation patterns, Adaptation process, Ethnic preservation, Adaptation process
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B.S., Ewha Womans University, Korea, 2001
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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
DOCTORAL OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA
2007
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December 2007
DEDICATION

For
My Lord, God & Savior Jesus Christ

My parents

&

My brother
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It would be impossible to thank all those in completing this degree; however there are many who has directly guided me and supported me for my long journey. First of all, I would like to give honor to my God. Without his love, the completion of this work would not have been possible and this would not even worthy of attempting. I also thank God for providing every one of you into my life.

To my parents, Hwayup Kim and Soonhee Han, thanks for your unconditional love, prayers, understanding, encouragement, and support throughout all my educational endeavors. Mom, do you remember the day you read the Joshua 1: 9 to me? This became the verse of support through the years that comforted me and helped me find my future path.

[Joshua 1: 9] Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.

Thank you and I love you so much. Mom and Dad LOVE YOU!!!

To my brother, Kyutae, thanks for the love, prayers, and encouraging e-mail messages. Your support during the difficult times will never be forgotten. Thank you and always know that I love you.

I am deeply indebted to Dr. Rose Chepyator-Thomson, who has served as my major professor. I would not have been successful in completing this degree as well as my graduate studies if not for your continuous support and guidance. Thanks for the motherly advice, patience, understanding my struggles, and your great willingness to support me for the last five years.
I would also like to acknowledge my committee members, Dr. Billy Hawkins and Dr. Larry Nackerud. I appreciate for their continuous guidance and extremely helpful advice during my doctoral study. What a dream team we have!

I would like to give my sincere gratitude to my fourteen participants: Ji-Hoon, Yoo-Jin, Woo-Seong, Young-Ae, Hyo-Ri, Tae-Hyun, Jun-Gi, Sang-Woo, In-Sung, Ye-Seul, Dong-Won, Na-Young, Rae-Won, and Eun-Hae (pseudonyms). Thank you for welcoming me, your precious time, and the sharing of your experience.

A special thanks to PPB for the greatest support and love. Lastly, I would like to thank all of my friends, colleagues, teachers, professors, and fellow faculty members at BHSU. Sungeun Kim, Youngsun Kim, Yeonhwa Kim, Jisung Lee, Ohkyung Kwon, Sungeun Cho, Hyunsun Yoon, Mijeong Kim, Taehyun Baek, Seeun Kim, Youngha Park, Isaac Lee, Soyoung Park, Wendy Shon, Misook Lee, Sunhee Jo, Sunghae Park, Glenn, Dr. Nancy Hall, Dr. James Hesson, Dr. Sandy Klarenbeek, Christine McCart, Dr. Rob Schurrer, Dr. Betsy Silva, Nancy Shuck, and Dr. Jinhong Jung, thanks for keeping me smile, big hugs, prayers, and encouragement throughout the time as a graduate student at UGA and during my first time as faculty at BHSU. If anyone deserves to be thanked for this process, you know it is you!
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The United States, known as a country of immigrants, has always been a destination for individuals from other countries. According to Moua, Guerra, Moore, and Valdiserri (2002), “in the 20th century, immigration peaked in the first couple of decades, but was rapidly declining by 1940: it reached an all-time low in 1970” (p. 189). However, as federal law and national immigration policy – Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 – began to affect immigrants in the 1970s, the United States saw rapid growth in the diversity of its population. Over the past 40 years, the United States has experienced one of the highest rates of immigration in its history. According to the Center for Immigration Studies, more than 26 million have settled in the United States since 1970 (Moua, Guerra, Moore, & Valdiserri, 2002), especially between 1991 and 1997 when approximately seven million immigrants came to the United States (Elwood, 2005). Almost one million new immigrants settle in the United States each year, and these immigrants have formed 10 percent of the country’s entire population (Moua, Guerra, Moore, & Valdiserri, 2002). In 2001, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that over 78 million Americans were of nonwhite racial ethnicity, and estimated that nearly 40 percent of U.S. populations will be nonwhite by 2025 (Elwood, 2005).

California is a good example of why the United States government should seriously examine the important issues as it relates to the largest wave of immigrants. California has the largest immigrant population in the United States, both in numbers and percentage of the
population, followed by the metropolitan areas of New York, Florida, Texas, and New Jersey. Not surprisingly, immigrants have changed the composition of the U. S. population, and, due to the rapid growth of nonwhite people, Caucasians residing in California now account for less than half of the state’s population (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). Understanding the immigrants’ cultural backgrounds, social norms, family structures, and diverse health-related issues such as healthcare beliefs and practices, as well as sports participation patterns and needs, is important because of the changes that they bring about in the diversity of the country. However, understanding and taking account of these massive changes is challenging because of the scarcity of research, as well as gaps in national databases due to the number of undocumented immigrants, and the heterogeneity of immigrant populations, making it difficult to comprehend problems and conditions that immigrants face once on the United States soil.

Background of the Study

The review of literature focuses on studies published in peer-reviewed journals and books. Computerized databases were used, and contents and abstracts of each of the articles were read. I recognize that other sources, such as existing master’s theses and doctoral dissertations, are also highly valued; however, these were rarely included because master’s theses and doctoral dissertations are not easily accessible nor properly represent current research trends. The computerized database search was accomplished through Galileo, Academic Search Premier at EBSCOhost, and the Research Library at ProQuest databases, using the following keywords: “immigrants,” “health issue,” “physical activity,” and “sport participation.” The research was conducted entirely in English.
A number of research studies presenting the contributions of immigrants to U.S. population growth, ethnic diversity, and the labor market have focused on immigrants’ health status and problems associated with acculturation stress, and on legal issues affecting government policy and health care access. First, a substantial portion of immigration research focused on issues involving population growth and the changing segment of the U. S. population, occurring due to the significant growth of immigrant populations and social and geographical segregation (Cookson, Carballo, Nolan, Keystone, & Jong, 2001; Kandula, Kersey, & Lurie, 2004; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004; Will, 1999), as well as the increased tacit need for illegal workers in the urban labor market (Spencer, 1994; Thornburgh, 2005).

The immigration research has discussed issues such as various health concerns, including mental health problems. According to Rapala and Manderson (2005), “this is true for many immigrants whose move to a new social environment leads, on the one hand, to positive outcomes (i.e. better financial position, secure future, personal safety), but on the other hand, is weighted by the experience of loss of social status that could lead to an increased level of stress and health related problems” (p. 177). Dotevall, Rosengren, Lappas, and Wilhelmsen (2000) indicated a number of immigrants from other countries to have a worse coronary heart disease (CHD) risk factor profile compared with the general population from the host country, although a decreasing trend in coronary heart disease risk factors has continually been reported since the 1970s in most Western countries. This study further revealed that the increased level of the coronary heart disease risk factors, such as higher blood pressure, higher Body Mass Index (BMI), cholesterol levels, and smoking, are significantly associated with the immigrants’ higher rates of unemployment and psychological stress. Furthermore, the increasing number of foreign-born populations in urban areas and their health issues has been of concern to the public health
professionals and community (Imperato, LaRosa, & Schechter, 2005). In 2001, the State University Downstate Medical Center initiated a Master of Public Health (MPH) degree program, housed in the Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health of the College of Medicine, and the program mainly focused on urban and immigrant health issues. To address the various health issues through population-based interventions, several important curricular changes were made in Master of Public Health (MPH) degree programs. The MPH degree program offered more coursework than before and the hours of student practicum experiences were greatly increased to assist future public health care professionals to meet the diverse health needs of the community. Essentially, the changes in composition of population, a rich diversity of people in the community, affected the various public health concerns and the needs for interventions.

In addition, several researchers determined that immigrant groups face increased risk of mental health problems (Anashensel, Becerr, Fielder, & Weiss, 1990; Hovey, 1998; Rutter, Yule, Berger, & et al., 1974). The researchers further suggested that “recency of immigration, generational status, acculturation, and acculturation stress play significant roles in initiation of high risk behavior” (Blake, Ledsky, Goodenow, & O’Donnell, 2001, p. 105). Particularly, several studies have examined the unique mental concerns and psychological problems of immigrant children and youth (Aronowitz, 1984; Blake, Ledsky, Goodenow, & O’Donnell, 2001; Florsheim, 1997; Morrow, 1994; Sam, 2000) and elderly immigrants (Gelfand & Yee, 1991; Loo, Tong, & True, 1989; Mui, 1996b; Snowden & Cheung, 1990; Yu, 1986). In fact, researchers found immigrant children and youth to be at higher risk of mental health problems such as isolation, loneliness, and anxiety than nonimmigrant groups, and older immigrants experience more depressive symptoms and need more careful attention than nonimmigrant elderly people.
Lastly, how health policy affects the immigrants’ welfare system and issues of access to health care was frequently examined by many researchers (Kretsedemas, 2005; Smith, 2001). The research studies show that one of the greatest obstacles immigrants face is the lack of health insurance coverage. “One-third of immigrants in the United States do not have health insurance, a ratio two and one-half times higher than that for the native-born population” (Moua, Guerra, Moore, & Valdiserri, 2002, p. 190). Furthermore, access to the health care system is made more problematic by immigrants’ limited English language skills. Language barriers are experienced by most immigrant groups (Kim, 2001; Yeh & Inose, 2002; Kretsedemas, 2005; Yeh, Arora, Inose, Okubo, Li, & Greene, 2003), and as a result, immigrants with low levels of language proficiency in English are more likely to go without healthcare services and experience limited interaction with welfare professionals (Kirkman-Liff & Mondragon, 1991; Ku & Matani, 2001; Schur & Albers, 1996; Solis, Marks, Garcia, & Shelton, 1990; Suarez, 1994). In these research studies, welfare reform policies and their effects were discussed, revealing the increased concerns of immigrants’ health. For instance, Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and publicly funded benefits for immigrants were mainly highlighted (Moua, Guerra, Moore, & Valdiserri, 2002). Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires federally funded health care providers to offer translation services to clients with limited-English proficiency. Indeed, providing language assistance provides positive outcomes for immigrants’ health and access to the welfare system, removing language barriers for immigrants’ access to health care services.

Despite the increasing number of research studies on immigrant groups and ethnic minorities, much of the literature on immigrant-related issues, such as legal policy and health issues associated with immigration population growth, is largely focused on Latinos perhaps
because they are the largest ethnic minority in the United States. Little is known about the specific health conditions of uninsured and/or undocumented immigrants (Wolff, Stalder, Epiney, Walder, Irion, & Morabia, 2005), or other ethnic minority groups’ health status, health beliefs and practices and perspectives on health care quality (Ngo-Metzger, Massagli, Clarridge, Manocchia, Davis, Iezzoni, & Phillips, 2003; Mui, 1998). Due to the increasing number of diverse ethnic immigrants in the United States, it is essential to examine their needs and quality of life; however, a limited number of studies have examined the community environment of ethnic minorities (Mui, 1998) and their experiences in their adaptation process to a new culture (Padilla, Wagatsuma, & Lindholm, 1985; Rosenthal & Feldman, 1990). Traditionally, those quality of life issues among diverse ethnic minority groups, excluding Latinos, have been marginalized in the academic and public literature.

In 2000, Healthy People 2010 provided the nation’s health objectives for the present decade (U.S. Dep. Health and Human Services, 2000). Ten leading health indicators (LHIs) were mainly discussed, documenting the significance of public health issues. These indicators are important for guiding action-based research and interventions based on the health needs of the current U.S. population. Using the ten leading health indicators (LHIs) as a guide, research studies consistently emphasize measurements of the public health progress. The leading health indicators (LHIs) include the following: physical activity, overweight and obesity, tobacco use, substance abuse, responsible sexual behavior, mental health, injury and violence, environmental quality, immunizations, and access to health care. Accordingly, immigrants’ health-related studies from the perspectives of these LHIs -- including health needs, health care quality, participation in regular physical activity, and physical activity patterns -- have expanded in scope and gained growing attention among researchers in recent decades. Even though some recent
research studies have attempted to address the various issues to assure the health of diverse population of the United States, the majority of these studies primarily focused on “problems of the general population without much attention to problems particular to special populations such as people with disabilities, ethnic/racial minorities, or immigrants” (Stodolska, 1998, p. 521).

In a number of current studies, the influences of ethnic and racial backgrounds on a variety of issues related to health, sports, leisure, and recreation behavior have been documented (Henderson & Ainsworth, 2001; Hutchison, 1987; Juniu, 2000; Tirone & Shaw, 1997). Significant differences have been identified in terms of physical activity patterns and sport behavior among ethnic minority groups (Gobster, 1998; Grey, 1992; Taylor & Toohey, 1996). Furthermore, it has been pointed out that members of racial minorities are the most disadvantaged individuals in terms of sports participation (Coakley, 2001). Although participation in leisure and sports among culturally and ethnically different groups is increasing, research on subjects related to their sports participation patterns is still limited. Whereas the constraints of recreational sport and physical activity of some special populations such as women, people with disability, and racial minority have recently gained considerable attention by many researchers (Carrington, Chivers, & Williams, 1987; Glyptis, 1985; Harrington, Dawson, & Bolla, 1992; Henderson & Allen, 1991; Henderson, Bedini, Hecht, & Schuller, 1995; Henderson, Stalnaker, & Taylor, 1998; Jackson, 1991; Philipp, 1995), only a few studies have directly focused on the sport constraints of immigrant groups (Rubble & Shaw, 1991; Yu & Berryman, 1996).

Similar to other research on immigrant-related issues, most of the literature on immigrants’ health report data and issues of ethnicity, race, and sports have focused on African Americans and Latinos because they are the largest ethnic minorities in the United States. While
some of the research studies attempt to deal with issues of ethnic and racial minorities and their participation in recreational sports, little attention has been paid to the research on sports participation patterns of recent immigrants, including Asian immigrants and White ethnic groups. Research on physical activity experience and sport participation of those groups is very limited and fails to mention the differences within subgroups. There are substantial subgroup differences regarding the health-related issues such as physical/mental health problems, health beliefs, sport behavior, and needs; however, many researchers still group all Europeans, Asians and Pacific Islanders, or Latinos together in their recent studies (Kandula, Kersey, & Lurie, 2004). For example, the Asian population in the United States is composed of more than two dozen ethnic groups from Asia and the Pacific Islands, including Koreans, Chineses, Japanese, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Thais, Taiwanese, and Laotians. Understanding various sport behavior such as physical activity participation patterns and preference of each ethnic minority is quite challenging because of the heterogeneity of immigrant population and gaps in national databases (Kandula, Kersey, & Lurie, 2004). Therefore, the body of knowledge of sport behavior of Korean immigrants in a major U. S. metropolitan area, such as their sport preferences and constraints of physical activity participation will be examined in this qualitative study.

Rationale for the Study

During the last thirty-year period, the immigration of Asian and Pacific Islanders to the United States has increased by more than 400% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1995). Data from the 1990 U. S. Census showed that the Asian population in the U.S. increased by 107% (from 3,400,439 to 7,273,662) during the 1980-1990 decade; on the other hand, the population of Whites grew only 6 percent; Blacks, 13%; and Hispanics, 53% (U. S. Bureau of Census, 1991).
Between 1990 and 2000, the Asian population in the United States as a whole increased 48%, compared with 6% for the White population, the lowest growth rate among the major racial groups, and 58% for the Hispanic population (Yu, 2001). Primarily because of the rapid growth of immigration in its history, the Asian population is one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States. The Asian population is composed of ethnically diverse minority groups from Asia and the Pacific Islands, including Koreans, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Thais, and Laotians. Although there is an increasing number of ethnic minorities and immigrants of Asian origin, researchers have rarely paid attention to Asian immigrants (Allison & Geiger, 1993). Asian immigrants’ social norms, cultural background, family structure, perspectives on health, and sport participation patterns are quite different from those of the mainstream population and immigrants from other regions (Alba & Nee, 1997). In addition, Asian immigrants are one of the most diverse ethnic groups in the United States, composed of more than two dozen ethnic subgroups, with significant subgroup differences in terms of culture, language, values, beliefs, and social norms, as well as health behavior and sport participation pattern. The study of immigrants’ involvement in sport provides an important vehicle to understand their social and cultural aspects in the host culture (Bergin, 2002; Nelson, 2005); however, the study of Asian immigrants’ sport experience is still a minor interest to researchers, and further, researchers seldom address the heterogeneity of Asian immigrant populations despite distinctiveness within subgroups.

Given the steady increases in the number of research studies that focus on Asian immigrants in the United States (Barkan, 1996; Mangiafico, 1988; Min, 1995), more research attention is needed on Asian immigrants’ sport behavior in the host culture. Despite the significant role of sport participation in the immigrants’ adaptation to life in the host culture
(Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004), most research studies have exclusively focused on immigrants’ sport behavior in structured social contexts such as the K-12 school settings and workplace (Yu & Berryman, 1996). As Kim (2001) asserts, “Leisure experiences in immigrants’ daily nonwork lives have seldom attracted the interest of researchers studying the immigration experience of ethnic minorities” (p. 18). Therefore, this study closely examined the sport behavior and physical activity experiences of the daily lives of one specific Asian immigrant group, Korean immigrants.

I chose particularly the first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants residing in the metropolitan Atlanta area because (1) Korean is one of the fastest growing ethnic groups among Asian population in the United States due to the considerable number of immigrants from Korea; (2) the Korean immigrant population is heavily concentrated in metropolitan areas such as Atlanta, Georgia; (3) a substantial number of Korean immigrants in the United States are first and one-and-a-half generation immigrants because most of them immigrated to the U. S. after the introduction of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965; and (4) my being a native Korean, a qualified cultural representative, could lessen communication issues between researcher and researchee while doing the qualitative research.

The steady and significant inflow of immigrants from Korea has dramatically increased Korean population in the United States. The Korean population increased from about 70,000 in 1970 to 355,000 in 1980, and it rose to approximately 799,000 in 1990 (Yu, 2001). As of the year 2000, the Korean population reached 1,076,872 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2000). According to the population census data (U. S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000), the Korean population increased 34.8% between 1990 and 2000, while the U.S. total population grew only 13.15% and the White population grew only 5.9%.
Furthermore, “Immigrant populations are heavily concentrated in six states (California, New York, Florida, Texas, New Jersey, and Illinois), although there has been significant growth in immigrant populations in nearly all states over the past decades” (Kandula, Kersey, & Lurie, 2004, p. 359). In recent decades, in states such as Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Utah, the number of immigrants more than doubled (Pollard & O’Hare, 1999). Similarly, the Korean population in the United States is concentrated in most of the metropolitan areas. Traditionally, the dominant number of Koreans, like other Asian populations in the United States, has been concentrated in the Western states. However, the 1990 and 2000 Census revealed that the pattern of geographic concentration of Korean population in the United States changed dramatically. During the 1990s, Southern states showed the highest increased rates of the Korean population, 46.42% in the four regions. Midwestern states, such as Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, showed the lowest growing rate of the Korean population with 21.35%. Western states, such as California, Washington, and Utah, showed a 33.72% increase of Korean population and the Northeastern states showed a 35.20% increase (U. S. Census Bureau, 1990, 2000). Among the 10 fastest growing states for the Korean population – in highest growth rate order, Georgia, Nevada, North Carolina, New Jersey, Tennessee, Delaware, Washington, Arizona, Florida, and Virginia –, six (Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Delaware, Florida, and Virginia) were Southern states (Yu, 2001). Particularly, Georgia experienced the highest growth rate of Korean population between 1990 and 2000, 88.18%, and most Koreans residing in Georgia are concentrated in the Atlanta metropolitan area. Thus, this popular pattern of Korean population’s geographic distribution guaranteed the availability of substantial number of research participants for this study.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze daily physical activity experiences and interactions in sport contexts of first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants in the metropolitan Atlanta area (Georgia Metropolitan Statistical Area: MSA) in the United States, using both participant observations and semi-structured in-depth interviews. The Georgia Metropolitan Statistical Area includes the following 20 counties: Barrow, Bartow, Carroll, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, Dekalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Newton, Paulding, Pickens, Rockdale, Spalding, and Walton. First-generation Korean immigrants, who were born in Korea and who later immigrated to the United States as adults, are of particular interest in this study because their immigration at older ages influenced subsequent changes in their sport participation and sport behavior, and their length of stay in the United States is long enough to compare their experiences of both cultures. As previously mentioned, the sport behavior of ethnic minority groups in the United States is quite limited. Therefore, this study mainly focuses on the behavioral aspects of Korean immigrants’ daily sport participation, such as physical activity preferences, needs, and constraints of sport participation. The research identifies different physical activity-related issues and needs of the specific minority group.

Research Questions

The main research questions that I explored in the study were the following: (1) What are the reasons that the Korean immigrants left their country? (2) How did they participate in physical activities in their home country and the United States? (3) How did they react to their physical health in their home country and the United States? (4) What kinds of things stopped
them from participating in physical activities? (5) What kinds of things motivate them to participate in physical activities? (6) What role did physical activity play in their lives?

Overview of Research Procedures

Symbolic interactionism was the theoretical framework that guided the overall research design and interpretation of the findings. The focus of this qualitative research is to examine the first and one-and-a-half generation Korean immigrants’ daily physical activity experiences and explore the meanings of sport participation from their perspectives. According to Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionism is defined as “activity in which human interpret each other’s gestures and act on the basis of meaning yielded by interpretation” (pp. 65-66). Because the fundamental nature of the sport participation is social interaction with other individuals and the interpretation of the perspectives on sport behavior encountered, symbolic interactionism is the best fitting theoretical framework for the purpose of this study. Glaser and Strauss (1999) described grounded theory methods as the “discovery of theory from data” (p.1), and this methodology allowed the researcher to “critically analyze situations, to think abstractly, and to have sensitivity to the words and actions of the respondents” (Patton, 2002, pp. 489-490). Using symbolic interactionism as a theoretical framework, constant comparison of emerging themes regarding the ground theory method was used for the research process through data collection and analysis. As codes were established and consistent categories emerged, the major themes of this study were uncovered.

Data collection procedures in the study included participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews with each participant, and document collection from the research site. Participant observations were conducted at two different locations, religious and/or
multicultural gatherings and sport clubs organized by Koreans, in order to find the target population or at least understand the general research settings, followed by separate interviews with each research participant who met the selection criteria. The typical interviews lasted about one hour and the interviewees’ preferred place and time were arranged for their comfort level during the interview. Interviews were conducted by using a pre-determined interview guide, and the interviewees were offered a choice of languages, either Korean or English. All interviews were audio-taped for transcription purpose with participant agreement prior to the interview. A signed written consent form was obtained prior to the interview. A pseudonym was used for participant identification, and data were confidentially stored. When the researcher needed to clarify the participant’s statements from the previous interviews or when the specific follow-up themes emerged after the initial analysis process, then follow-up interviews, either face-to-face interviews or telephone interviews, were conducted. Furthermore, public documents were also used as sources of data. In the study, a town’s newspapers and brochures of community sporting events were collected and analyzed.

Significance of Study

The value of studying mainly first-generation Korean immigrants was that they had substantial sport-related experience both in Korea and the United States and they, regarded as well-settled immigrants due to enough length of residence in the United States, were more likely to share the cultural and social differences in perspectives, values, and physical activity experiences. Therefore, by conducting qualitative research involving a close examination of the daily sport behavior and physical activity pattern of one specific ethnic group among many Asian immigrants, Korean immigrants would contribute to the future studies in several ways. First,
Korean immigrants have infrequently been research participants for extensive qualitative research studies in the field of sport and physical activity, although there is a dramatic recent increase in the number of Asian population, especially Korean population, in the United States. Consideration of Korean immigrants’ perspectives on their daily sport participation patterns and influencing factors on sport behavior is essential to provide appropriate implementation of sport services and programs that target specific needs and expectations of Koreans, and ultimately provide a better quality of life for them. Second, the findings of study would fill the knowledge gaps regarding the sport behavior of minority populations in the United States. There has been increasing research attention given to the sport and physical activity experience of ethnic minorities due to the increasing number of Asian immigrants and other ethnic groups in the U. S. population; however, much of the research knowledge remains undiscovered because there are little data for this population available resulting from a lack of research or focused studies. Lastly, the findings of this study will help both researchers and educators understand how ethnic minority’s sport participation in non-structured settings is associated with the assimilation to the mainstream society. Moreover, it will help researchers and practitioners to fully understand the diverse Eastern cultural perspectives on sport and physical activity, and to uncover the diverse issues such as physical activity preferences and constraints of sport participation in the context of the cultural perspectives of minority groups.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature related to the research questions presented in chapter 1. The chapter is divided into seven sections. First, U.S. society’s normative conceptions and the immigrants’ experiences during the integration process are reviewed, focusing on identity conflicts and cultural values, increased risk of health problems, language barriers, and pervasive prejudice. Second, the history of Korean immigration to the United States is examined. Third, sport and cultural characteristics among Koreans are described. Fourth, assimilation theories -- both traditional and contemporary -- and basic assumptions and perspectives are presented. Next, the determinants that influence immigrants’ adaptation – individual-level factors and structural-level factors – are examined. Sixth, the role of sport in the adaptation process is examined. In the last section, the factors that influence sport behavior are discussed.

Immigration and Immigrants’ Experience

Immigrants, particularly from a non-western culture, encounter problems in their acculturation process. The immigrants’ survival and livelihood largely depend on their acquisition of the new language, their perception of the new world, modes of thinking, and actions which occur according to the socially constructed norm of the host society (Kim, 1989). However, acquisition of those standards and practices of the host nation is an extremely difficult process for the immigrants because of the apparent normative conceptions of society. According
to Rapala and Manderson, individuals in a Western capitalist society are positioned along a linear concept continuum, which starts from mostly in-valid (disabled) to mostly valid (norm) (Rapala & Manderson, 2005). In short, being valid (norm) in a Western capitalist society is clearly linked to the ideas about physical strength, control, health, success, and attractiveness. Thus, to be in-valid (disabled) in the Western society carries many negative meanings as opposed to the ideas of being valid and has an idealized norm: being physically inactive, value-less, unnecessary, fragile, obstructive and useless. The normative conceptions, constructed and idealized by a Western capitalist society, position individuals somewhere along the line of continuum, and they are somehow disabled and in-validated because of their body, gender, ethnic background, religion, or socioeconomic status. Because of prevailing normative conceptions, immigrants, who are categorized at the furthest point from the valid (norm), suffer much institutional and social marginalization problems on their striving to meet the unattainable socially constructed ideals/norms.

The next literature review section focuses on what the immigrants experience: difficulties associated with conflict regarding identity and cultural values, health problems, language barriers, racism, and prejudice.

Identity Conflicts and Cultural Values

Race, national origin, culture, history, appearance, language, religion, regionality, or a combination of these form one’s ethnic identity (Gordon, 1964; Nagel, 1994). Ethnic identity therefore is described as a primary aspect of self that includes cultural affiliation to an ethnic group, or an individual’s acquisition of values, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors associated with membership in that group (Bernal & Knight, 1993; Keefe, 1992; Phinney, 1990; White-Stephan & Stephan, 1989). Ethnic identity and cultural awareness constitute factors that contribute to the
acculturation process (Padilla, 1980). In a research study on Japanese immigrant youth, Yeh, Arora, Inose, Okubo, Li, and Greene (2003) found ethnic identity to play an important role in the complex process of immigrant acculturation. Further, a number of studies found ethnic identity to be significantly associated with the acculturation processes (Alvarez, Kohatsu, Liu, & Yeh, 1996; Phinney, 1989; Kim, 2001; Yeh, Arora, Inose, Okubo, Li, & Greene, 2003).

Because ethnic identity is constantly negotiated and defined by individuals through the changes in relationships with others, social contexts, and geographic locations (Yeh & Huang, 1996), immigrants constantly experience crisis in identity development and maintenance to sustain immigration status or attain social acceptance. Immigrants are continuously trying to adapt to a new culture by compromising their sense of identity in a new environment. Several studies found immigrants to face challenges such as discriminative behavior, economic hardship, cultural conflict, and self-imposed isolation in the host country during their acculturation process, which may have expanded their demand to preserve their ethnic identities (Cha, 1977; Kim, 2001). Kim emphasized the significance of sustaining one’s strong attachment to ethnic identity as a matter of self-protection (Kim, 2001). According to Hurh and Kim (1984a), first-generation immigrants frequently manifest stronger ethnic attachment to their culture of origin than do their descendants. Therefore, integration into U.S. society tends to be minimized when immigrant groups exclusively locate their identity in their own ethnic community, where self-identity can be asserted without conflict. Even though immigrants accept and learn the language, values, perceptions, and acquire attitudes of the host culture rather than preserve those which they previously depended on in their traditional culture, cultural integration cannot guarantee a high level of structural integration (Gordon, 1964). Many integration theorists have revealed many immigrants to recognize the difficulty of achieving the full acceptance in the host society or
becoming integrated into the dominant culture without altering their personal culture significantly (Gordon, 1964; Hirshman, 1983; Kim, 1977; Yinger, 1981).

Health Problems

Another difficulty that immigrants may face during their integration process is health problems. Previous studies reported that immigrants confront increased risk of negative health and mental health concerns such as migration stress, family stability, cultural conflict, social supports, and personal competencies (Blake, Ledsky, Goodenow, & O’Donnell, 2001; Florsheim, 1997; Morrow, 1994; Sam, 2000). In a review of literature on adjustment problems among immigrants, Berry, Kim, Minde, and Mok (1987) expressed that acculturation stress during integration played a significant role in lowering their mental health status, pointing to such problems as confusion, anxiety, and depression. Further, the authors identified feelings of marginality and alienation, disturbances and disruptions of identity, and a heightened psychosomatic symptom level among the difficulties that immigrants faced. Similarly, Mui (1998) indicated that immigrants are likely to experience health problems because of “the stresses associated with immigration, language barriers, acculturation, poverty, illnesses, social isolation, perceived dissatisfaction of family support, family discord, financial difficulty, and splitting of households” (Mui, 1998, p. 160).

In a cross-sectional analysis of the psychological symptoms related to significant independent contributors among recent immigrants, Miller, Sorokin, Wilbur, and Chandler (2004) discovered depression to be one of the most serious health problems that immigrants experienced. In a number of studies, several variables (age, length of residence in the United States, gender, self-rated health, living arrangement, and perceived satisfaction) are significant in predicting depressive symptoms in immigrants; however, age and length of residence in the
United States are highly correlated with depression. Collectively, the studies of immigrants suggest that age at immigration to be constantly correlated to the psychological symptoms in immigrants. Individuals who immigrated during or after their middle age tend to have high rates of depressive symptoms and have greater difficulty adapting than younger immigrants (Birman & Tyler, 1994; Ritsner & Ponizovsky, 1999). Moreover, the length of residence in the host country has been regarded as a significant predictor in the study of psychological symptoms in immigrants. Previous studies found longer length of time in the new country to be related to lower depression scores (Kim & Rew, 1994). On the contrary, some studies reported length of residence in the host country to be inconsistently related to depression in some immigrants (Miller & Chandler, 2002). Pickwell (1999) addressed an increase in depressive symptoms over time in some immigrants. Several studies suggested immigrants to be vulnerable to psychological distress in the form of depressive symptoms (Burnette & Mui, 1994, 1996; Mui, 1996a, 1996b; Mui & Burnette, 1996).

Depression is one of the risk factors associated with suicide (Lapierre, Pronovost, Dube, & Delisle, 1992), and 20% of all late-life suicides are due to depressive symptoms (American Psychiatric Association, 1998). Yu (1986) found that the suicide rate for elderly Chinese immigrants has been much higher than the rate for their white counterparts and U.S.-born older Chinese Americans. Although there is evidence that depression is the most common psychological problem among all elderly people and that it may occur frequently in elderly immigrants, ethnic elderly groups and elderly immigrants were rarely included in the studies.

Furthermore, researchers found immigrant children and adolescents to be at a higher risk for mental health problems than nonimmigrant youth (Blake, Ledsky, Goodenow, & O’Donnell, 2001; Yeh, Arora, Inose, Okubo, Li, & Greene, 2003). For example, Sue and Frank (1973) found
immigrant youth to experience more isolation, loneliness, and nervousness, as well as a higher level of anxiety, than their peers from mainstream society. Similarly, many researchers also reported immigrant children and adolescents to be confronted with acculturation stress and to have lower self-esteem, a greater level of interpersonal and intrapersonal distress, and more external locus of control than later-generation immigrant youth and other adolescents in the host country (Abe & Zane, 1990; Homma-True, 1997; Padilla et al., 1985; Pang, Mizokawa, Mourishima, & Olstad, 1985). In spite of the findings of numerous studies, they found that immigrant youth are at increased risk for mental health problems and emotional difficulties during acculturation, and that researchers may have overlooked the health and mental health needs of immigrant children and adolescents.

Particularly, the following possible reasons further explain why health concerns of Asian immigrant youth are overlooked in a number of studies. First, there is a stereotype of Asians as the “model minority” which constructs the misconception that all Asian immigrant youth are self-confident, academically successful, and mentally healthy (Kim & Yeh, 2002). Thus, Asian immigrant youth’s increased risk for physical and mental health problems associated with adjustment difficulties are veiled due to this dangerous perception. The second reason for underestimating the numbers of Asian immigrant youth struggling with mental health problems is their cultural coping patterns, which emphasize interdependent relationships and familial commitments (Yeh, Arora, Inose, Okubo, Li, & Greene, 2003). For example, Asian immigrant youth tend to seek mental health assistance from family members – parents, relatives, and siblings – while dealing with their mental health problems rather than from mental health professionals (Root, 1985; Suan & Tyler, 1990; Yeh & Wang, 2000). Furthermore, they tend to discuss their mental health problems with friends (Atkinson, Whiteley, & Gim, 1990; Mau &
Jepsen, 1988; Yeh & Inose, 2002; Yeh & Wang, 2000) and community members such as religious leaders and colleagues rather than counselors and psycho-therapists (Solberg, Ritsma, Davis, Tata, & Jolly, 1994). Lastly, Asian culture emphasizes the suppression of emotion, which is in contrast to Western culture, where displaying of emotion is encouraged (McCarty et al., 1999). Therefore, teachers and mental health professionals hardly noticed the Asian immigrant youth’s health problems due to this cultural difference.

Language Barriers

Most immigrant groups experience language barriers during the integration process. According to Kretsedemas (2005), language barriers are one of the formidable obstacles facing different immigrant groups and, as a result, are primarily responsible for the fact that immigrants who have a language limitation tend to experience difficulties in communication or in assimilating into the host country. Many immigrants are unable to adapt to changes in communication because they lack language proficiency in the host culture (Chang, 1977). A number of researchers have reported that language acquisition upon migration into a new environment is a major challenge for immigrants, and that the challenges caused by lack of language competency are prevalent in every angle of their lives (Kim, 2001; Yeh & Inose, 2002; Yeh, Arora, Inose, Okubo, Li, & Greene, 2003). In addition, low levels of host language proficiency are a key obstacle to establishing relationships and maintaining the social interaction between immigrants and mainstream people. The reason is that individuals who have difficulties due to the insufficient proficiency in the host country language tend to isolate themselves from the host society (Kim, 2001), which often may lead to mental health problems (Yeh & Inose, 2002). Some studies found a strong correlation between language-acquiring patterns and an immigrant’s age. The research on the immigrants’ language proficiency indicated that younger
adults have a tendency to acquire the host language more rapidly and achieve high levels of proficiency than older adults (Furnham, 1984), and the children of immigrants and later-generation immigrants tend to be bilingual and proficient in the host language rather than the original language (Will, 1999). However, immigrants who are physically distinctive from the individuals of the host country, particularly Asian ethnic groups, will always be recognized as different regardless of their language proficiency (Wong, 1995).

Furthermore, it is typical for Asian ethnic groups to encounter adjustment problems and experience forms of discrimination while in the United States due to their limited English skills, which are different from those of European ethnic groups (Kim, 2001; Yeh, Arora, Inose, Okubo, Li, & Greene, 2003). Wong (1995) firmly stated that Asian ethnic groups, including Asian Americans born in the United States, will always be labeled as different no matter how close they are to the individuals in the host nation or how proficient they are in their use of the English language, values, perceptions, needs, and behavior. This has significant implications in terms of racial-ethnic disparities and challenges in the research of diverse populations, including Korean immigrants in the United States.

Racism and Prejudice: Global Perspectives

Most immigrants have experienced discrimination and/or racism. Bergin (2002) clearly demonstrated in *Maori Sport and Cultural Identity in Australia* that many New Zealand immigrants, particularly Maori immigrants in Australia were discriminated against due to the Bondi ‘urban myth’ that indicated New Zealand immigrants gathered together in the Bondi beach to have a lazy time at the expense of the Australian taxpayer. In fact, the Maori people resided throughout metropolitan Sydney and only a few Maori people actually lived in the Bondi Beach area. Even though there was not enough factual basis for this myth, the Bondi ‘urban myth’ is
still pervasive and the majority of New Zealand (and Maori) immigrants in Australia are continuously discriminated against because of negative stereotypes.

A number of researchers also reported that immigrants and minority groups were discriminated against due to their different physical appearance and/or low levels of English proficiency (Handlin, 1959; Yeh, Arora, Inose, Okudo, Li, & Greene, 2003). The experience of Asian immigrants in the United States was similar to that of other immigrant groups: They all faced an economic adjustment period and their economic opportunities were severely limited by racial discrimination. According to Kim (1981), the Korean immigrants who settled on the West Coast of the United States were exposed to the ‘anti-Oriental movements’. “When the anti-Oriental movement in California was in full force at the turn of the 20th century, the Koreans were lumped together with the Chinese and Japanese as Mongolians, and all were subject to the same discrimination” (Kim, 1981, p.22). In particular, the lives of the early Korean immigrants were greatly restricted by open discrimination. According to Song (2004), their lives were limited “not only by immigration laws, which separated them from their families, but also by such explicitly anti-Asian Laws as California’s 1901 Anti-Miscegenation Law, which prohibited their intermarriage with whites, and its 1913 Alien Land Law, which prevented them from owning land” (Song, 2004, p.11). It is thus assumed that Asian immigrants in the United States experienced difficulties in their quest for the upward socioeconomic mobility because of anti-miscegenation laws and social conditions.

Brief History of Korean Immigrants in the United States

Over the past 30 years, the immigrants from diverse cultures have taken residence in the United States, and research scholars have studied their needs and importance in society, making
ethnic minorities a critical area of examination. Even though immigrants who came to the United States from different cultures experienced similar adjustment problems, such as identity crisis, cultural and social conflict, health problems, language barriers, and discrimination, the challenges that each ethnic group encountered were unique. Until recently, however, many studies still grouped all Europeans, Asians and Pacific Islanders, or Latinos together, despite heterogeneity within subgroups (Kandula, Kersey, & Lurie, 2004). The uniqueness of one group, the history of Korean immigration, particularly the characteristics of sport and sport behavior is focused upon closely.

Unlike other minority groups, such as European and Latino ethnic groups, Asian Americans tend to establish strong ethnic communities and maintain the economic structure and previous lifestyles and social network without sudden cultural adjustment and conflict in the host society. Historically, Asian Americans have accepted different treatment and racism, including economic and social discrimination, without expressing strong protest; therefore, they have frequently been represented as “the silent minority” or “the quiet Americans” (Oh, 1994). In addition, there is an existing stereotype of Asian Americans as the “model minority,” despite the claims of several studies that the “model minority” image is not a realistic representation of Asians (Lee, 1996; Lee & Zhan, 1998; Sodowsky & Carey, 1987; Uba, 1994; Yeh, Arora, Inose, Okudo, Li, & Greene, 2003; Yu & Berryman, 1996; Zheng & Berry, 1991). However, this stereotype has been used as a “hegemonic device” by individuals who have dominant power in racial hierarchy (Lee, 1996); thus, the dangerous perceptions that all Asian Americans are hardworking, academically and economically successful, superior in math and science related subjects, and psychologically healthy are continuously maintained (Kim & Yeh, 2002). These
stereotypic labels have put Asian Americans on a different standard and have made it difficult for them to acculturate into U.S. society.

Due to the short immigration history and lack of Western researchers’ acknowledgement of the differences among the Asian ethnic groups, research on Korean immigrants has been relatively limited compared with that of other subgroups such as Chinese and Japanese immigrants (Oh, 1994). Although many conditions were not much different from those of other Asian ethnic groups, it is clear that Korean immigration history begins with experiences and conditions that are different from those of the other groups. The history of Korean immigration to the United States can be examined in numerous ways; nonetheless, many scholars agree that there are three major waves of Korean immigration (Choy, 1979; Hurh & Kim, 1984a; Kim & Patterson, 1974; Oh, 1994).

During the nineteenth century, only a small number of Koreans came to the United States. They consisted primarily of political exiles, students, and ginseng peddlers, but with only about 50 individuals, too small to be recognized as the first immigrant flow (Kim, 1981; Kwon, 1997). The first visible wave of Korean immigration to the United States is known as “labor immigration (1903-1924)”. In January 1903, a group of 121 Korean immigrants arrived in Hawaii on a U.S. merchant ship, the S. S. Gaelic, to work as contract sugar plantation laborers in the Hawaiian Islands (Kwon, 1997). Between 1903 and 1905, a total of 7,226 Korean immigrants arrived at the Hawaiian shores on 65 ships to work in plantations in Hawaii (Hurh & Kim, 1984a; Kim, 1981; Kwon, 1977; Light & Bonacich, 1988; Yun, 1977). A majority of the early Korean immigrants to Hawaii were young males between the ages of 20 and 30, mostly unmarried, uneducated, and engaged before immigration in semi-skilled or unskilled occupations (Hurh & Kim, 1984a; Kim, 1981; Kwon, 1997; Park et al., 1990; Song, 2004). Korean immigrant
laborers worked temporarily on the Hawaiian plantations, and by 1907 approximately 2,000 of the first-wave immigrants left Hawaii and moved to urban areas in Hawaii and the U.S. mainland (Kwon, 1997; Park et al., 1990). Like other Asian ethnic groups, Korean immigrants later formed ethnic neighborhoods, called “Koreantowns,” and permanently settled in urban cities of the United States.

The first wave of Korean immigration was spurred by several factors, but a number of studies emphasized that the main facilitating factor of Korean immigration to the United States can be explained within the international capitalist system perspective (Kwon, 1997; Park et al., 1990). According to this perspective, the labor market conditions in the U.S. had high demand for cheap labor; also, the strikebreakers needed to serve the economic needs of the U.S. sugar business. The reason was that the wage to recruit European laborers was much higher than for Asian laborers. Besides, a number of Japanese workers organized strikes for higher wages, which were significantly increased between 1900 and 1905. Consequently, the sugar planters employed Koreans as cheap laborers and strikebreakers against the Japanese laborers for their business. Through the numerous meetings held by substantial cooperation between the chief of the U.S. delegation and the representatives of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association and the East-West Development Company (U.S. recruiting agencies), Korean immigration to Hawaii was accelerated extensively (Kwon, 1997).

However, the Japanese government prohibited the Korean immigration to the United States during the period of Japan’s 1910-1945 colonial rule of Korea for the following reasons. First, the Japanese government wanted to protect Japanese workers in Hawaii from the competition of Korean laborers because sugar planters recruited Koreans as the strikebreakers against Japanese laborers, who initiated the organized strikes in their demand of higher wages.
Second, the Japanese government wanted to ban Korean immigration to the United States for military and economic reasons because they needed Koreans as military conscripts and laborers to construct factories, buildings, and roads for the military purpose and to increase the agricultural productivity, especially rice production. As a result, the first wave of Korean immigration to the United States was ceased during the colonial period; furthermore, the admission of early Korean immigrants was completely curtailed due to the Immigration Act of 1924, known as the Oriental Exclusion Law (Kwon, 1997; Park et al., 1990). During the colonial period, only family members were allowed to immigrate to the United States; therefore, approximately 1,100 Korean picture brides arrived in Hawaii from Korea between 1910 and 1924 through the picture marriages, arranged marriages based on the exchange of photographs between unknown parties who selected spouses for each other (Hurh & Kim, 1984a; Kim, 1981; Kwon, 1997; Park et al., 1990). However, not only immigration of Korean laborers but also the inflow of Korean picture brides to the United States was stopped completely in 1924.

The second wave of Korean immigration, called “war immigration (1951-1964),” occurred during and after the Korean War of 1950-1953. Between 1951 and 1964, approximately 6,500 young brides of U.S. military servicemen, 6,300 war orphans, and 6,000 students came to the United States (Hurh & Kim, 1984a). Despite the enactment of the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924, most of them legally immigrated to the United States during this period due to the special circumstance, the Korean War (1950-1953). The wives of U.S. soldiers who served in the Korean War and adopted war orphans came to the United States as immediate relatives of U.S. citizens; therefore, they were not subject to the restricted groups of the Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the Oriental Exclusion Law (Kwon, 1997). The three major groups during the Korean War era (wives of U.S. servicemen, adopted children, and students) continuously formed the
significant components of Korean immigration to the United States, and the great number of professional workers, such as nurses, were also admitted to the United States in the period following the Korean War.

The characteristics of the second wave of Korean immigrants were extremely different from those of the first-wave Korean immigrants. According to Park et al., “the early immigrants had a sex ratio of 10 males to 1 female, whereas the Korean War era immigrants had a sex ratio of 1 male to 3.5 females” (Park et al., 1990, p.8). Thus, a massive flow of war brides, mostly young women between the ages of 20 and 30, during the period 1951-1964, is largely responsible for the high proportion of female immigrants entering the United States. In this context, most of the second wave of Korean immigrants reported no occupational background at the time of their immigration to the United States and came from the lower socio-economic classes in their home country (Kim, 1981). For the second-wave immigrants, adapting to a new environment without familial and socialization problems was quite a difficult task because they were mostly young women and children.

The third wave of Korean immigration to the United States, called “family immigration,” began with the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, which discontinued the discriminatory national origin quota system (Oh, 1994). The passage of the Immigration Act of 1965 significantly affected the ethnic-racial composition of the immigrant population due to the abolition of the national origin quota system, and immigrants from all regions were allowed to immigrate to the United States for the first time (Foner, 1987; Hurh & Kim, 1984a; Kim, 1981; Portes & Bach, 1985). The new immigration law set an annual limit of only 310,000 immigrants: 120,000 immigrants from the Western Hemisphere, including North America, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean; 170,000 immigrants from the Eastern Hemisphere, including
all other continents and islands; and 20,000 individuals from any individual country (Hurh & Kim, 1984a; Kwon, 1997). After the new immigration policy of 1965, “the percentage of European immigrants decreased to less than 25 percent and continued to decline” (Kwon, 1997, p.17). On the other hand, the immigrants to the United States from Asia, Latin America, the Pacific regions, the Caribbean, and Africa dramatically increased. The number of Korean immigrants – like many other Asian immigrants – has rapidly increased since 1965. The population of Korean immigrants to the United States dramatically accelerated from 70,000 Korean immigrants in the 1970s to 355,000 in 1980 and to 800,000 in 1990, and Korea was ranked in the top five countries sending immigrants to the United States based on the statistics from the 1990 U.S. Census Bureau (Song, 2004). For the United States’ manpower needs in specific occupations during this period, the Immigration Act of 1965 affected the characteristics of the third-wave Korean immigrants, who were different from the older immigrants.

In 1968, the Immigration Act of 1965 took effect and immigrants were admitted to the United States regardless of their national origin; however, a new form of selection for entry still operated under the authority of Department of Immigration and Department of Labor. According to Kim, “prospective immigrants with specific skills must find, before their entry to the United States, an employer willing to hire them; and they must obtain from him a document certifying their prospective employment in order to receive the secretary of labor’s certificate of clearance” (Kim, 1981, p. 29) establishing the following provision: Aliens are not qualified for immigration if they are “seeking to enter the United States, for the purpose of performing skilled or unskilled labor, unless the Secretary of Labor has determined and certified to the Secretary of State and to the Attorney General that (a) there are not sufficient workers in the United States who are able, willing, qualified, and available at the time of application for a visa and admission to the United States.”
States and at the place to which the alien is destined to perform such skilled or unskilled labor, and (b) the employment of such aliens will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of the workers in the United States similarly employed” (Cassell, 1966, p.107). Therefore, highly educated and highly skilled Korean immigrants from the urban middle-class were the majority during the initial period of the third-wave immigration because their specific skills and professions were delineated as contributing to the economic development of the United States; thus, they were qualified for admission. According to Kwon (1997), the high pre-immigration educational backgrounds and managerial, technical, and professional occupations of recent Korean immigrants clearly show that there has been a noticeable level of “brain drain” from Korea to the United States. For instance, a massive number of Korean medical professionals, including physicians, nurses, dentists, and pharmacists, came to the United States shortly after the change of the immigration policy in 1965 in response to the high demand in the medical industry for foreign medical professionals willing to work for lower salaries during this period.

In 1972, almost half of the Korean immigrants came to the United States under the occupation preference categories (Kim & Min, 1992). However, further amendments in 1976 to the Immigration Act of 1965 downgraded medical professional immigrants from the third preference to the sixth preference in order to protect U.S. jobs from new immigrants and illegal aliens (Kim, 1981). Thus, most Korean immigrants were usually forced to engage in low skilled and physically demanding jobs and experienced downward mobility. Especially at the initial stage of settlement, Korean immigrants in the United States experienced difficulty in converting their high educational and occupational background in Korea into post-immigration status (Barringer et al., 1990). Even though they experienced utmost difficulties during the period of
extremely hard work, most of the third-wave immigrants usually became better established and economically successful following the initial adaptation period (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004).

Sport and Culture among Korean Immigrants

In the pluralist view, the idea of equality of opportunity is fundamentally grounded in the capitalist societies, and this pluralistic idea is derived from the important national documents. People firmly believe that sport provides equal opportunity for participation and encourages each individual to receive economic benefits and social mobility commensurate with their efforts and talents (Sage, 1998). However, sport participation patterns and recreational activity preferences in Korea have been shaped by structures of social class inequality. Modern sport in Korea was initially introduced by Christian missionaries in the late 19th century and, along with other recreational activities, gradually gained popularity from subsequent government-led promotion of sport, for mainly anti-communist and defense purposes during the post-Korean War period (1950-1961) and for the assertion of economic and nationalistic foci during the former president Park Chunghee’s government (1961-1979), which stressed the importance of physical fitness for the nation. Moreover, media coverage of sports dramatically increased and professional leagues were established following the 1988 Olympic Games, which were held in Seoul. However, social class stratification in sport participation patterns and recreational activity preferences is predominantly recognized in terms of Confucian elements in the Korean society.

Traditionally, cultural aspects and attitudes toward sports inherited from the Confucian philosophy are deeply rooted in Korean society and have influenced general participation patterns and preferences for physical activity. Confucianism focuses mainly on three elements: emphasis on formalism, a value for scholarship, and the ideology in the natural dominance of
male over female (Mangan & Ha, 2001). According to Stodolska and Alexandris (2004), “Confucian elements that are still pervasive in the Korean culture include cultural preference for passivity rather than activity, and focus on collectivity rather than on the individual” (p. 384). Therefore, the socioeconomic elite class prefers non-competitive and non-stressful activity rather than active and strenuous physical activity, which is considered as the physical activity involving the proper energy and physical effort for most people. They are more likely to participate in recreational sport activities, such as golf and skiing, while low socioeconomic groups participate in organized team sports, such as soccer and basketball.

In addition, social inequality in sport participation patterns and recreational physical activity preferences is primarily related to various constraints such as lack of time, physical exhaustion, and financial difficulty. Several studies indicate that the participation rates in recreational sport activities of individuals from the low socioeconomic class are quite low because the members of the working class usually hold several jobs concurrently, instead of having a fulltime job, and work long hours with hardly any leisure time (Juniu, 2000; Shinew et al., 1995; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). Besides, the lack of interest in embracing an active leisure life as a result of the physical exhaustion after the physically demanding jobs and the lowest wage just for the basic survival needs is responsible for their low levels of participation in sport and recreational activities. Although facilities and community resources, such as public parks, are available for working class groups, these numerous constraints persistently challenge the equal opportunities and recreational participation patterns in sports.

Thus, involvement in sport and recreational activities is not equally allocated among the social classes and certain sports effectively represent the dichotomous classification between high socioeconomic class sport and low socioeconomic class sport. For example, members of the
upper elite class participate in certain sports such as golf to display their economic and social success. Moreover, they have restricted access to certain sports such as golf, tennis, and sailing, which maintain steep membership fees and rules for member approval; thus, the members of other social classes face dual barriers – both economic and social -- to access these sports, which also serve as signs of success in business and as symbols of gaining respect and power (Stodolska & Alexandrix, 2004).

In Korean society, the social structure of male dominance and superiority over females continually promotes the hegemonic ideology through various cultural practices, and sport is considered as one of the powerful cultural practices to construct, maintain, and reproduce the dominant ideology in accordance with the values and interests of dominant groups. The gender inequality in Korean sport still continues, and patriarchal ideology inherited from the traditional Confucian values on gender in Korean society is securely entrenched in society and cultural practices. Sociologist Irving Zeitlin (1973) claimed that “the social scientist who studies a social structure without studying its history will never truly understand any given state of that structure or the forces operating to change it” (p.14). Therefore, it is essential to examine the gender stratification in Korean sport in the historical context because of its close relationship to political, economic, and other cultural aspects.

The Confucian philosophy formed the foundation of the social values and cultural preference in the Chosun dynasty (1392-1896) and emphasized cultural values such as conservative gender stereotypes and discriminative gender relations. According to Koh, “Confucian values strictly divided the domestic and social roles of male and female, and spread the notion of predominance of men over women, which defined women as subordinate to men” (Koh, 2003, p.69). Confucianism not only underrepresented the value of domestic labor but also
limited the opportunity for education and participation in sport. Gender differences of participation patterns and preference in physical activities and sport were greatly influenced by the Confucian values in Korean society. Traditionally, women’s physical activities were not in accordance with the Korean tradition of Confucianism until the early twentieth-century, and such cultural values still influence contemporary Korean society.

The political promotion of all areas of sport, the strong governmental financial support for international sport events, such as the Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988 and the FIFA World Cup Korea/Japan in 2002, and the success of Korean athletes in the United States (e.g., Se Ri Pak, the winner of the 2000 LPGA Championship) have all greatly influenced the increased number of opportunities for women to participate in various kinds of sport. Recreational sport participation patterns and preferences, gender inequality in sport, and recreational activities in Korea have manifested in terms of the social acceptability of sport and the particular patterns of spectatorship. The social acceptability in terms of perceived gender appropriateness of sport has been a critical element in deciding women’s participation and financial support from the sponsoring companies. In Korea, the stereotyped perceptions of the gender inappropriateness of certain sports has limited the female’s participation in various levels of sport, including youth, recreational, interscholastic and intercollegiate, and elite sports. The lack of popularity of, and participation in, certain sports perceived as masculine-type sports, such as soccer and basketball, has resulted in unbalanced financial support from the sponsoring companies and a shortage of females in the leadership and decision-making positions.

Furthermore, females’ enthusiasm for sports, especially those sports considered male-appropriate, is limited to that of silent spectatorship instead of active participation, and female spectators have particular patterns of expressing their enthusiasm. For example, international
sporting events, such as FIFA World Cup Korea/Japan in 2002, have been able to gain huge attention nationwide from both males and females, both foreigners and Koreans, and from diverse generations. However, females tend to remain quiet while men talk about soccer. Although many women enjoy watching a soccer match and discussing what they know about soccer, as soon as they attempt to address their love of soccer, for example, discussing rules and strategy, “curiosity comes up in such a phrase as ‘you know it very well for women’s standard’ or ‘I haven’t seen a woman like you talking about soccer’” (Tanaka, 2004, p.54). These responses represent patriarchal ideology and hierarchical gender relations that still dominate the Korean society. Thus, the females’ enthusiasm about sport is revealed in more feminine ways which are socially acceptable: They support the Korean National Team through on-line and off-line membership in the organized supporters’ clubs; they purchase the team shirt and transform it to be more feminine, trendy, and sexy style and then this transformed shirt is usually well dressed with other fashionable accessories, a mini-skirt, and high-heel sandals. Under the traditional Confucian values on gender, females may experience the different physical activity patterns compared with their counterparts, and confront the social and cultural limitations on their access to funds and social acceptance of certain sports.

The United States has an increasingly diverse population of many racial and ethnic minorities, including African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asians. According to Stodolska and Alexandris (2004), Caucasians now account for less than half of California’s population due to the swift growth of minority groups in the state, and this visible growth of minority groups in some states has changed the composition of the U.S. society. In contrast, Korea is composed nearly all of one race, Korean. Because of Korea’s distinctive population composition, the racially homogeneous nation, Korea, similar to other Asian countries, is easily
characterized as having a collectivist culture. Individuals in collectivist cultures, such as Korea, emphasize dependence, high level of attachment to their own ethnicity, loyalty and social values rather than individual values, social relationship with others based on trust, and idealism; in contrast to collectivist cultures, individualist cultures highlight independence, privacy, individual values, social relations based on contracts, and materialism (Kim, 2001).

Thus, the race issue in Korean society and sport is quite minimal, and every Korean shares the sense of intimacy and sense of full Korean citizenship, and they strengthen their ethnic identity when participating in sport and recreational activity. However, professional sport opportunities for athletes of foreign nationalities were typically restricted until the FIFA World Cup Korea/Japan in 2002. An acceptable atmosphere of diversity was gradually established due to the successful hosting of the global sporting event, the media spotlight on the leadership of Guus Hiddink, the first foreign head coach of the Korean National World Cup Team, and the passionate experience of being a member of national cheering squads and the World Cup celebration. The popular professional sport teams in Korea -- such as basketball, soccer, and baseball teams -- began to recruit players of foreign nationalities, and a great number of Korean fans became more familiar with the racial diversity and more attentive to the talented athletes regardless of their nationality. The circumstances of Korean sport have gradually changed over the past few decades; still, structural systems should continuously be emphasized to eliminate the formidable access barriers and racial inequality in sport settings, and participants from foreign nationalities may experience difficulties in accommodating to a homogeneous Korean society lifestyle.

As noted earlier, Koreans in collectivist cultures maintain a high level of ethnic attachment and social values in their daily lives, and their perceptions, interaction patterns,
behaviors, and traditions are deeply grounded in their own cultural characteristics. Hence, integration of most Korean immigrants into the United States will not occur quickly or consistently because they unconsciously adhere to their cultural beliefs and socially constructed value systems, which are noticeably different from those of the dominant society, the United States. These factors help explain the level of integration of Korean immigrants in the United States, particularly that of third-wave Korean immigrants after The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, despite their length of stay in the United States and their huge desire to assimilate entirely in the host society (Hurh & Kim, 1984a; Oh, 1994). A number of studies demonstrated that Korean immigrants experienced difficulties during the adaptation process either because of their cultural traits and language or because of their need for a sense of belonging and strong ethnic attachment (Fujii, 1976; Kim, 2001). Moreover, Korean immigrants typically tend to preserve their traditional culture, language, social relations, and practices rather than adapting to those of the host country.

Assimilation Models

Over the last five decades, many scholars (Barth, Basch, Blanc-Szanton, Campbell, Gans, Glick Schiller, Gordon, Keefe, LeVine, Padilla, Portes, Zhou, and Waters) in the fields of sociology, social psychology, political geography, cultural anthropology, migration studies, and ethnic and racial studies completed a number of research studies on immigrants using assimilation theories. The scholars’ research studies used assimilation theories to examine how immigrants come to share a general culture of the host country and to acquire equal opportunity in society in their process of adaptation. This process includes eventually abandoning old cultural patterns such as language, values, customs, and attitudes, for the adaptation of a new culture,
which shifts naturally and irreversibly toward assimilation (Zhou, 1997). Various assimilation
theories, based on this assimilation perspective, in the early literature of sociology and ethnic
studies, are conceptualized and used in the systematic framework of the assimilation concept

Gordon’s (1964) theoretical framework captures the complexity of the assimilation
process and introduces the distinction between “cultural assimilation” and “structural
assimilation.” According to Gordon, immigrants begin their adaptation to the host society
through “cultural assimilation,” which refers to the immigrants’ adoption of the cultural patterns
of the host society, such as acquisition of the language, personal values, and attitudes, which
allows immigrants to achieve a considerably high level of cultural assimilation. However, the
cultural assimilation does not automatically guarantee the other form of assimilation, “structural
assimilation,” which refers to the entry of individuals of an ethnic minority into the primary
group-level interaction with the dominant group through organizations and institutions. Unlike
cultural assimilation, structural assimilation depends on the dominant population’s acceptance of
the immigrant group by the dominant population; therefore, structural assimilation into the
mainstream is difficult to achieve due to immigrants’ immutable ascribed status (Hurh & Kim,
1984b; Kim, 1977). Nevertheless, Gordon asserts that most ethnic groups will eventually reduce
the differences in values and behavior and leave all of their distinctive ethnic traits, which are
regarded as the negative factors of complete assimilation to the dominant culture, as they pass
through the assimilation process, and they will eventually intermarry with the mainstream
population and enter its society on a primary-group level with the full acceptance by the
population in the host society (Gordon, 1964).
The traditional assimilation theory mainly assumes that with each succeeding year, immigrants want to join the mainstream society and eventually become more acceptable and similar to the individuals of host society and eventually succeed economically. However, since the 1960s this theory has met with challenges. In a number of recent research studies published in the 1980s and the 1990s, and with its application to the contemporary immigrants, the traditional assimilation perspective has been subject to intensive critique. Alba and Nee (1997), Alejandro Portes (1984), Hurh and Kim (1984b), Waters (1994), and Zhou (1997) argued that the traditional framework of assimilation did not determine the social and cultural heterogeneity in the United States and neglected the structural constraints. Still, the canonical account of traditional assimilation theory, provided by Milton Gordon and others, has great power for an understanding of the earlier waves of immigration and applying the basic theoretical conceptions of assimilation to the contemporary ethnic studies in the United States. However, recent sociological literature on assimilation emphasizes the need for more contemporary theories due to the following limitations of traditional theoretical approaches to assimilation: straight-line assimilation, normative applications, failure to recognize the racial distinctiveness, and the impact of economic opportunities.

In Gordon’s view, acculturation was a predominantly a one-way process (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004; Waters, 1994), with Gans (1973) and Sandberg (1973) concept of “straight-line assimilation” being used to describe the sequence of adjustment to the host country. This straight-line assimilation model assumes that immigrants and their descendants would completely melt into the mainstream society at the final stage of acculturation; that is, minority’s perceptions of social distance will significantly diminish and the prejudice and discrimination by the host society will also decline (Alba & Nee, 1997). However, the situation faced by the
growing number of recent immigrant groups, particularly nonwhite voluntary immigrants to the United States since 1965, differs in the assumptions of the traditional straight-line theory of assimilation. According to Hurh and Kim (1984b), nonwhite immigrants experienced a discrimination based on structural constraints, and were ethnically segregated from the dominant culture and society regardless of their complete assimilation, high level of social acceptance by the host society, socioeconomic status, and length of residence in the United States. Alba and Nee (1997) also emphasized that prejudice and discrimination could still be pervasive even when immigrants had structurally assimilated and acquired the complete acculturation to the host culture and society. Thus, the immigrants’ perception of structural constraints and restricted acceptance into the mainstream of the host society also limited their desire for social acceptance by the dominant population and, as a result, the immigrants demonstrated the resilience of ethnic awareness and even enhanced the ethnic attachment to their traditional culture for sustaining their sense of comfort, self-protection, and social recognition and ethnic identification (Hurh & Kim, 1984b; Kim, 2001; Portes, 1984). Even though both cultural and structural factors, such as length of stay in the United States, socioeconomic status, persisting cultural patterns, social distance, and social acceptance by the host society can sufficiently explain the integration rate, immigrants’ rising ethnic awareness and strong ethnic attachment are merely affected by those factors. Similar to the foregoing consideration, Korean immigrants are more likely to maintain their distinct ethnic identity regardless of the level of integration, and they are assimilated both culturally and socially only to a limited extent without altering or replacing any significant part of their traditional culture and social networks (Hurh & Kim, 1984a, 1984b; Mangiafico, 1988; Oh, 1994).
Furthermore, Gordon’s account has been criticized for being a normative conception of assimilation. Traditional assimilation theory assumes the existence of a homogeneous host society, and the term used by Milton Gordon (Gordon, 1964), “social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the core society at the primary group level,” (p.80) and his description about cultural standards, “middle-class cultural patterns of, largely, white Protestant, Anglo-Saxon origins,” (p.72) represent the view that ethnic groups can eventually acquire the complete acculturation by adopting the core culture, the White American Protestant’s culture. According to Warner and Srole (1945), the traditional account of assimilation by earlier social scientists holds the normative conceptions: In other words, the cultural characteristics of ethnic groups are categorized in the furthest point from the norm based on the standpoint of the host society and they discontinue to learn their “inferior” cultural traits and successfully adapt to a new culture, which is regarded as the norm, for the full acceptance from the host country. Therefore, the normative conceptions tend to be closely related to the hierarchical notion of cultural and racial acceptability, which ranges from White Protestant at the top to minority groups at the bottom, and assimilation theory based on the normative application could also remarkably support Gordon’s concept of Anglo-Conformity (Alba & Nee, 1997). However, the obvious problem with traditional assimilation theory has been accentuated as U.S. society has become more heterogeneous and as the immigrants of the contemporary era enter the society in which diverse subcultures and dynamic ethnic identities coexist (Alba & Nee, 1997; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004; Waters, 1994). Consequently, these immigrants, are exposed to interaction with not only the middle-class Anglo-Americans’ core culture but also with the members of different ethnic groups from diverse racial origins and different cultural traits during the assimilation process. It
is this extended relationship between different minority groups that is lacking in Gordon’s account (Alba & Nee, 1997).

The last limitation of the traditional assimilation theory was that assimilation is conceived consistent with the earlier waves of immigrants who arrived predominately from Europe between the 1920s and the 1950s. The descendants of earlier mass European immigration “could eventually assimilate because their European origins made them culturally and racially similar to U.S. ethnic core groups – those from the British Isles and some northern and western European countries” (Alba & Nee, 1997, p. 845). However, a number of sociological studies identified that most contemporary immigrants from non-European origins have distinctive cultural traits and have different ethnic patterns of assimilation and inclusion into the host society from those from European origins (Waters, 1994; Zhou, 1997), and the traditional assimilation theorists failed to acknowledge the existence of racial and cultural distinctiveness of many immigrant groups (Alba & Nee, 1997; Gans, 1979; Nagel, 2002; Portes & Rambaut, 1996).

In addition, recently arrived non-European immigrants face situations that differ from the conditions of the earlier waves of immigration from European origins, particularly in terms of immigrants’ economic opportunity. Alba and Nee (1997) emphasized that economic opportunities and their impact on occupational mobility are critical to the assimilation prospects of immigrants. During the period of mass immigration of Europeans in the early decades of the 20th century, the abundant existence of manufacturing jobs which required few work skills in an industrial economy ensured steady employment and upward social mobility necessary for adaptation to take place (Portes, 1997). In contrast, the U.S. contemporary economy has swiftly become “knowledge-intensive industries” (Zhou, 1997), which has led to the elimination of many low-skilled manufacturing jobs and the replacement of highly-skilled engineers and other
professionals. As a result of the impact of economic restructuring, contemporary immigrant laborers with low-level manufacturing jobs encounter more difficulty, a comparable low wage, instability of employment, and risk of experiencing downward mobility (Sassen, 1988). Therefore, assurance of a level of social mobility will be more difficult for the contemporary immigrants and their descendants, and the changed structure of economic opportunities has a negative impact on the disproportionate job opportunities of the majority of contemporary immigrants. As previously stated, the underlying assumptions of traditional theoretical approaches have been criticized for the following reasons: straight-line theory, concept of Anglo-conformity, and failure to recognize the racial and cultural distinctiveness and the impact of economic restructuring. Therefore, it is imperative to reformulate the assimilation theory which adequately describes the process of adaptation of the contemporary immigrants.

In a significant part of the research on contemporary immigration, it is well documented that many ethnic groups tend to resist the assimilation into the host society and maintain their distinct ethnic identity and demonstrate a strong attachment to their distinct cultural traits despite the length of residence in the United States, socioeconomic status, and the level of cultural and social integration (Hurh & Kim, 1984a; Mangiafico, 1988; Portes & Zhou, 1993). As Portes and Zhou (1993) theorized in The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants, the assimilation process has become segmented in today’s U.S. society. Instead of ultimate convergence into the unified mainstream core through the common path of integration as predicted by traditional assimilation theories, recent research has observed several distinct patterns of adaptation which are most likely to occur among contemporary immigrants and later-generation immigrants.
According to Portes and Zhou (1993) and Waters (1994) and in context of assimilation theory, there are three possible modes of adaptation. The first mode of adaptation replicates the pattern of the traditional assimilation theory, where “time-honored portrayal of growing acculturation and parallel integration into the white middle-class” happens (Portes & Zhou, 1993, p.82). Immigrants, mostly White Eurocentric immigrants, acculturate and integrate into the normative structure of middle-class U.S.A. by adopting the mainstream values and expectations; however, this pattern of adaptation is inaccessible to certain groups of immigrants due to the prejudice and discrimination and other barriers imposed by the host society (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). The second possible path of the adaptation is the downward mobility pattern, the opposite direction of the first mode of adaptation, which leads to the acculturation into the underclass. This pattern of assimilation is often taken by some immigrant groups, particularly racially distinct immigrants and their descendents, who find their upward social mobility being obstructed by discrimination in mainstream society and by the impact of economic restructuring (Portes, 1994; Portes & Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1994). The third possible pattern of adaptation associates rapid economic integration with preservation of the immigrants’ ethnic values and tight solidarity.

According to the third pattern of adaptation, several immigrant communities produce economic opportunities such as coethnic firms and provide the resources for their ethnic groups, and many immigrants tend to promote their economic success by maintaining their strong ethnic attachment in the United States. According to Portes and Zhou (1993), “such community-mediated opportunities provide a solution to the race between material resources and second-generation aspirations not available through competition in the open labor market” (p.87). In addition, referring to the study by Warner and Srole (1945), Waters (1994) mentioned that “it is
the socially mobile white ethnics whose ties to the ethnic group and the ethnic identity decline. It is the individuals who are stuck in the lower classes who turn to their ethnic identities and groups as a sort of consolation prize” (Waters, 1994, p. 817).

However, some scholars argue that perspectives of the contemporary assimilation theory have created a severe dichotomy between the circumstances of earlier generation immigrants and those of the present immigrants (Nagel, 2002). These theoretical perspectives underestimate the tremendous desire among many contemporary immigrants, even as they tend to preserve their ethnic identities and distinctive cultural traits, to be included in the host society’s core culture, which is precisely defined as “middle-class cultural patterns of, large, white Protestant, Anglo-Saxon origins” in Gordon’s account (Gordon, 1964, p.72). While Portes and Zhou’s (1993) segmented assimilation theory, as well as the perspectives of other contemporary theories in the field of ethnic studies, provides a definitive critique of traditional assimilation theory and adequately describes the diverse paths of the adaptation process, this has also generated some problematic assumptions about immigrants and the dynamics of relationship between immigrants and the host society. Thus, it is important to examine the influencing factors of the immigrants’ assimilation pattern without focusing on either the traditional framework of assimilation or contemporary assimilation perspectives.

Determinants of Immigrants’ Adaptation Process

Zhou (1997) identified two sets of determinants influencing immigrants’ adaptation in *Segmented Assimilation: Issues, Controversies, and Recent Research on the New Second Generation*, including individual-level factors and structural factors. The first set of determinants consists of “the most important individual-level factors influencing immigrant adaptation [and
they] include education and other factors associated with exposure to American society, such as aspiration, English language ability, place of birth, age upon arrival, and length of residence in the United States” (Zhou, 1997, p. 984). Hence, the high level of educational attainment, stronger aspiration and motivation for social acceptance by the host society, proficiency in English, level of exposure to U.S. culture such as that experienced by those who are U.S.-born or those immigrating at a younger age, longer U.S. residence, or a higher intermarriage rate facilitate the successful assimilation process. As Portes (1984) especially noted, “education is frequently mentioned as a powerful assimilative force for two reasons: first, educated immigrants are generally more acceptable to dominant-group members; and second, education facilitates overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers which prevent access into broader social circles” (Portes, 1984, p. 384).

The second set of determinants of the immigrants’ adaptation process includes structural-level factors, consisting of racial status, socioeconomic status, and place of residence (Zhou, 1997). The racial status of the majority of contemporary immigrants sets them apart from the mainstream society. According to Portes and Zhou (1993), the racial status and the lighter skin color of European immigrants and their descendents reduced a major barrier to enter the host society; therefore, “the process of assimilation depended largely on individuals decisions to leave the immigrant culture behind and embrace American ways” (Portes & Zhou, 1993, p. 76). However, such an advantage based on the racial status undoubtedly does not exist for the contemporary non-white immigrant groups. Even though many contemporary immigrants never experienced prejudice based on their racial status or skin color in their homelands, later-generation immigrant adolescents and children, especially those whose phenotypes resemble darker-color ethnic groups, have confronted quite difficult conditions to enter the mainstream
community in the United States (Portes, 1995; Waters, 1994; Zhou, 1997). Moreover, their immutable ascribed physical features – “non-white” – may be regarded as disabled and vulnerable based on the normative conceptions which are pervasive in the Western capitalist society and the racial status of the majority of contemporary immigrants and their offspring create the major barrier to upward social mobility (Portes, 1995; Waters, 1994).

Besides, the socioeconomic status has been identified as the second variable of the structural-level factors. According to Zhou (1997), the socioeconomic status is the most critical factor for the immigrants’ and their descendants’ adaptation because “it determines the type of neighborhoods in which children live, the quality of schools they attend, and the group of peers with which they associate” (Zhou, 1997, p. 987). In a number of studies, socioeconomic status has been significantly addressed as the key dimension of the adaptation of immigrants, which is measured by indicators such as level of education, occupation, and income (Alba & Nee, 1997; Portes, 1984; Zhou, 1997). Zhou (1997) asserted, “Those from middle-class backgrounds are able to benefit from financially secure families, good schools, safe neighborhoods, and other supportive formal and informal organizations, which ensure better life chances for them” (p. 988). Thus, the factors in determining the higher socioeconomic status, usually conflated with the upward social mobility, should lead to complete and successful adaptation.

Lastly, the residential concentration, the third variable of the structural-level factors influencing immigrant adaptation, is intertwined with previously mentioned two variables of the second set of determinants, racial status and socioeconomic status. Referring to the study by Gil and Vega (1996), Zhou (1997) mentioned that “while networks of ethnic social relations function as an important source of support and control. Recent research has found evidence to indicate that the cohesion of family and ethnic ties tends to deteriorate with longer duration of U.S.
residence, as in the case of refugees from Central America” (p. 998). Similarly, Hurh and Kim (1984b) noted, in Adhesive Sociological Adaptation of Korean Immigrants in the U.S.: An Alternative Strategy of Minority Adaptation, that “the immigrants’ strong and persisting ethnic attachment may largely be a function of involuntary factors, such as ethnic segregation inherent in the U.S. society structure, limited adaptive capacities of the immigrants, and economic and ecological conditions of the host society at a particular time” (pp. 189-190).

In summary, major determinants of immigrants’ adaptation process can include individual-level factors – educational achievement, desire to gain a social acceptance by the mainstream society, language proficiency, citizenship, time of immigration, and intermarriage rate – and structural-level factors – race, socioeconomic status and levels of the residential concentration. In addition to the perspectives of theoretical framework, these two sets of determinants, not only individual influencing factors but also interaction between the variables, make a significant contribution to understanding the immigrants’ adaptation in the host society. However, the adaptation process is quite complex in the contemporary era, and none of these perspectives completely explain the assimilation process of immigrants. Therefore, careful consideration must be exercised when explaining the state of assimilation for recent immigrants. In the following section, I will highlight the role of sport and physical activity as an assimilation factor in the adaptation process of recent immigrants from Korea using the framework of Portes and Zhou’s (1993) segmented assimilation theory.

Role of Sport in the Adaptation Process

Consistent with Portes and Zhou’s (1993) segmented assimilation theory, as well as with other contemporary theories in the field of ethnic studies, the major role of sport in the
adaptation process of immigrant groups has been divided into three parts. First, the role of sport and physical activity in the adaptation of immigrants into the mainstream culture will be explored; second, the role of sport in their acculturation into their sub-culture will be discussed; and, lastly, the ethnic identity preservation and promotion of group solidarity through the participation in sport and physical activity are examined.

**Sport participation as a factor in promoting integration into the mainstream**

Involvement in sport has played an important role in promoting the immigrants’ acculturation into the mainstream culture and in facilitating the closer inter-group relationships among immigrants, other ethnic minority members, and mainstream White Americans. Stodolska and Alexandris (2004), from their study of role of recreational sport in the adaptation of Korean and Polish immigrants in the United States, reported the following:

> Participation in activities such as golf gave them a unique opportunity to spend free time outdoors among lush greens, which was a highly desirable experience for Koreans accustomed to urban environments. Moreover, it helped them establish friendships with mainstream Americans, maintain business-related contacts, and solidify their position within the local community (p.400).

Moreover, Stodolska and Alexandris identified that the initial contact with the members of other ethnic minority groups and mainstream White Americans in an informal setting was during recreational sport and physical activity. Those findings indicated that immigrants were more likely to use sport as a vehicle to develop the interpersonal contacts with mainstream Americans and other ethnic group members residing in the United States. To do so they became exposed to adopt cultural patterns, values, and behaviors of the mainstream society which are distinct from their own culture (Allison, 1979). Participation in sport and physical activity
deepened the cultural understanding between groups and the exposure of immigrants to the new ways of life in the host society, thereby accelerating the acculturation process.

Integration into the mainstream society may occur more easily in non-competitive sport settings, where communications and social interactions with other ethnic group members take place naturally with limited stress and anxiety (Kim, 2001; Shaw, 1985). On that account, proficiency in language is an important factor of integration into the mainstream culture. In Stodolska’s (1998) research on assimilation and leisure constraints in immigrant populations, he asserted that immigrants with inadequate language ability commonly experience uneasiness in the mainstream society and that the language difficulties limit their sport participation choices. According to Kim (2001), therefore, “the level of integration of immigrants is closely related to patterns and preferences of leisure activities and experiences which themselves influence and are influenced by language and other forms of cultural learning” (p.38). While a number of studies suggested that involvement in mainstream sports and physical activity have provided some indications of the immigrants’ level of integration into the host society (Bergin, 2002; Burdsey, 2006; Kim, 2001), some scholars argued that the types of physical activities in which immigrants participate may be an insufficient indicator to interpret their acculturation level (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). Therefore, the role of sport and physical activity in the process of adaptation to the host environment should be interpreted with consideration of diverse ethnic minority groups and intramural dynamics found in immigrant communities.

Assimilation of Values of the Non-Mainstream Ethnic Groups

According to Stodolska and Alexandris (2004), the adaptation patterns of Korean and Polish immigrants in their study could not follow Portes and Zhou’s (1993) and Waters’ (1994) assertion that certain immigrant groups, particularly racially distinct minorities and their
descendants, assimilate values of the U.S. underclass. Instead of adapting values of the U.S. underclass, they had the tendency to acculturate to the sub-culture of their own ethnic community. Therefore, the role of sport and physical activity was absolutely exclusive in this context because the result of Stodolska and Alexandris’s (2004) study expanded Portes and Zhou’s (1993) and Waters’ (1994) original classification and introduced an additional possible adaptation path that immigrants may follow in addition to the three modes of adaptation in the segmented assimilation theory proposed by Portes and Zhou (1993) and Waters (1994).

The popularity of certain sports and physical activity, sub-culture sports, among specific immigrant communities in the United States has been identified in several studies (Connor, 1985; Fitzpatrick, 1971; Hutchison, 1987; Hutchison & Fidel, 1984; Portes & Bach, 1985). For example, as Stodolska and Alexandris’s (2004) study of recreational sport participation of Korean immigrants showed, the first generation middle-class Korean immigrants residing in the United States enjoyed playing sports such as tennis and golf in their ethnic community, and “these sporting disciplines were not necessarily popular in the home countries of immigrants, but they had become a focus of interest among ethnic immigrant populations in the host country” (p. 403). Since participation in certain sports became one of the defining features of the sub-culture, adopting new subculture sports represents a particularly important sign of the sub-cultural assimilation.

Preservation of Ethnic Values

While sport promoted the immigrants’ acculturation into the mainstream culture or assimilation of values of sub-cultures of their own ethnic community, for some ethnic group members, sport participation helped to reinforce their ethnic identity and to solidify ties with their ethnic groups. According to Stodolska and Alexandris (2004), “several of our Korean
interviewees stressed the importance of golf that helped in re-establishing and solidifying ties among high school and university alumni clubs in Chicago” (p.404). In addition, a number of studies have shown that involvement in sports and physical activities within their own ethnic groups strengthened bonds with other members of their community and allowed immigrants to socialize with ethnic community members with whom they enjoyed sharing the warm feelings, togetherness, and common experience they encountered during the adaptation process (Bergin, 2002; Kim, 2001; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). Thus, participation in sport has not been simply identified as an ethnic gathering; but has been identified as a significant influencing factor in the construction of cultural identity and in the representation of their ethnic identity (Crobin & Mayall, 1998).

Furthermore, participation in sport and physical activity with members of their own ethnic community, as mentioned by Portes and Zhou (1993) and by Waters (1994), serves as a means of the minority members’ economic benefits and success in the host society. For example, several immigrants, from members of the working class to business owners or recently arrived immigrants, participated in sport settings within their ethnic community to facilitate the formation of ethnic networks helpful in running their business and/or finding a valuable piece of information such as that pertaining to employment opportunities. Consequently, immigrants who choose to preserve their ethnic identity and forge the relations with the members of ethnic minorities are often able to achieve upward social mobility.

Influencing factors on sport behavior

There are several influencing factors that are likely to have a significant impact on the level of acculturation of Korean immigrants in a sport context. Focusing on constraints and
issues of recreational sport behavior among recent immigrants, Monika Stodolska (1998) asserted that certain constraints on sport experienced by immigrants are different from those of the general population. The findings of her study also suggested that not all constraints on sport behavior of immigrants are affected by all dimensions of assimilation, but the constraints experienced by recently arrived immigrants tended to diminish along with their increasing assimilation level. Therefore, “it is likely that the leisure of immigrants is most severely constrained immediately after their arrival and that some of these constraints have a tendency to decline in significance as people adapt to the new environment” (Stodolska, 1998, p. 543). Even though some recent research studies have focused on the constraints of recreational sport and physical activity experienced by special populations such as women, people with disabilities, and racial minority groups (Carrington, Chivers, & Williams, 1987; Glyptis, 1985; Harrington, Dawson, & Bolla, 1992; Henderson & Allen, 1991; Henderson, Bedini, Hecht, & Schuller, 1995; Henderson, Stalnaker, & Taylor, 1998; Jackson, 1991; Philipp, 1995), only a few have directly addressed the sport constraints among immigrants (Rubble & Shaw, 1991; Yu & Berryman, 1996). In this section, therefore, some key factors, those that are likely to influence immigrants’ sport behavior, will be discussed: gender, language barriers, age, social isolation, and socioeconomic status.

Gender

The level of involvement in sport and physical activity is intervened by the immigrants’ gender. Concentrating on immigration-related changes in recreational sport participation patterns, Stodolska and Alexandris (2004) stressed that gender-based differences in assimilation appear during the acculturation process. Gender influences not only the level of integration but also the extent of the sport participation. For example, under Confucian values on gender in Korean
society, “gender differences may also have a great impact on choices and decisions women and men make in their daily leisure activities” (Kim, 2001, p.48). Traditionally, Confucian philosophy, which is deeply rooted in most Asian culture, de-emphasizes the individual values and highlights the gender role and family hierarchy. Therefore, women are severely constrained in their access to facility and community resources and opportunities, and their participation patterns and preferences for physical activities and sports. Similar findings were also suggested by both Alvirez and Bean (1981) and Clark (1979). In their studies of differentiation in participation patterns and constraining factors on physical activity among Hispanics, the researchers pointed out that cultural characteristics such as male dominance over females could be responsible for gender segregation of physical activity and restriction on social contacts and sport participation. Furthermore, South Asian adolescent girls in particular were more severely restricted in their sport participation by lack of parental permission for out-of-home activities and sport programs than counterparts (Carrington et al., 1987; Glyptis, 1985; Taylor & Hegarty, 1985).

Language

According to Stodolska (1998), immigrant groups are likely to experience “immigration related constraints” on sport behavior, which are applicable only to immigrants in particular, not to the general population, such as language difficulties. Language difficulties experienced by immigrant populations vary from these groups’ immigration histories and socio-economic status, but the language barrier is one of the primary obstacles faced by most immigrant groups (Kestsedemas, 2005). Additionally, Rapala and Manderson (2005) noted that it is important to consider how acquiring the dominant language can effect overcoming the structural barriers and successful interactions between immigrants and dominant groups. Language is a crucial tool that
enables people to construct a new mode of thinking, to perceive the information, and to learn the world and social reality, as well as to establish relationships (Rapala & Manderson, 2005). Thus, “language is a key obstacle to social interaction because people who cannot communicate tend to isolate themselves from the host culture” (Kim, 2001).

Immigrants with inadequate language skills often experience isolation and uneasiness in the mainstream culture, and these insufficient language abilities further lead to the detrimental effect on sport behavior and leisure experience of immigrant groups (Kim, 2001; Stodolska, 1998). Not surprisingly, constraints on participation in sport and physical activity, including lack of social interactions, inability to find the programs to improve their health, and inability to access the facilities, are closely related to the language problems of immigrant populations; furthermore, those constraints severely limit the opportunity to participate in recreational activities and sport, especially during the post-arrival period. In contrast, immigrants with fluent language abilities will have more choices and experiences of physical activities and programs within the dominant society (Kim, 2001). For example, Korean immigrants will not be restricted by language difficulties in physical activity programs and recreational events and have little difficulty to interact with others when the programs are organized and proceeded by their native tongue. Therefore, it is obvious that individuals who are unable to speak the dominant language or have very limited language skills will not be able to interact with the dominant groups and their participation patterns and preferences of physical activities will not be similar to those of the mainstream culture.

**Age**

Age at the time of immigration is another influencing factor on sport behavior. According to Kim (2001), “when Korean immigrants enter the United States, they are in most
cases in their adulthood, which implies that their personality and identity have largely established in the old culture.” (p. 52) A number of researchers found that some differences by age groups in patterns of the language use and preference can be a major feature of determining their assimilation levels and leisure behavior of immigrants (Stodolska, 1998; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). Gal (1978) also stated that the immigrants’ age and their preference of speaking in their native language were highly correlated. Furnham (1984) stressed that younger immigrants tend to learn English more quickly and acquire higher language proficiency than do older immigrants. In contrast, older immigrants may prefer to maintain a high level of ethnic attachment, known as “ethnic enclaves,” and keep a distance from the host culture because of language barriers and cultural differences they encountered (Kim, 2001; Lee, 1986). For the majority of older immigrants, thus, the adaptation problems associated with a certain age such as language difficulties and alienation were regarded as the constraining factor of their physical activity patterns and experience.

Affiliation with Ethnic Organizations

The fourth constraining factor of recreational activities and sports is social isolation. Hultsman (1995) and Jackson (1993) concluded that social isolation is considered to be a major constraint on leisure to the general population and is not only limited to immigrants. However, immigrants in particular are likely to experience immigrant-related constraints on sport behavior. Rublee and Shaw (1991) used a qualitative framework to analyze some possible constraints of the leisure behavior and inhibitors of assimilation of refugees who had recently settled in Canada from Latin America. In their study focusing on immigrant-related constraints on leisure, the authors found that language difficulties, lack of overall orientation about the host country, and post-arrival social isolation severely limit their participation in leisure.
Socializing with neighbors, involvement in organizations and community events, and participation in religious gatherings are not as popular among Koreans when they are in their home country; however, most of the Korean immigrants in the United States have joined ethnic organizations such as business-related organizations (Korean American Grocers Association, Korean Dry Cleaning and Laundry Association) and social organizations (Korean American Association, high school and college alumni associations, sports clubs, Korean senior school, Korean American welfare center, the elderly Korean American Association, and social gatherings in the Korean Christian church). Hurh and Kim (1988) reported that 82% of Korean immigrants in Chicago are affiliated with one or more ethnic associations, and Mangiafico (1988) found that a much larger proportion of Korean Americans (75%) are affiliated with one or more ethnic organizations than are other Asian ethnic groups. Even though every ethnic organization has its own purpose, each one frequently offers various social activities such as trips, seasonal picnics, and Korean holiday celebrations for its members and their families (Kim, 2001). Thus, immigrants who are actively involved with one or more ethnic associations would be less likely to feel social isolation, and consequently they will have more social interactions and have opportunities to participate in leisure activities with leisure partners of the ethnic community.

Socio-economic Status

A number of studies have highlighted the importance of socio-economic status as a determining factor of physical activity (Johansson et al., 1988; Steenland, 1992; Yusuf et al., 1996). In general, immigrants with higher levels of structural assimilation as well as economic assimilation were found to experience less immigration-related constraints on sport behavior. For immigrants, according to Stodolska (1998), “the productive period (i.e. the period before their retirement age) is shorter in comparison to the expected duration of their retirement, they need to
save more to be able to consume at the same level” (p. 544). Such tendencies can be explained since a large proportion of immigrants enter into the United States as older adults. Immigrants are likely to work more and spend less while they reach the smooth consumption levels and thus have less time for the physical activities and leisure (Kydland & Prescott, 1982). Furthermore, downward social mobility following immigration is a common phenomenon among the majority of immigrants, likely causing the leisure activities of these working class immigrants to be passive and highly limited. This group of immigrants who confront the downward social mobility are comprised not only of individuals who held working class jobs in their home country but also of members of the middle class in their former countries who experienced a socio-economic status decline during the post-settlement period. Stodolska and Alexandris (2004) described this decline as follows:

Such a decline is considered to be quite a common outcome of immigration and is often attributed to the differences in the job markets, discrimination, lack of understanding of the American culture, inability to transfer skills to the adopted country, lack of language skills, or over-dependence on ethnic economy in the initial periods after arrival (p. 398).

During the period of initial adaptation, they experienced a downward mobility and held several lowest paying jobs and thus have limited opportunities to participate in recreational sport and leisure.

A significant volume of research has suggested that individuals who belong to higher social class are more likely to engage in leisure and have higher participation rates in recreational sports (Coalter, Dowers, & Baxter, 1995; Collins & Kay, 2003; Crespo et al., 1999; Eitzen & Sage, 2003). In addition, socio-economic status influences recreational preferences and patterns
of sport participation (Shinew et al., 1995; Stodolska, 1998; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). Immigrants with higher socio-economic status are less constrained in their leisure for many reasons. According to Stodolska (1998), “individuals who are more affluent and who work in more prestigious occupations are likely to have an opportunity for more frequent interactions with the mainstream population on the professional level and thus find such interactions in leisure to be less stressful” (p. 544). Moreover, those immigrants of the higher socio-economic groups are likely to have more time for leisure and their choices of physical activities are not restricted by cost-related constraints. For instance, they tend to prefer individual pastimes and activities such as gold, skiing, tennis, and sailing rather than organized team sports (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). Additionally, also highly related to their socio-economic status, educated immigrants have higher participation rates because they are better informed about health benefits of participating in physical activities. In contrast, the leisure constraints including lack of money, lack of time, low interest due to the physical exhaustion after work, and low educational level of immigrants of lower socio-economic status are negatively related to their active sport participation.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

Theoretical Framework

Silverman (2000) explained that the decision to use qualitative methodology as opposed to quantitative methodology depends on what is being studied. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), “qualitative methods can be used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought process, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods” (p. 11). Contrary to quantitative research, qualitative research allows the researcher to discover multiple realities of a phenomenon and to gain insights into the personal perspectives of the participants by asking questions in response to participants’ responses or reactions. Bogdan and Taylor (1975) further detailed qualitative methods as “research procedures which produce descriptive data: people’s own written or spoken words and observable behavior” (p. 4). Thus, the role of the qualitative researcher is to understand the “hows” and “whys” through the descriptive data rather than seek one objective truth associated with statistics or disaggregated data (Blumer, 1969; Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

After becoming aware of his or her role in qualitative methodology, the researcher should consider the theoretical perspective. The theoretical perspective is the “philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). By elaborating on the theoretical perspective, the
qualitative researcher can shape the assumptions that reflect the rationale for the choice of research methods and provide the means through which the data can be understood and grounded. The major theoretical perspectives that lie behind the methodology of the past few decades include positivism/post-positivism, interpretivism, critical inquiry, feminism, and postmodernism. This study is conducted under an interpretive approach, and the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism guided the overall research design and interpretation of the findings. Additionally, grounded theory methods were used to conduct constant comparative method of the data analysis.

**Interpretivism**

Interpretivism is a theoretical perspective that embodies a constructionism that is removed from the objectivism found in the positivist/post-positivist stance. For the constructionist, positivist/post-positivist approaches tend to ignore the subjective experience and the participants’ development of meaning; thus, meaning (or truth) is the central notion of the social process and it is completely dependent on how it is constructed and interpreted by the participants. Constructionism holds that “all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). In the constructivist view, meaning is not inherent but constructed by human beings as they consciously engage in the reality they are interpreting in different ways.

Historically, the concept of interpretivism, advanced by Max Weber (1864-1920), is a theoretical perspective that is grounded in the constructivist paradigm, and emerged in contradiction to positivism focusing on the understanding and explanation of human and social reality. Interpretivism generated a means of extricating human and social science research from
the control of natural science methodologies. Wilhelm Dilthey’s (1833-1911) real distinction speculated that human and social sciences demanded radically different research methods from those of the natural sciences because there is a clear distinction between natural reality and social reality. However, Neo-Kantian philosophers Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915) and Heinrich Rickert (1863-1936) rejected the notion of Dilthey’s real distinction between natural reality and social reality, and accepted the logical distinction. In the case of nature, the natural sciences look for the consistencies, regularities, and general laws and use a generalizing method. In the human and social sciences, researchers are concerned with the individual phenomenon and use an individualizing method. Thus, a logical distinction is made between the two.

Similarly, Max Weber disagreed with Dilthey’s real distinction between natural reality and social reality and posited Windelband and Rickert’s logical distinction between them. He believed that human behavior, as well as natural phenomena, can be explained by general laws, and any explanatory understanding of causation comes through an interpretive understanding of social action and use of applicable ideal-type methodology. Fundamentally, the two areas of science, natural science and social science, demand different methods but the studies of the natural world and the social world have come closer together because of the historical streams in the interpretivist approach.

Denzin (2001) asserted that interpretivism “endeavors to capture and represent the voices, emotions, and actions of those studied” (p. 2). Denzin further stated that the critical element of interpretivism is clarifying the meaning through the interpretation to understand the essential meaning that has been conveyed. The interpretive approach allows the researcher to emphasize the significance of meaning and examine the participants’ perspectives, “hows” and “whys,” through interpretation and interpersonal interactions. The interpretive researcher firmly believes
that there are a number of contributions derived from qualitative research that support the use of the interpretive approach. Denzin (2001) described these contributions as follows:

1. Understanding of other perspectives.
2. Recognition of the assumptions of the participants.
3. Evaluation of the phenomena and the possibility of producing essential meanings for intervention.
4. Discovering participants’ perspectives which are closely related to their lived experiences.
5. Uncovering the limitations of quantitative research and statistical data.

In this study, it was important to understand how Korean immigrants were involved in their daily physical activity pursuit and how their experiences influenced the constraints of their sport behavior. Therefore, the participant’s perspectives, not the researcher’s, would be revealed through interpretation of provided descriptive data for the purpose of understanding sport participation patterns.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism, one of the most important and enduring theoretical perspectives in North America, is derived from one of the historical streams of the interpretivist approach. Its roots can be traced back to pragmatism and the pragmatist philosophers, such as Charles Sanders Peirce, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead, who focused on experience and culture as almost interchangeable terms and claimed that seeking the meaning of experience becomes an exploration of the world. Then, this perspective has emerged to be the main focal point of symbolic interactionism: the putting of oneself in the place of the other (Crotty, 1998).
In multi-cited premises, Blumer (1969) enunciates symbolic interactionism’s three basic assumptions that are embedded in a number of social science research methodologies:

1. Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them.

2. The meaning of such things is derived from, and arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows.

3. These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters (p. 2).

Blumer (1969) further defined symbolic interactionism as “activity in which humans interpret each other’s gestures and act on the basis of meaning yielded by interpretation” (pp. 65-66). In addition, “symbolic interactionism places primary importance on the social meanings people attach to the world around them” (Taylor & Bogdon, 1998, p. 11). According to Blumer (1969), symbolic interactionism “sees meaning as arising in the process of interaction between people” (p.4) and “sees meanings as social products, as creations that are formed in and through the defining activities of people as they interact” (p. 5). Similarly, Charon (1992) also stated that symbolic interactionists believe that human action is based on their interactions with other individuals as well as within themselves. Therefore, symbolic interactionists’ concerns tend to be the interactive aspects of the individual’s actions, objects, and society, rather than the structures associated with large-scale, fixed social systems. That is, human interaction is mediated by the use of “significant symbols” -- language and other symbolic tools -- to share and communicate the meaning of one another’s actions, perceptions, and feelings and to interpret their meanings and intent only through the use of these significant symbols (Crotty, 1998, p.75).
According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), “communication is symbolic because we communicate via language and other symbols; further, in communicating we create or produce significant symbols” (p. 124). For the symbolic interactionist, symbols are the basis of social life. The history, society, culture, and communication among individuals can be traced through symbols and it is through symbols that meaning is associated with interaction between sociologists who seek the meanings through symbols and participants who actively and creatively construct their social world through symbols. Therefore, “the sociological observer must exercise sufficient discipline on himself to ensure that it is indeed the actors’ meanings that are recorded in his notebook and not merely his own” (Mitchell, 1977, pp.115-16).

This emphasis on the use of symbols – language, human acts, and physical – led to a prominent interest in the methods that symbolic interactionists use. The researchers tend to study human interaction and social interaction through participant observation and interviews, rather than through surveys, to create the close contact and interaction in the daily lives of the participants; but their fairly narrow focus on easily observable face-to-face interactions for understanding the meanings of actions, society, and culture limits the study. Given this close contact, without considering the material reality outside the interaction, symbolic interactionists could easily ignore the factors which are not visible in the face-to-face interaction; but they must be taken into consideration. At the same time, they could hardly remain free of value commitments of their research. Furthermore, their focus on interaction through only symbols limits the view of the macro-level of relationships involving social institutions even though each individual constructs the meanings in the structured social situation. Meaning comes from interaction and interaction is obviously important to human society; however, symbolic
interactionists should acknowledge the main deficiency of their approach and focus on the macro-structured aspects of the social system by using more systematic research methods.

**Relationship of Symbolic Interactionism to the Study**

This study was guided by the symbolic interactionism framework because it constitutes the best fitting theoretical framework for the purpose of the study. The study sought to investigate the Korean immigrants’ experiences and explore the meanings of sport participation from their perspectives; and symbolic interactionism places emphasis on the meanings they construct in their social interactions. Because the essence of the sport participation concerns social interaction with others and the interpretation of the perspectives on sport behavior encountered, symbolic interactionism is an appropriate theoretical framework to guide the research design and interpretation of the findings. Specifically, Woods (1992) explained that symbolic interactionism “typically deals with small-scale, everyday life, seeking to understand processes, relationships, group life, motivation, [and] adaptations” (p. 365). This study will investigate the participants’ individual meanings of sport participation and their perceptions of social interactions and relationships in the sport setting from their point-of-view; therefore, the theoretical perspective for this study has been based on a framework of symbolic interactionism.

Moreover, a major theme of symbolic interactionism is the notion of taking the role of the other (Mead, 1934). Mead identified that natural leaders are those who are able to comprehend the perspectives and reflections of different groups within a society. He stated, “Figures of that sort become of enormous importance because they make possible communication between groups otherwise completely separated from each other” (Mead, 1934, pp. 256-257). Charon (1992) also mentioned that, “taking the role of the other is best understood as taking the perspectives of the other… and directing one’s own actions accordingly” (p. 105).
In accordance with the central theme of symbolic interactionism, the assumption that the researcher must take the role of the research participant to fully understand the phenomenon was emphasized. This inquiry provided me with important strategy for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data. “Taking the role of the other is the basis for human symbolic communication” (Charon, 1992, p. 113); therefore, I put myself in the place of the participants. By taking the role of the research participant, I would be better able to see things from their own perspectives and determine the meaning of words and/or acts. Furthermore, an enhanced understanding of their personal perspectives could be acquired. According to Charon (1992), “to gain a perspective is to understand the other through taking his or her role and to come to share that perspective” (p. 111). Thus, symbolic interactionism provided the theoretical lens for data collection, presentation, analysis, and interpretation throughout this study, and this theoretical framework was well suited to the purpose and nature of this study.

Research Design and Questions

Data collection in this study consisted of participant observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews with each participant, as well as a review of documents from the research site. In order to find research participants or at least understand the general research setting, two participant observations at two different locations were conducted prior to the interviews. As the most important source of data, 14 participants were chosen by means of purposeful sampling, and in-depth interviews were conducted over a two-month period and were guided by predetermined interview protocol. At the beginning of each interview, each participant was asked to talk about demographic information and reflect on their perspectives, feelings, values, and actions regarding the sport participation. According to Kvale (1996), the purpose of the
qualitative research interview method is “to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (pp. 5-6). The interview method helped the researcher to understand the participants’ perspectives, deepening understanding to gather insights into their thinking, and generating rich and descriptive data. Interviews were audio-taped, transcribed in both English and Korean, and interpreted using the constant comparative analysis method. The interview data also provided several meaningful direct quotations about the participants’ beliefs, experiences, values, and feelings. Another source used, throughout the data collection, was document reviews. Documents from both personal and public accounts were very useful sources in understanding the participants’ everyday interaction and phenomena with diverse points of view. In this study, the public records, which were the archival materials and documents of a society, community, or organization, such as a town’s newspapers and brochures of community events, were examined.

Symbolic interactionism was the guiding theoretical framework used to design this study. Symbolic interactionism provides a framework that centers on meaning, which becomes the individual’s perspective. The meaning “of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing” (Blumer, 1969, p. 4). In addition, Blumer (1969) defined symbolic interactionism as “activity in which humans interpret each other’s gestures and act on the basis of meaning yielded by interpretation” (pp. 65-66). The researcher utilized these central components of symbolic interactionism to analyze data and to examine the participants’ perspectives. Through the researcher’s interpretation of the findings, the perspectives the participants created and perspectives modified by participants as they interacted with others based on the meanings were determined and analyzed. Using symbolic interactionism as a theoretical framework, the grounded theory method of constant comparative
analysis was employed for the data collection and analysis. As codes were established and as categories emerged, the major themes of this study were revealed.

The research questions for this study were broad-based to allow for the evolution of themes and integration of concepts significant to the research participants. This study was guided by the following general research questions: (1) What are the reasons the Korean immigrants left their country? (2) How did they participate in physical activities? (3) How did they react to their physical health? (4) What kinds of things stopped them from participating in physical activities? (5) What kinds of things motivate them to participate in physical activities? (6) What role did physical activity play in their lives?

Site and Sample Selection and Criteria

In this section, the specific methods and rationale used for site and sample selection are discussed. The site and the participants of the study were selected based on the opportunity they provided for purposeful sampling. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) explained purposeful sampling as a sampling process that includes research participants who “are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory” (p. 65). As noted by Merriam (1998), “purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p. 61). According to Patton (1990), the power of purposeful sampling lies in the selection of information-rich data sources focal to the research purpose. For this study, the site and the participants were selected because those selections had available data sources that were information-rich.
Site Selection

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explicated that the purpose of sampling is to allow the investigator to maximize information collection from information-rich data sources about the research topic. In this study, the purposeful sampling method and Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) explanation of the purpose of sampling guided the selection of the research site; the specific criteria were predetermined central to the research purpose.

Between 1990 and 2000, the Southern states in the United States – Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas – showed the highest rates of increase for Koreans in the country (Yu, 2001). In particular, Georgia ranked as the state experiencing the highest increase rate, 88.18%, among all 50 states (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). As of April 1, 2000, according to the U.S. Census data, there were approximately 28,745 Koreans residing in Georgia, and there were 22,317 Koreans residing in the Atlanta, Georgia Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Even though no official census records were available on the Korean population in metropolitan Atlanta area at the time of the interviews, the Korean American Association in the city estimated about 55,000-60,000 Koreans were residing there. Therefore, research participants were recruited in the Atlanta, Georgia Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes the following 20 counties: Barrow, Bartow, Carroll, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Newton, Paulding, Pickens, Rockdale, Spalding, and Walton.

Sample Selection

The 12 research participants in the proposed study were chosen by means of purposeful sampling. In this sampling method, initial participants were selected based on specific inclusion
criteria for this study. First, target research participants included individuals who had immigrated
to the United States from Korea as adults (first generation) or as children (1.5 generation).
Second, the research participants have permanently settled in the United States. To separate first-
or first-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants (either Korean American citizens or permanent
residents) from other types of residents such as short-term residents, routine visitors, and
students, I had to set the participant’s minimum length of stay in the United States. Based on the
research findings that the longer individuals stay in a new culture, the more they acculturate in
the culture (Hurh & Kim, 1984a), the participants who had stayed in the United States for at least
10 years, which I considered to be enough time for the determination of their status, were
selected.

Subsequently, two additional research participants were selected in accordance with
grounded theory methodology, using theoretical sampling. The data analysis for this study was
guided by the grounded theory methodology; accordingly, theoretical sampling was used as a
main sampling strategy. According to Glaser and Strauss (1999), theoretical sampling is defined
as “the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects,
codes, and analyzes his/her data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in
order to develop his theory as it emerges” (p. 45). After the initial data analysis and the
development of a tentative theoretical insight regarding the initial collection of data, the
researcher decided to seek additional participants based on criteria of “theoretical purpose and
relevance” which is regarded as an essential part of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1999, p.
48). “Emerging theory points to the next steps – the sociologist does not know them until he is
guided by emerging gaps in his theory and by research questions suggested by previous answers”
(Glaser & Strauss, 1999, p. 47). As a result, the participants and the sample size were not
specified until the researcher found there were no theory gap and no additional emerging themes in theoretical sampling.

Observation and Participant Recruitment

In order to find research participants, set up the study, and clarify the future direction of the research, I organized two participant observations before conducting the interviews, at two different observation locations. The observation, a fundamental data-gathering technique of qualitative research, ranges across a continuum from mostly observation to mostly participation. The participant observation, one of the means of my data collection, ranged across a continuum, from mostly observation to mostly participation. Even though participant observation continues throughout the period of data collection, “It is particularly important in the beginning stages because if its role in informing you about appropriate areas of investigation and in developing a sound researcher-researched relationship” (Glesen, 2005) and “it helps you discover complexity in social settings by being there” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.194). Therefore, the main purpose of observation is to understand the research setting – its participants, their behavior, and interactive patterns of a way of life – in a learner’s stance which requires the researcher’s flexibly changeable point of view. In addition, the emphasis on making the familiar strange is usually more difficult than the emphasis on making the strange familiar because the researchers must overcome the preconceived assumptions and socialized perceptions continually. Through observation, qualitative researchers can achieve a new understanding of making the strange familiar and the familiar strange (Erickson, 1973), and begin to expose and rethink their own assumptions and perceptions. The purpose of my participant observations in two different settings before conducting the interviews was to provide the opportunity for recruiting research participants who met the requirements for my study and, in the event that they were not
participants, at least understand the general research setting and a bit of the actions and/or patterns of the physical activities of the potential participants through the observation.

For the participant observation, I decided to conduct research close to home rather than in an unfamiliar site or new culture. Doing backyard research was attractive for the following reasons: I had relatively easy access; the rapport was already established; and doing so offered a maximum of flexibility as regards time and movement. In addition, doing research close to home meant that I would be able to negotiate unexpected circumstances and potential difficulties which could arise at the observation sites. I participated in religious and/or multicultural gatherings and sport clubs organized by Koreans, at which it was relatively easy to find potential research participants and to establish an optimal researcher-researched relationship. Furthermore, the participants were selected through word-of-mouth communication and flyers requesting volunteer participants. After receiving their verbal consent to participate in the study, I was able to more easily interact with participants.

Field notes were typically used to provide in-depth information and elaborate the details of everything being observed even if the researcher was videotaping events in the setting. The use of technology, such as tape recorders, video cameras, and laptop computers, can effectively accompany field notes; however, in some settings, using the technology devices can be totally inappropriate and can distract the overall process of the observation. During the participant observations, therefore, the field notes which describe Spradley’s (1979) three elements, including place, actors, and activities, were used. Each of the field notes emphasized the different elements, rather than equally pointing to the three. For example, the first field notes mainly focused on the events, and then looked for acts within those events. The second field notes focused more on descriptions of the participants in the given setting. Throughout the observation
log, most of the descriptive sentences reveal something about the participants (actors), although
they recorded all three elements: place, actors, and activities. Who they were in terms of
approximate age, gender, race, and the number of those accompanying them, if any, how they
were dressed, what they participated in, and who interacted with whom, were examined. My
research questions and purpose of the participant observation were obviously clear during the
data collection -- observation and field note taking.

Data Collection Procedures

Interview

Interview is described as “a conversation with a purpose” (Burgess, 1984, p.102), “a
conversational partnership” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p.11), and mainly is categorized into three
types by Patton: informal conversational interviews, the interview guide approach, and
standardized open-ended interviews. Informal interviews are “serendipitous, occurring while you
hang out around a setting or as you are entering a home to conduct a more formal interview”
(Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.181). I used the interview guide approach, which is frequently used
in qualitative research. Using this approach, the researcher develops a few broad topics which are
based on the research questions to explore what he/she wants to understand; however, the
interviewer encourages the participants to respond freely and remains open to pursuing topics
that the interviewees bring up. The last type of interview is the standardized open-ended
interview, which involves tightly pre-designed questionnaires. All participants are interviewed
with fixed questions in a particular order by the skilled interviewer.

Before scheduling the interview with two participants, pre-established research questions
were reviewed by committee members. They read my draft of research questions and brought
their knowledge and expertise to the interview questions. They asked what I really wanted to communicate as the point of the study and what types of questions might be gleaned from the respondents. After modifying my research questions, I arranged the interview schedule with them. I considered their preferences and willingness as priorities and finally arranged the location and time. I deferred to the participants’ needs; however, the place they suggested needed to meet the following criteria: its noise level had to be appropriate not only to audio recording but also to the interviewer and interviewee’s ability to communicate easily; it should be physically comfortable; and it needed to be a place which did not invade the participants’ privacy. Various locations such as Korean restaurants, house, office, and coffee shop were used for interviewing, depending on the participant’s preference. Most chose their homes for the interview because of the privacy which also contributed to a distraction-free environment in tape-recording.

To understand individual perspectives and gather accurate descriptive data during the interviews, I informed the participants of the use of a tape recorder, which was also mentioned in the consent form, described the general description of my research, and responded to their questions, including: (a) How long will the interview last? (b) Is the follow-up interview required? (c) What is the consent form about? and (d) How long will the researcher use the audio-taped recording for the research and will this be destroyed? After acquiring both the verbal permission and signed written consent form, I confidently conducted the interviews. Both of the participants agreed to the use of a battery-operated tape recorder (OLYMPUS J-300 Voice Recorder), which had built-in microphones. I provided the participants the opportunity to pause and replay the tape recorder at any time of the interview if the topic became particularly sensitive or the participant became uncomfortable.
Interview questions were carefully designed and checked. However, in order to ask the interviewees questions that related to the overall purpose and topic of the research, pre-developed interview questions had to be modified and replaced with others, new ones were added, and some required additional follow-up questions based on the participant’s actual responses during the interview. Moreover, a clear beginning question, synthesizing, and summarizing the material, were added, if necessary, for the interviewees to grasp the exact meaning and purpose of the information. The difficulty was in keeping a balance between talking and listening, although I tried to maintain eye contact and not interrupt. Listening and perceiving nonverbal feedback, such as continuous eye contact and a nodding head, were critical, yet recalling what I planned to ask, carefully listening to pick up points interviewees were making, and keeping track of time all at the same time, required a great deal of practice.

Interviewees were offered a choice of languages, either Korean or English. The majority of the interviews were conducted in Korean. Even though the amount of time that the interview lasted varied, each participant had one to two face-to-face interviews with a total of one-to-four hours of audiotaping. Interview questions were sequenced according to a predetermined interview guide and most interviewees generally agreed to the use of a tape recorder during the interview. I recognized that the tape-recorder provided a nearly perfect record of what has been stated; however, I also managed to record the hand-written field notes during the interview to obtain effective and in-depth data such as the interviewee’s body language, tone, mood, and feeling through the handwritten notes. Furthermore, the researchers could compare the audio-recorded interview data with the detailed notes to consistently gather meaningful data and to interpret the interviewee’s detailed narratives that made qualitative research rich. Sometimes, my attention was focused on the struggle to keep up with the interviewee’s talk, but recording my
impressions, insights, and emerging questions during the interview was very useful in assembling the final data. As soon as possible after the interview, I reviewed my notes and listened to the tapes from beginning to end in order to get a complete picture of the flow, and then I transcribed the tape on the same day or the day after. I also conducted follow-up interviews, either face-to-face interviews or telephone interviews, when I needed to gain more information and to clarify the participant’s inexplicit statements from the previous interviews or when the specific follow-up questions emerged after the initial analysis process. All interviews, even the follow-up interviews, were conducted by the researcher and all data collected through the interview process were kept confidential and pseudonyms were used.

Document Reviews

Document review, a data collection technique, involves both personal and public records. Personal records include the written records of a person’s life such as minutes of meetings, journals, diaries, letters, memoirs, and wills. In addition, the personal documents include such objects as school work, photographs, scrapbooks, and painting from the individual accounts of events and experience. The public records are another example of the material culture. These are the collection of documents of a society, community, or organization – for instance, historical accounts such as a town’s newspapers and institutional newsletters, annual reports, policy manuals, attendance records, test scores, and birth and death records. “Documents and other unobtrusive measures provide both historical and contextual dimensions to your observations and interviews. They enrich what you see and hear by supporting, expanding, and challenging your portrayals and perceptions (Glesne, 2005, p.68). Thus, the public records such as a town’s newspapers and brochures of community sporting events were systematically examined in this study.
Data Analysis Procedures

“Analyzing and interpreting qualitative data is the process of deep immersion in the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials you have collected; systematically organizing these materials into salient themes and patterns; bringing meaning so the themes tell a coherent story; and writing it all up so that others can read what you have learned” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 270). In analyzing my interview data, I followed the four procedures proposed by Stake (1995). I started the first procedure, “categorical aggregation”, by searching for a collection of cases from the data and looking for research topic-relevant meanings to appear. In the next procedure, “direct interpretation,” I explored a single case in my data and drew significance from it without considering the multiple cases. I then moved to the next procedure, “establish patterns,” which is a process of looking for any relationship between two or more categories. In the final procedure, “naturalistic generalizations,” I aimed at presenting the findings descriptively, to facilitate and construct meaning. Furthermore, I applied the methodology of grounded theory in constant comparative data analysis. One of the central notions of grounded theory emphasizes the interrelated process between data collection and data analysis. Therefore, research issues and preliminary themes were continually examined from the beginning of the data collection, and the theoretical concepts and interpretations were collected while the data were being collected and analyzed.

A number of advantages of qualitative research methods have been identified. Firstly, qualitative research methods are particularly appropriate for aiming at pluralism and complexity. Qualitative researchers gather data with descriptive, inductive, and unobtrusive data collection techniques; consequently, the participant’s diverse issues in the context of the environment are individually studied. Davis (1986) and Myers (1977) suggested that gender, ethnic groups, and
socioeconomic status of the participants should be considered in selecting the research strategy because they are more likely to prefer a qualitative research technique such as the in-depth interview than a quantitative research technique such as the structured questionnaire or survey. Secondly, qualitative research methods also have the advantages of flexibility. For example, the qualitative researcher can quickly adjust and modify the interview questions, the location, and the length of the interview schedule and interview session, if needed. In addition, the researcher can conduct the follow-up interviews if the participant’s responses require the need for additional probes and clarification of the information in further sessions. Lastly, the researcher can gain a more in-depth understanding and analysis through the qualitative approach. During the interview or observation, the researcher is able to understand the individual’s particular values, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences which are influenced by environmental factors such as family construction, society, and culture.

Despite a number of advantages of the data collection methods in qualitative research, the qualitative approach has some limitations. The first limitation of the qualitative data collection techniques involves the researcher-researched relationship and interaction. In qualitative research, the quality of the interactions between the researcher and the researched, and the researcher’s interpersonal skills are essential. Researchers establish and maintain rapport in order to obtain the rich data related to the research topic. Rapport encourages the participants to bring up detailed data and reduces their anxiety and distance through the trust-building process with the researcher. Therefore, the participants may be unwilling or uncomfortable with sharing the personal or sensitive issues that the researcher wants to explore, and the researcher may not be able to lead the participant’s rich responses without the achievement of rapport relationship.
Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggest that the crucial aspect of qualitative research is trustworthiness, including adopting the standards for acceptable and competent practice and meeting the standards for ethical conduct while coping with sensitivity to the politics of the research topic and setting. To increase the trustworthiness of the research, I followed the current trend in data collection, use of multiple data collection methods throughout the data collection and analysis process, known as triangulation. I combined more than two data-gathering techniques in order to ensure credibility, the idea being that different methods complement each other, the weakness of one being covered by the strength of another. The purpose of triangulation was “not the simple combination of different kinds of data, but the attempt to relate them so as to counteract the threats to validity identified in each” (Berg, 1995, p. 5). Even though triangulation in order to increase credibility in the qualitative research findings may involve the incorporation of multiple sources, multiple investigators, and multiple theoretical perspectives, multiple data collection methods are the most common form of triangulation. In the use of multiple data collection methods, the decision to combine data-gathering techniques depends on the main purpose of the study and on the intention of the researcher. Three qualitative data-gathering techniques dominant in physical education include: observation, interview, and document collection such as journal and log. Rather than using a single data collection method, the use of a combination of methods to collect research data is consistently increasing. Therefore, I used the combination of observation and interview, which are commonly used methods (Chen, 1999; Halas, 2002; Ennis, et al., 1999).

According to Ezzy (2002), furthermore, “the aim of qualitative research is to allow the voice of the ‘other’, of the people being researched, to inform the researcher” (p. 64). In order to achieve this purpose of qualitative research, I used one of the strategies for integrating analysis
and collection, checking interpretations with participants (member checking). In this way, the
details of the interview were checked and the participants engaged in all processes of the
research. Accordingly, themes that emerged beginning with the analysis of the participant
observations, and outlined throughout the interview data collection, analysis and interpretation,
continued to emerge from the documentation of the major findings.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The major purpose of the study was to investigate 14 first- and one-and-a-half generation Korean immigrants living in the metropolitan Atlanta area (Georgia Metropolitan Statistical Area: MSA) about their behavior in daily physical activity participation. The findings of this study are divided into three major sections. First, the table of individual case profile presents each of the participant’s background in reference to immigration history, before and after immigration occupation, family relations, and physical activity. Subsequent immigration-related changes of participants’ daily physical activity participation are presented in context of level of involvement, physical activity preference, availability of facilities, social relations, and reasons for participation in physical activity. The final finding centers on the most prominent influencing factors that affect immigrants’ physical activity participation, which are gender, language fluency, age, social network, socioeconomic status, and current health status.

Individual Case Profiles
The table of individual profiles of 14 Korean immigrants consists of the information that focuses on gender, current age, the year of immigration, living arrangement, family relations, educational attainment, before and after occupational status, religion, meeting places, and types of daily physical activities.
### TABLE 4.1
Profiles for Research Participants

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<th>Before/After Occupation</th>
<th>Religion</th>
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<th>Participated Activities</th>
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Major Immigration Related Changes

Level of Involvement

The findings of this study show that immigration was significantly associated with level of involvement in daily physical activity participation among first- and one-and-a-half generation Korean immigrants who currently reside in the Atlanta, Georgia Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Some of the participants dramatically decreased in their level of participation in physical activity during the initial adaptation period. When asked about what his physical activity participation was like at the time that he had just arrived in the United States, a 43-year-old Korean male beauty supply shop owner, Jun-Gi, explained,

When I first arrived in Atlanta, I was too busy to think about how to live and make money. So I didn’t even think about exercising. Since I am a lot more financially stable now, I have more time so I exercise more.

A similar finding was obtained from interviews with female participants. A 37-year-old female Korean insurance company salesperson, Ye-Seul, commented:

When I first came to America, it was really impossible for me to exercise. During those days, I had to leave my little baby at someone else’s house. As soon as work ended, I had to go pick up my daughter and come home to clean up, and it would be 9 o’clock before I knew it. I really had no time and no money to think about exercise then.

Moreover, low level of involvement in physical activity during the initial period after immigration was also seen among other first-generation Korean immigrants. A 54-year-old Korean pastor at a Korean church, Ji-Hoon, recalled his complete ceasing of physical activity during this period:

When I first came to America, I did not even give exercise a thought. But because of that, I think it cost me my health. I remember always being tired. I honestly didn’t think about it, not even to benefit my health. I was pretty young when I first came to America, around my 30’s. There were people around me who did invite me to exercise with them, but I still didn’t think about any actual exercise.
While the level of physical activity participation was quite low for some of the Korean immigrants during the first period after their arrival, most of the interviewees became more actively involved in their daily physical activity during the first period after their arrival in the United States.

For instance, Mr. Jeong came to the United States without his family at the age of 33. Thus, he tried to exercise a lot more with other people, mostly Korean friends, to control stress, severe loneliness, and homesickness, which resulted from missing his family members. Mr. Jeong recalled a significant increase in his involvement in sport and physical activity during the initial period of immigration:

When I first came to the States for the first two-and-a-half years, I was living here alone. I got to exercise a lot more. I suppose it was because I missed my family. At the beginning, I missed them so much. Thinking about the family I left behind in Korea, I exercised everytime I missed them.

A similar finding was also obtained from interviews with first-generation Korean immigrants. As a 34-year-old male Korean immigrant, Dong-Won, described,

I was a student when I first came to America, so I had a lot more time to engage in exercise. And also, being alone was boring, so I would exercise a lot. For example, back in Indiana, I exercised a lot. While I enrolled in a language school, I stayed in the school dorms, so I would go regularly on my own to play tennis or racquetball for two hours.

Results of the interviews also showed that the primary reasons for the increased level of involvement in sport and physical activity were different based on age at the time of immigration. As Woo-Seong and Dong-Won described, first-generation Korean immigrants’ increased level of physical activity participation during the first period after arrival was usually related to their overcoming homesickness and loneliness, and their social interaction was solely limited to Koreans. However, the one-and-a-half generation Korean immigrants, who immigrated to the United States as children, pointed out that their increased level of involvement in physical activity during this period was typically associated with the desire to adjust to the new culture by
establishing social relationships with the mainstream populations. A 21-year-old male Korean senior student, Sang-Woo, who immigrated to the United States at the age of 10, commented,

When I first came to the United States, I’d go play sports and games with my neighborhood friends and school friends, and making friends with them became easier. You don’t need to speak English as much during playing. I guess, since you make more friends, American friends, so English gets better.

An 18-year-old one-and-a-half generation Korean female university student, Hyo-Ri, who immigrated to the U.S. 10 years prior to the interview, also explained,

When I first came to America, I played with kids who couldn’t speak Korean. They were born here and are Korean American. But instead, my brother and I got to learn English a lot more quickly. I used to walk everywhere and exercise outside with the other kids for the first two to three years. We just met outside and spent our time playing outside. Especially in the summer, I swam with really close friends including them. After swimming the whole summer and going back to school, I was still not fluent but I could communicate with kids through the language of sports and had much more confidence. As I used English while exercising, I realized that I learned English so much faster than I could’ve imagined. The kids that I played with were Korean Americans who could not speak any Korean. So the only way for us to communicate was for us to learn English. We learned so much from them and we used all the words and phrases at home over and over again until we got used to them. Then, English wasn’t a problem anymore.

![Figure 4.1 Decreased Level of Involvement](image-url)
The findings of this study also suggest that immigration was associated with preference changes in types of physical activity in which the first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants participated. Most of the interviewees participated in daily team sports such as soccer, baseball, softball, basketball, volleyball, and badminton before immigration. However, following the initial period after immigration to the United States, the interviewees became more involved and preferred to participate in individual sports such as walking, jogging, tennis, golf, and swimming.

When I asked Mr. Lee to describe the differences related to his physical activity participation between the time he was in Korea, just came to the United States, and now in the United States, he commented; “You know, I was a college student in Korea, so my daily activity was playing baseball and softball with my classmates at the campus field.” He continued to comment,
I can say baseball and golf when I compare when I was in Korea and now. I played baseball a lot when I was in Korea. But now I am not as fit as back then, so I do golf a lot more. I want to play tennis with my friends. They are really good. So I was just thinking I can learn from them and someday I can join with them. But, I don’t play tennis that often. I try to start again, but I am concerned about my age. Tennis is some what dangerous. I probably won’t go chase all the balls, give them up if I can’t get there. When I feel like I need to sweat, recently, I usually walk when I play golf, so I go for a round once a week or two. I sweat at the practice range. I think I spend about an hour at the practice. I go to the driving range maybe twice a week.

A 45-year-old male first-generation Korean immigrant, Woo-Seong, recalled his physical activity participation pattern during the first period after arrival in the United States:

When I first came to the U.S. and was studying for my PhD, I frequently used the nearest sport facilities and ran around the tracks and did an assortment of different exercises. No matter, I got a lot of those opportunities here. I exercised a lot with the church people when I first came to the United States. They were mostly younger church affiliates. We went to I-HOP restaurant after we played baseball. There were a lot of students at the university so we got together at the field and in a humanly way bumped with each other and became very close. It was fun to go out to eat after we got tired from exercising. Before I lived with my family here, I remember that I really had good times that I spent with the other students here.

After the initial adaptation period, he became more involved in individual-type physical activities during his daily life. As Woo-Seong described,

I like sports that involve some sort of a bat or hitting device. But with sports that involve a hand instrument, it’s hard to play alone. You need at least two people to play the sport but if you don’t have someone to play with you, you lose the chance to play. So, in my case, I try regularly to take walks as time permits. I go to the Morning Prayer sessions and afterwards circle the neighborhood, walking and jogging at times. During weekdays I do it (walking and jogging) in the tennis court in front of our neighborhood and there is a comforting feeling that comes with knowing that the tennis court is in my neighborhood. Honestly, I really love exercise. Sometimes physical activity is delayed because of time and condition but I try to regularly participate in physical activity at least once or twice a week if it is possible.

The findings of this study indicate that first- and one-and-a-half generation Korean immigrants’ physical activity participation patterns and their sport preferences were particularly influenced by the length of stay in the United States; that is, the participants tended to participate in team sports before immigration and the initial adaptation period, but participated more in
individual-type sports after the establishment period. Interestingly, immigration was not associated with the female Korean immigrants’ physical activity participation patterns and preference changes. Regardless of their length of stay in the United States, immigration-related changes regarding sport preferences cannot be found among the female Korean immigrants. As the female participants expressed, most of them preferred to participate in individual-type sports such as walking, stretching, jogging, and swimming.

A 37-year-old first-generation Korean female immigrant, Ye-Seul, currently working for an insurance company, commented,

I don’t like basketball or any sport which requires a lot of running. And also sports which require a lot of rough play. But I do want to learn tennis. Swimming too, but I can’t swim. I have no interest in sports like basketball and soccer. In Korea, I would go hiking very often, but here, I just can’t go hiking very often. When I was in Korea, I would go hiking at least three times a year. The hiking trips would last like four nights and five days. Spring, summer, fall… I barely missed a season. I am very good at hiking. There are also plenty of good locations for hiking in America. I know because I’ve been to the Smokey Mountains, but it’s very nice. There is a hiking group in Atlanta that meets on Sundays, but I go to church then, so I don’t have any interest in the group… However, if I do go hiking, I always go with my husband during the summer break. Sometimes, we make plans to go walk on trails.

A 43-year-old housewife, Young-Ae, also stated her unchanged physical activity type. She usually preferred to participate in individual sports:

I definitely had an active physical life back in Korea. I was able to send my kids to preschool and it gave me more time to take aerobic classes or swimming classes. When I came to the U.S., my exercise life was frequent. I went to YMCA with other church mothers in the morning. Back then, my husband was in the doctoral program and so we all met at the multi-purpose gym at the university or outdoor field in the campus area and exercised there. Especially during the summer breaks, we exercised around three or four times. I like to exercise indoors instead of the hot heat outside. It’s way too hot. I like things like swimming or aerobics. I don’t know if it’s because I don’t like to exercise that much but I don’t necessarily like team sports. To speak honestly, I don’t exercise that frequently. However, under the persistence of both my daughter and my husband, I at least do crunches or sit-ups. I already like to stretch.

While many interviewees reported increased level of participation in physical activity after the settlement period, their participation was highly limited to an individual type of sports.
Such a preference for individual-type sport can be explained by various lifestyle changes observed only among the immigrant populations. First, certain constraining factors such as inadequate free time and lack of interest in the physical activity during the initial period after arrival usually diminished when the Korean immigrants became better adjusted to life in the United States. The reason is that they became more engaged in recreational sports and physical activity after settlement. However, even several years following their arrival, the middle-class Korean immigrants still worked long hours in their self-employed family businesses or held jobs that required a considerable number of work hours. Accordingly, their sport preferences and sport participation patterns were influenced by their lifestyles. Some first-generation Korean immigrants who had family businesses increasingly preferred to participate in individual-type sports such as golf because they had relatively flexible time, which was usually not available for individuals who held regular work hours. Further, they could enjoy participating in individual type sports by themselves. Instead of finding leisure partners and asking them to exercise together, the Korean immigrants came to enjoy participating alone, that is, without exercise partners because they realized that finding leisure partners was very difficult due to the immigrants’ busy life, which was always full of crowded schedules. In the words of a 52-year-old male Korean grocery store owner, Tae-Hyun:

Occupation such as mine is a physically demanding labor. Normally, people with similar occupation as mine just don’t sit some place and work. I am always on the move or go somewhere, and fortunately Atlanta has plenty of golf courses. So, whenever I am in situation where I can go golf, I go golfing. Let’s say I want go play tennis, it takes at least one more person, and every sport is like that. You know, that’s what sports are. But, at least in golf, it’s something I can do alone. Such as going to driving range or just go for a round of golf alone. So, in my case, I go golfing whenever I have some free time. Not necessary for my health sake, but to release my stress from work and so on. So, to release my stress, I’d go play golf.
A 47-year-old male-Korean restaurant owner, Eun-Hae, also commented:

I truly like sports and exercise but making the time is the hard part. Since I run a small restaurant, I am often tired, especially on days that I help my kids with their homework and after eating dinner. It’s really hard to try to make the time to exercise. I don’t have much time since I have to run my own business. If there were friends around the neighborhood who asked me to exercise with them, even reluctantly, I would get it done. To motivate oneself or use exercise on a consistent base is pretty hard. If there was an exercise partner, that would be great! But I’ve never asked other Korean people to exercise with me because I know America is very different from Korea. There are so many more family-oriented things. And I know in America, most couples both go out and work and they have very busy daily schedules. I used to exercise a lot when I was younger. I played football, basketball, and tennis with the neighborhood kids… until college. After that, I only played when other people asked me to. My routine wasn’t very consistent. And now, I only do hiking alone, sometimes with my family.

Ji-Hoon Joo, a 54-year-old Korean church pastor, also mentioned the reason why he preferred to participate in individual-type sports:

As much as I would like to, I must consider the priorities of the college students and immigrants. For students, their studies come as their top priority and for the immigrants, their business comes as their prime concern. This is why I don’t ever call first, to avoid obligating them to make time to play. In this aspect, the best exercise is exercise that can be done alone, such as weight-lifting or jump-rope. I also walk and sometimes play racquetball, because racquetball is very effective in causing perspiration. I began to find workouts that I could do by myself, because the requirement of a partner for exercise such as tennis and golf proved to be a disadvantage for me. In this aspect, going to the YMCA to play racquetball, lift weights, and in general, just exercising there was what I was looking for.

The results of the interviews showed that the Korean immigrants’ hard-working lifestyles and their emulation for a more independent lifestyle after their settlement in the United States contributed to changes in their daily physical activity involvement. The reason was that physical activity participation patterns and preferences were a part of the broader changes that they made, which were closely related to their immigration to the United States.

In the case of first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants, who achieved a certain level of social and economic stability after several years of post-arrival struggles, it is quite likely that they tended to embrace new sport and physical activity pursuits considered
popular and trendy among the middle-class population. While the middle-class Americans’ way of life was often considered as the lifestyle the Korean immigrants desired to emulate, the lifestyle of the middle-class Korean immigrants, who acquired the prestigious positions in the mainstream job market or achieved economic success through small businesses, were also considered as the idealized lifestyle. The following quotes from the Korean immigrants will clearly show what kinds of sports and physical activities were regarded as popular and trendy among the members of the American middle class and middle-class Korean immigrants. In addition, these quotes support the idea of demonstration effect, showing off achieved wealth, and explain why their recreational sport and physical activity participation patterns and preferences were solely limited to individual and/or dual type sports.

A 52-year-old male Korean grocery store owner, Tae-Hyun, commented,

There are definitely changes in my physical activity pattern when I was in Korea and since I moved to United States. When I was in Korea, tennis was known as a luxurious sport, the sport only for the rich. Sports that were somewhat domestic was badminton. Let’s see, that’s in the early 80’s. That’s when I came here. When I came here, all sorts of sports were open for everyone. Not just tennis, but as well as golf and bowling. If my economic level reach where I want it to be, I could enjoy those sports. When I first came here, tennis was very popular. So, I started with tennis. Then, the trend changed to bowling, which cost more than tennis. So, I started playing bowling. After tennis and bowling era ends, golf comes in to the Korean society in America. The number of years I played golf is not that long. I’d say about 10 years? I have lived here for 25 years, but golf… compared to other people, I didn’t like golf that much back then. And I had this stereotype about golf that golf is only for those with money, so I just worked hard. But when I looked around, literally everyone played golf. And it was hard to make friends by not playing golf. So I started golf then, and now I can pretty much play with everyone.

Similarly, a 43-year-old Korean male beauty supply shop owner, Jun-Gi, also explained trendy and popular sports and physical activities in which most of the established Korean immigrants participated following their post-arrival in the United States:

When I first arrived in Atlanta, I was too busy to think about how to live and make money. So I didn’t even think about exercising. Since I am a lot more financially stable now, I have more time so I exercise more. When I first got here, I’d go play bowling and go out
for a drink with my friends. But recently, I usually play golf with my friends because most of them, who are in the same field of business, enjoy playing golf a lot.

In addition, Mr. Rae-Won Kim mentioned that there was not an exercise that he particularly disliked. Even though he never expressed a preference for his physical activity, he replied and stated the popular sport in the Korean immigrant society:

For example, sports like football, basketball, baseball are hard to participate in once you are past a certain age. Those kinds of sports are more for the younger and more physically younger people. But golf seems to be the more you age and more you stay and establish more stable socio-economic status in the United States; the more you have chances to participate in it.

Role of physical activity participation

(a) Ki-Bun-Chun-Hwan. The findings of the study suggest that the changes in role of recreational sports and physical activities among the first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants were significantly associated with their immigration to the United States. While most of the interviewees in this study seemed to enjoy various daily physical activities such as going for a walk as a means to refresh themselves or as a means to attend social gatherings with colleagues and friends when they lived in their home country, they became more actively engaged in their daily physical activities, and their involvement in physical activities after the arrival to the United States played a critical role in their acculturation process.

The main role of the Korean immigrants’ daily physical activity participation before immigration could be described as resulting from psychological benefits, ‘Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan’, which occurs through relaxed and unorganized involvement in solitary or self-initiated physical activities. According to Kim (2001), “literally, Ki-Bun means ‘a state of mind or atmosphere’ and Chun-Whan means ‘transformation, change, or shift.’ Therefore, Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan can be interpreted as a ‘shift in the state of mind’ as a result of engaging in various activities, the changes could be simple or complex, deliberate or spontaneous” (p. 104). For the first- and one-
and-a-half generation Korean immigrants, *Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan* serves a meaningful part of their daily physical activities regardless of immigration and length of stay in the United States. In short, physical activities that Koreans participate in associated with *Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan* could be anything from intentionally created solitary and social activities to self-focused physical activity. “*Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan* can be characterized as a way to escape from a routine life, stress reduction, or relaxation through which people are refreshed and rejuvenated” (Kim, 2001, p.105). The research participants identified various physical activities as a means of achieving *Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan*.

Several participants stated that they enjoy casual and relaxed physical activity with other people for *Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan* reasons. Mr. Kim provided a good example in describing how he was involved in effortless and relaxed physical activities during his school years:

Rae-Won: When I was younger, just hanging out with my friends was exercise in itself. We used to ride bike during my elementary school days. In middle and high school, I also swam... In college, I played lots of soccer and bowling because it is better to have *Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan* with my classmates than by myself. I don’t know if you can actually say that it is a sport. I think it’s what most people consider a recreational activity.

In the case of Ms. Han, casual walking and mountain climbing were ways to have *Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan* in the past. She explained as follows:

There was a park close to my home in Korea and I got to take walks with my parents or myself. I walked almost everyday. Come nighttime, my house was in Gwacheon, so I would walk for two hours to the Seoul Grand Park. So two hours of walking everyday and hiking expeditions 2-3 times a year. The hiking trips usually last like four to five days. I even carried my baby daughter on my back while hiking up Mt. Halla. Sometimes, I would even go to the nearby art museums pushing my daughter around in a baby carriage, and that’s all a workout right there.

And while Ms. Han admitted that she does zero amount of exercising after immigrating compared to how active she was in Korea, she still loves hiking, and making the hiking plan made her happy when she was accompanied by her husband and daughter. Similarly, Ms. Park shared her experience of *Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan* in Korea, in context of hiking:
Of course even in Korea I wanted to exercise… But truthfully I barely engaged in a daily workout in Korea, because I was so busy with my job. But I occasionally did hiking or other walking-related activities for Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan. At school, the teachers would all get together to go to the mountains or nearby parks. Every once in a year, a group of teachers would go hiking, then I would participate.

After arrival in the United States, involvement in daily physical activities for Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan reasons seemed to be more intended for relief from stressful and hard-working immigration life. According to Mr. Cha, playing golf was a good activity for relieving the stress from his daily routines. As Mr. Cha said:

I release my stress while playing golf. Even if I am healthy, I think stress can ruin my health. I think that’s a positive effect of exercising. I get rid of a lot of stress while playing golf. I have so many things that I have to take care of, from my personal problem to work related. So, the only activity that takes me away from all those stresses and problems is golf. It’s about four hours. For those hours, I am free. Then I get back to work.

The experience of Mr. Jun-Gi Lee was also another clear example of adjusting to hiking in the United States:

I just like golf, you know. I feel I release my stress when I sweat and feel fresh. My emotional stresses and what not go away when I exercise. I might feel down, but it gets better. I like it. To live through new life as an immigrant, I think playing golf with my friends definitely played a very important role.

The statements of several interviewed Korean immigrants demonstrated that physical activities for Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan did not necessarily require direct social interactions with other people. For example, an individual takes a walk alone without socializing with others in which he/she can enjoy very personal and private time and experience relaxation and pleasure through less structured self-focused physical activities. As opposed to the involvement in self-focused physical activities, an individual can engage as well in recreational sports and physical activities for Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan with social interactions with others such as family members, close friends, and colleagues. In many cases, first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants tended to choose physical activities that require interaction in social settings for Ki-Bun-Chun-
Whan before immigration, and they became more involved in self-focused physical activities for Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan after arrival in the United States.

Most of the interviewees confirmed that certain physical activities chosen for Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan enabled them to achieve not only the physical health but also psychological growth; in addition, these advantages, resulting from engaging in daily physical activities, proved to be a meaningful part of their experiences. However, involvement in recreational sport and physical activities was not solely limited to Ki-Bun-Chun-Whan for the first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants after the immigration to the new country. The findings of this study suggest that the major role daily physical activities played in the Korean immigrants’ adaptation process was different along three distinct ways. In the following section, three additional roles of daily physical activities in the participants’ adaptation process are explained.

(b) Promoting Acculturation to the Mainstream Society. First, the first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants were more likely to use recreational sports and physical activities as a way to promote acculturation to the mainstream society, particularly during the period of initial adaptation. The findings indicated that the participation in recreational sports and physical activities exposed them to the new culture of the mainstream population, the White American middle-class group, and it played a significant role in facilitating closer social relations through the participation in their daily physical activities. According to some of the first-generation Korean immigrants, participation in certain physical activities such as golf or attendance at their children’s sport-related activities such as after-school sporting activities and school-sponsored events accelerated them to establish the initial contacts with the mainstream population and helped them to promote acculturation into the mainstream society. As a 54-year-old male first-generation Korean immigrant, Ji-Hoon, put it:
Exercising together is good for building relationships with people. Obviously, being a pastor at a Korean church gives me plenty of opportunity for human engagement, but James and I, in particular, although he was a church member, were able to bond through him teaching me golf. Because I had already learned a little golf, it was easier for me to talk to James and asked him questions about the ways of life in the U.S. when exercising together. He was a professional golf player in the past. I think exercise is very good, because it helps strengthen relationships between people.

Similarly, Ms. Young-Ae Lee also mentioned that the first time she interacted with the mainstream population was through her children’s involvement in physical activities. As a 43-year-old female first-generation Korean immigrant, Young-Ae, who had a 7-year-old daughter and 5-year-old son at the time of immigration, recalled,

You know… the mothers often sit in together and talk while their children are playing a sport. Through that, I learned about a lot of things. When I first arrived in the United States, it’s nice to get important sources for living here and I realize, ‘Wow, I guess there are things like that here’. With the helpful tips, it’s easier for me to get used to living here. I and my two adorable children got together with people who live on the other side of town just to get together and exercise together. People who live in the neighborhoods are able to tell us about what we should do or give us helpful tips so that we can get used to living here more easily. Sometimes, my family did play sports together but I also exercise with other families who lived in town but first, we had to find a location. We played in places like nearby sporting facilities or parks and we exposed and learned much about the mainstream culture here.

On many occasions, the findings of this study showed that the one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants were more likely to have many more opportunities to interact with the mainstream population through participating in school-related physical activities and in events than did their parents, first-generation Korean immigrants. A comment made by a 19-year-old male college student, In-Sung, who had immigrated to the United States ten years ago, serves as a good example:

Well…I’ve been playing soccer ever since I got here… (Pause) It’s an everyday after-school activity that I do. I really enjoy it. The practice starts at 4:15 and lasts till 6:30. There are two coaches and about 25 players. It’s just our school’s soccer team that represents our school, and…we compete with other schools. I mainly do it for fun. When I play soccer with friends at school, it’s just fun to goof around… We make fun of each other if one makes a mistake…try to show off some skills, or just compete. I just love hanging out with them playing sports. Even on weekends, I play soccer with them, eat
lunch, and then go to my friends’ house. I just hang out with them just talking, playing games.

Another one-and-a-half-generation male Korean immigrant, Sang-Woo, also commented that he was more involved in school-related activities than his busy-working parents during the initial period of adaptation, and his active participation made it easier to contact mainstream peers and to overcome his lack of English skills in such a short time. As Sang-Woo recalled,

As I described, transition from Korea to the United States was very difficult. First, the language barrier, the language barrier between Korean and English was harder than I expected. I thought… I received a fine English education, and I did. But the wall between English in Korea and English in the United States was very high and difficult. When I first came to the United States, I’d go play sports and games with my neighborhood friends and school friends, and become friends with them easier. You don’t need to speak English as much during playing. I guess, since you make more friends, American friends, so English gets better. Eventually, I caught up to the level I am at right now. It took me a while but I got there.

The comments from a 20-year-old one-and-a-half-generation female college student, Na-Young, also supported this theme:

When I was young, during or after school, I went outside and played with my friends. Not because the thought of exercising burdened me, but because, at that age, I just liked to move around. Indirectly, adjusting to another lifestyle helped with exercising. As I fit in with friends, I would go over to their houses or go to birthday parties I was invited to and was able to see how Americans lived… But afterwards, I remembered that I would tell my mother how the houses looked like, how I wore shoes inside the house, and stuff like that.

(c) Assimilating to Their Own Sub-Culture. The findings of this study showed tennis and golf to be particularly popular in the Korean immigrant community. Several of the first-generation male Korean immigrants indicated that their increased level of participation in certain sports, tennis and golf, could be ascribed not only to the hidden demand that they had not participated in these sports in Korea before but also to the increased tendency to get involved in ethnic sub-culture after the arrival in the United States. A 52-year-old male Korean immigrant described well that tennis and golf were not popular in his home country, but these sports had become a trend in the Korean immigrant community in the United States. As Mr. Cha compared
his physical activity patterns between the time that he lived in Korea and after the immigration period. He said:

There are definitely changes in my physical activity pattern when I was in Korea and since I moved to United States. When I was in Korea, tennis was known as a luxurious sport, the sport only for the rich. Sports that were somewhat domestic includes badminton. Let’s see, that’s in the early 80’s. That’s when I came here. When I came here, all sorts of sports were open for everyone. Not just tennis, but as well as golf and bowling. If my economic level reaches where I want it to be, I could enjoy those sports. When I first came here, tennis was very popular. So, I started with tennis. Then, the trend changed to bowling, which that cost more than tennis. So, I started playing bowling. After tennis and bowling era ends, golf comes in to the Korean society in America. Amount of years I played golf is not that long. I’d say about 10 years? I have lived here for 25 years, but golf... compared to other people, I didn’t like golf that much back then. And I had this stereotype about golf that golf is only for those with money, so I just worked hard. But when I looked around, literally everyone played golf. And it was hard to make friends by not playing golf. So I started golf then, and now I can pretty much play with everyone.

One of the first-generation female Korean immigrants described that almost all of her church members played golf, which induced her to reluctantly participate in golf one time. As Ms. Park recalled,

In America, golf seems to be really popular among Korean immigrants, but I have never played golf, so I wouldn’t know. And I don’t like it either. I always tell people that the one sport that I won’t ever play for the life of me is golf. Unwillingly, I’ve gone to the golf course once, because the person I went with kept talking to me how nice it was to walk around the golf course. So finally, one day, I went to the golf course with her and her husband who were very much into golf... I didn’t play but just followed them around. They would ask me “Isn’t this nice?” but I’ve still yet to experience the fun of golf. It’s just a boring sport, and I’m disappointed with people who play it. I don’t ever stop my husband from playing, but golf is just one of the sports that I really don’t understand the point of.

Several first-generation male Korean immigrants mentioned that tennis and golf enjoyed particular popularity in Korean immigrant society, and the emergence of these trendy sports in the host country has been considered as the symbol of successful acculturation to the sub-culture. Thus, many well-established Korean immigrants and even the recently immigrated Koreans showed a great tendency to adopt certain sports, which are regarded as the popular sub-culture recreational sports and physical activities. The following quotes from several first-generation
Korean immigrants provide the evidence of the importance of tennis and golf in their own ethnic sub-culture.

A 52-year-old grocery store owner, Tae-Hyun, contributed the following:

I feel guilty for playing too much golf. I think I am over doing the golf compared to my situation. I am a Korean immigrant who lives in the United States. I miss Koreans a lot. The only place I can meet Korean people is golf course because everybody plays golf in the United States. So, if they call me to go for a round, then I always tried to go with them. And, when I see Koreans, who I’ve never met before at the course, I go say hi to them first. Mainly, be glad to see them because we met not at a golf course in Korea, but here in the United States. So I made a lot of Korean friends through like this.

A 54-year-old first-generation Korean immigrant, pastor of a Korean Baptist church, also described the popular sub-culture of sports among the Korean immigrants, indicating that tennis and golf were only reserved for the richest in Korea, but ultimately, he realized that they increased his level of involvement and interest in such sports after the immigration to the United States. Mr. Joo described his experience as follows:

In Korea, I hardly exercised at all. The typical Korean lifestyle probably has changed a lot since I left, but back then, exercising and spending money to maintain one’s health was not very common. People just overworked themselves, and running the churches in Seoul definitely required a lot of work. After graduating from college, I lived for 10 years without exercise. ‘Why exercise is necessary?’ I would question to myself. So, the bottom line is, I did not engage in any exercise when I lived in Korea. Even despite occasionally playing ball in college with my friends, after graduating, well….But after coming to the U.S., I feel like I have been placed in a great surrounding for my health. While here, the only sports I have learned are golf and tennis. By any stretch of the imagination, these are definitely not sports I am allowed to participate in when I lived in Korea. But here, I often play golf and tennis with my church members and I like to engage with my church members through golf and tennis. To be honest with you, I started playing golf about four or five years ago for the ministry purpose. While trying to think of a way to meet them, I had heard that almost every Korean people played golf. So, rather than for my health, I learned golf from Mr. Han in order to start a golf ministry. The ministry lasted for only about several months and I was not really satisfied with the outcomes. But I still know that it was a good way to connect with Korean people who are non-Christian and bring them out to church because golf is the one most Korean immigrants participated in.

(d) Facilitating Ethnic Identity and Solidifying Cultural Ties. Lastly, a finding of this study showed the role of daily physical activity in the first- and one-and-a-half-generation
Korean immigrants’ acculturation process to help preserve their ethnic identity and promotion group solidarity. This revealed the sense of belonging to the Korean immigrant community, which was established simply by their involvement in physical activity with other Korean immigrants. In an unfamiliar environment, their involvement in recreational sports and physical activities strengthened the solidarity and allowed Korean immigrants to interact and socialize with individuals with whom they shared the same culture, tradition, beliefs, values, language, experience, life styles, and physical appearance. This finding applies to both first-generation Korean immigrants and oneand-a-half-generation Korean immigrants. For example, several of the first-generation Korean immigrants stressed the importance of golf and tennis that helped in establishing network and solidifying ties within Korean immigrant community. As Woo-Seong, a 45-year-old first-generation male Korean immigrant, expressed the following:

If I fall into a sport, the fun that I have from it is enough to get me to play it. Especially with church people or other close Korean people, playing sports that include several people brings everyone together. And dining together when we are hungry after the tennis game or practice is a really fun way to do with them. I think I cannot live apart from the Korean community. Particularly, when I came to the United States, I was really involved in Korean society. I felt I belonged to the Korean community by participating in tennis or other physical activities with my Korean friends… Of course, tennis is still one of my favorites after the immigration. And I got to know different people through those physical activities at the beginning period of immigration.

The following quote from one of the first-generation male Korean immigrants also described that golf served the purpose of building ethnic networks and strengthening ties among Korean business owners. The 43-year-old beauty supply shop owner, Jun-Gi, offered the following:

Here in the immigration society, we make friends mainly through church, not by exercising. Since we live a part, we only see each other once a week at church. So, with the people from church, we exercise together, too. However, golf is different. Golf is different here in the United States. It’s hard to make friends when it reaches my age, because, if I make unreliable friends or swindlers, I’ll be hurt by them. If I like the person, I’d go for a round with them a few more times and decide. At the field, I am just trying to keep the manner and just enjoy their company. After that, and I still like them then I’d keep in contact. But, with my business friends, we have a lot to talk about since we are working in same field of business. I often play with visiting scholars or long-term visitors
from Korea, but I felt that we have different aspects on many things. I mostly play with them because we can share common thoughts and some useful information which is very helpful in running our businesses while playing golf. So, I usually play golf with my business friends. Talking about some issues like employment conditions or labor market conditions with non-immigrant people? It cannot be possible because we have nothing to share in common.

While participation in tennis and golf played a significant role in promoting the group solidarity and ethnic network among the first-generation Korean immigrants, ethnic soccer clubs served a similar purpose of strengthening ethnic values and retaining ethnic identity among one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants. Sang-Woo, a 21-year-old one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrant, commented on how playing soccer in a Korean Soccer Club constituted a large proportion of his leisure time:

I love the people I play with and the sense of belonging. Yeh… that’s why I love to play games with Korean people during the whole weekend. I’d play soccer for Korean Soccer Club on Wednesday evening and Saturday morning, and I’d play baseball on Sunday afternoon with my Korean church friends. Soccer is not a popular sport here in the United States, but most of Koreans are so wildly excited at soccer. The Korean Soccer Club is very inchoate club in the Korean immigrant community, I guess only one to one-and-a-half years old. It is not affiliated with any religious institutions, so almost everybody in the Korean community is welcomed to participate. All of them have really good attitude. They are really nice people and it’s always to have nice friendly games with them. And their age groups are from… high school students to forties. We have our own uniforms with the player’s name and number on it, and we regularly have a friendly match with others. If someone shows the interest to join the team during the practice, we gladly say “yes” and enjoy the rest of the time together. I think… about two or three months ago, two police officers, mid-aged White guys, continued to stay over until our game-like practice is over, and they asked whether they could join. Of course, we invited them for the next practice and had a lot of fun together. I think the participation in ethnic soccer team will definitely help Korean immigrants to retain their ethnic identity and strengthening group solidarity through not only the soccer experience but also the post-match socializing such as drinking and having light meal together. And… I think the ethnic sport club is likely to gain a social significance in the mainstream society.

Influencing Factors on Sport Behavior

The findings of this study showed that there are many influencing factors that affected first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants’ sport behavior, such as the degree of
participation, preferences, and specific constraints experienced by the immigrant population. While some of the influencing factors on Korean immigrants’ sport behavior are also applicable to the general population, a number of constraining factors that affect their daily physical activity and sporting experiences are quite different from those of the general population; some of the constraints are only associated with their specific circumstance, immigration to the United States. In this section, I will discuss the major factors that are likely to influence the Korean immigrants’ sport behavior in their daily life: Confucian values, which are pervasive in Korean society and its impact on gender role, English language fluency, age, affiliation with ethnic organization and/or religious institutions, socio-economic status, occupational status, health status and concerns, previous experience of physical activity’s benefits, and desire to assimilate to the mainstream society.

**Confucianism and Gender**

Confucianism is an ancient Chinese philosophical system with non-religious ethics, but has a tremendous impact on every sector of traditional Korean culture and still remains the prevalent Chinese philosophy for the 21st century in South Korea. Confucianism is centered on three cardinal principles and five ethical norms (Mangan & Ha, 2001). The three cardinal principles emphasize loyalty, filial piety, and fidelity. The five ethical norms, which deal with human relationships, are 1) righteousness and obligation between rulers and ministers, 2) cordiality and closeness between parents and children, 3) distinguished respective spheres between husband and wife, 4) order and benevolence between elders and juniors, and 5) good faith between friends.

During the Korea Yi Dynasty (1392-1910), Confucianism was accepted by the government for political purposes. In order to establish the new political system and doctrine and
also to eliminate the previous dynasty’s political power, Confucianism was chosen as an anti-Buddhism policy. Under Confucianism, the Buddhist monks, the most powerful individuals during the previous era, Koryo Dynasty (918-1392), lost their political power and the Buddhist property and/or land, which were either forfeited or strictly regulated. Furthermore, the Yi Dynasty’s Confucianism became a dominant policy to offer the rationale and regulation of hierarchical social system and set the principles and moral guidance for the elite and the rest of the society. During the entire Yi Dynasty period, the Yi regime chiefly emphasized the following elements of Confucian philosophy for the political and administrative tenets: value of education, formalities, respect of authority, and social hierarchy.

Confucian philosophy reached deeply into almost all aspects of Korean culture, and this virtue-based Confucianism, the three cardinal principles and the five ethical norms, still forms the basis for moral and ethical laws, and serves as the primary philosophy that guides Korean daily life and behavior, even though the role of Confucianism as the established national philosophy ended a century ago. According to Yi and William (1967), “family relationships, political attitudes, approaches to problem-solving and many other aspects of Korean life show the imprint of the Confucian tradition” (p. 43). Without exception, for most Korean immigrants in the United States, Confucian philosophy is alive and plays a significant role in their cultural values, behavior, attitudes, and family structure. Referring to the study by Fukuyama (1993), Zhou and Kim (2006) stated that “different ethnic groups possess identifiable characteristics, that encompass cultural values, practices, and types of social networks; these characteristics were formed in the homeland and transplanted with minor modifications by immigrants to the new land, where they were transmitted and perpetuated from generation to generation” (p. 3). Similarly, the first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants residing in the Atlanta,
Georgia Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) also hold a set of cultural values, which is deeply rooted in Confucianism, and its elements put an emphasis on scholarship and formalism, and they have greatly influenced general participation patterns and preferences for daily physical activity in the Korean population.

The following quotation supported the perspective that an intellectual elite group is expected to be an exemplary person to the rest of the society, and this elitism on the basis of Confucian philosophy only emphasizes the respect for scholarship and formalism. Therefore, the upper class’s devaluing of physical activity, regardless of level of involvement and degree of strenuousness, influenced the Korean’s physical activity participation pattern and preference. A 45-year-old first-generation Korean male, Woo-Seong, expressed his opinion:

Ahh… Now that I think about it I don’t really like team sports. It’s good with two people to get together but when you have teams of eight or more, it gets overwhelming. I have never really learned soccer so I don’t play it too often. When too many people get together, only the strong players get to play and the others are ignored. I just think individualized sports are better because the experience of individual sports seems to have a less risk of losing the Yang ban Che-Myeon [the upper class’ reputation].

In addition, Nun-Chi is one of the important interpersonal relationship skills in Korean culture, happening when individuals are in an unfamiliar environment and/or start to develop a new social interaction with people. For example, Na-Young, a 20-year-old one-and-a-half-generation female Korean immigrant, shared her experience of Nun-Chi when she worked out at the University’s recreational sports center:

After the Virginia Tech massacre last April, I’d often times feel uncomfortable going out to the gym. There was sensitivity towards Asians, so I wondered what Americans would think when they saw me. Besides that, there was nothing else I was uncomfortable about.

Similar responses were also stated by one of the first-generation Korean immigrants. As a 43-year-old beauty supply shop owner, Jun-Gi, described,
Right after the Virginia Tech massacre, I was driven by the fear and concern about unrecoverable overall image of Korean people for a couple of weeks. That’s how it is in the United States. Even before the Virginia Tech incident, I am still concerned about it. Try not to harm other people, and try to well establish good images of Koreans. Not so much now, but the aftereffect… I don’t know. We were the one that harm and they are the one that being harmed. Maybe because of that, I was talking to my friends about it 2 days ago, and I think there are something left behind.

According to Kim’s (2001) explanation about the term, Nun-Chi, “there is no direct translation of the Korean word Nun-Chi in English, but it can be interpreted as an ability to perceive unexpressed emotions, attitudes, and thoughts of another person or sensitivity to implicit norms and conventions. Nun-Chi also means the ability to read a situation, or environment and know what to do before being asked” (p. 131). The findings of this study represented that both Yang ban Che-Myeon and Nun-Chi are critical Korean cultural concepts, reflecting Confucian elements.

The five ethical norms of Confucianism dealt with human relationship, which formed the structure of society and profoundly influenced the tightly defined roles and status of each individual in relations to others. One of the ethical virtues of Confucianism, the clear distinction in gender roles and family hierarchy between husband and wife, explains the Korea’s male-dominated society. Even though the Korean immigrants adapt to the new values and roles of mainstream society after the immigration to the United States, they tend to maintain the values of their native culture, which are influenced by Confucian philosophy, and by the notion of the gender division in the family, and the devaluing of domestic work that still exists in the Korean society.

The clear distinction between gender roles in the family system based on the traditional Confucian philosophy is reflected in this study. The findings of this study show strictly divided gender roles in both family and social structure, and also show beliefs of natural superiority of male over female, which contribute to a differentiation in patterns and preference of physical
activity participation. Very interestingly, all of the first- and one-and-a-half-generation female Korean immigrants, regardless of their age, length of stay in the United States, and socio-economic status, tend to prefer to participate in individual- and/or dual-type sports and physical activities, mainly focusing on the aesthetic features, while most of their counterparts enjoyed the competitive sporting experiences. Three of the interviewed female participants ranked Yoga as a number one wanted activity and stated that they are eager to participate in Yoga class. As Yoo-Jin, a 50-year-old full-time housewife, who regularly participated in a 30-minute to one-hour walking activity almost everyday, commented:

I use the treadmill at home. It’s been about three years since we’ve bought this, and I’ve just recently started using this daily. Other than walking, another indoor sport that I really want to try is Yoga. When I used to go to the YMCA, I tried to sign up for Yoga with my daughters, but things didn’t end up working out. The class that I went to was not for beginners. So I dropped out and waited for that instructor to return to teach the beginners class, but I didn’t end up doing it. But I still really want to try yoga. And out of the other indoor sports, I’d like to try to learn swimming, but I can’t right now, because I’m scared of the water. But I’d still like to learn it sometime. I sometimes go with my kids to the pool, but still, I can’t seem to learn. The right opportunity hasn’t come yet.

As teenagers and young ladies are especially concerned about their physical appearance and body image, ranking it as the number one primary reason for becoming involved in physical activities, a 20-year-old one-and-a-half-generation female Korean immigrant, Na-Young, showed a great interest in her body image and expressed her enthusiasm to have an opportunity to learn Yoga:

When I become my mother’s age, I want to avoid high blood pressure or heart problems, so I work ahead on having a habit of exercising. As for now though, because I’m still young, the term ‘physical health’ makes me think of body image. Although I haven’t tried it yet, I would like to try Yoga someday. They say yoga is good for one’s mental health. During the last semester, the Yoga classes didn’t fit with my class schedule, so I was unable to sign up for it. But I would still like to try it.

For all of the female Korean immigrants, the choice of their daily recreational sports and physical activity were greatly impacted by the traditional Confucian values. Thus, the emphasis
on gender role division in the family and social system, women’s belonging in the domestic work, and the wide spread notion of women’s subordination to men creates the gender segregation of physical activity and distinct participation patterns. Accordingly, the female participants solely chose physical activities that are socially acceptable in terms of the perceived gender appropriateness -- such as Yoga, stretching, light weight lifting, and walking -- and they were more likely not to participate in out-of-home activities. The following shared experiences from a couple of female Korean immigrants clearly showed gender differences in participation patterns and physical activity preferences. An 18-year old female college student, Hyo-Ri, who immigrated to the United States 10 years prior to the interview, described her experience:

After learning yoga last year, I really get itches to really stretch or to exercise. Otherwise, I feel really stiff. So I do yoga or dance in my room when I am in the mood. It’s not often but I sometimes go out and play tennis with my brother and dad.

A similar description was also given by Young-Ae Lee, a 43-year-old Korean housewife, in response to a question about some characteristics of preferred activities:

I like to exercise indoors instead of the hot heat outside. It’s way too hot. I like things like swimming or aerobics. I don’t know if it’s because I don’t like to exercise that much but I don’t necessarily like team sports. While I am at home, I tried to do at least crunches or sit-ups. I already like to stretch.

Furthermore, the first-generation female Korean immigrants were severely constrained from sport participation because of the domestic roles of female being influenced by the Confucian philosophy. In Korean society, there is still a clear distinction in roles between female and male in the family structure, and women are traditionally responsible for both parenting and housework. Therefore, the emphasis on the gender role and family hierarchy based on the Confucian values contribute to the factors that constrain women from participating in physical activities or accessing facilities in their daily life. All of the first-generation female participants confirmed that maintaining the active pursuit was very difficult when their children were at the
school-age level. As Ye-Seul, a 37-year-old first-generation female Korean immigrant commented,

When I first came to America, it was really impossible for me to exercise. During those days, I had to leave my daughter at someone else’s house. As soon as work ended, I had to go pick her up and come home to clean up, and it would be 9 o’clock before I knew it. I really had no time to think about exercise then. Now, she has grown a little, and I can leave her by herself to take a walk around the neighborhood on my own. But, it’s being busy even though I don’t have a set work schedule. The best time for exercise is in the early morning or late afternoon, but I’m too tired in the morning, and my daughter comes home from school around 4, and when she comes, I feed her and one thing after another, before you know it, it’s 8. Even going out to work out at that time would be okay, but it would be late after I finish, maybe around 9. I take care of a child who is still growing, and perhaps this is what really prevents me from a flexible schedule to exercise. Who knows, maybe after my kid grows up, I’ll have a little bit more freedom.

Mrs. Park’s statement also demonstrated the clear gender role distinction about family matters and its impact on her participation pattern:

When I first came to America, I was unable to do anything. First of all, my kids were really young, and I had to take them around with me for the most part, so my circumstances really didn’t allow me to exercise. That was when they were very young. As they grew up a bit, I was able to exercise; I enrolled my children and myself at the YMCA for swimming lessons.

Another participant, Mrs. Yoon, talked about the female’s primary roles of childcare and domestic tasks in the family as a main factor constraining her from participation in physical activity:

Before I got married, I used to swim a lot and… I also played golf. I went to the ranges alone and just hit the balls. After I got married, I became too busy to have any sort of a consistent exercise routine. I like to exercise… I exercise sporadically. I mean I still walk around the neighborhood. Since I still have kids in grade school it’s hard for me to find the time. I ask my kids when they come home from school, “How was school today,” but if they came home and I just told them, “Mommy is going out to exercise,” then I can’t really watch the kids. It’s really important to spend time with them especially when they are younger. Since the kids become a bit older, we have more time available. But… after I feed the kids their dinner and help them on their school work and shower them, it’s already past ten o’clock. There are exercise equipments in the basement and I always remind myself to do it… but the household laundry and other things become my priority. I just say, ‘Man, I am just too tired’, and excuse myself out of it.
Mrs. Yoon further described the scene of female Korean immigrants’ double duty – participation in workforce after the immigration and the domestic labor – as a major constraint of the regular physical activity, and explained her low level of physical activity participation to be due to the double duty as compared with the increased participation in active physical pursuits of her close friends who reside in Korea. Mrs. Yoon explained:

I always try to set the schedule based on my children’s needs. In Korea, kids go off everywhere by themselves once they get into elementary school and they have the freedom to because they can walk or ride the bus anywhere. Here… well, I have to take them from here to there, ride after ride. After that, the day is basically over. If I made time for myself to exercise, it would be during the time that my kids were in school but I have to work during those times. If I was a full-time housewife, it’ll be more realistic for me to go the YMCA or other sporting facilities while my kids were school but in America, most couples both go out and work. It sometimes seems that Korean people living in Korea might have more leisure in their schedules to make time for exercise. The kids take care of whatever they need to on their own. They take care of it alone. There isn’t much time I can devote to myself. After dinner, practically all the time of the day has gone. I wonder how Korean mothers get activities like yoga and hiking done when their kids are at tutoring. That’s what I believe is the same difference between Korean and American lifestyles. The mothers know that here they are so busy working and whatnot that they really don’t have the time to enjoy that sort of leisure. I mean, there aren’t that many chances for Korean mothers to work in Korea. Here, work and making money depends on how much you apply yourself. I believe that is the greatest difference between Korea and America. I think the Immigrants’ lifestyles consists of a family-oriented core and there aren’t many opportunities to really exercise until the kids get older and move out and live in their own dorm.

**Language Proficiency**

The findings of this study suggested that the lack of English language fluency is one of the influencing factors affecting first and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants’ sport behavior. While the previous constraints of physical activity participation, including elements of Confucianism and gender role distinction deeply rooted in the Confucian values, are regarded as the constraining factors only for Korean or Asian ethnic groups, another constraint on the daily recreational sports and physical activity participation is lack of language fluency, which is particularly applicable to most immigrant groups. The level of difficulty in speaking English
experienced by the immigrants vary from the group’s immigration histories, socio-economic status, and age at the time of immigration. Even though most of the Koreans who immigrated to the United States after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965 had high educational and occupational backgrounds in their homeland, they experienced the extreme language difficulty after immigration to the United States.

The findings of the study indicated that the Korean immigrants had a noticeable tendency to become involved only in the ethnic sports club or to participate in picnic, social activities, or recreational activities sponsored by the ethnic church and/or ethnic organizations instead of establishing the social relationships with the mainstream people. Due to the lack of language proficiency, especially during the initial adaptation period, their participation in recreational sports and physical activities was either severely restricted or limited only to ethnic enclaves.

The following quote from Mr. Lee well described his extreme stress associated with the language difficulty during the period of initial adaptation. She recalled the following:

The biggest stress was the language barrier. For example, when I go to McDonald and order coke, coffee would come out. Back then, they didn’t even have their menus numbered. I would even spell out the order but the workers there won’t understand and that was very stressful. There are a lot places where I could release stress in Korea, such as sports bars or pool house. But, there are not that many in America, so I definitely release the stress when we, just men, exercise together and drink. My immigrant life would be different if I didn’t have that. I don’t know. A lot of ladies would watch Korean dramas and videos or shop to release stress. But Korean men in the United States are very humbled. Koreans in the United States are a lot more naïve compared to Koreans in Korea, especially the people who have lived here for long, not the new comers. The old comers are kind and very family oriented. They are always thinking about just their family and work. That’s it. So without exercise, I don’t know how I could live. To live through new life as an immigrant, exercising and hangout with my Korean friends definitely played a very important role.

Similarly, Ji-Hoon, a 54-year-old-first generation Korean immigrant also described her experience:

When I first came to America, I did not even give exercise a thought. But because of that, I think it cost me my health. I remember always being tired. I honestly didn’t think about it,
not even to benefit my health. I was pretty young when I first came to America, around my 30’s. There were people around me who did invite me to exercise with them, but I still didn’t think about any actual exercise. But as soon as I started exercising with Korean church members, I began to gain a lot more energy. Of course, exercising together always provides an opportunity for a closer bond and sense of belonging because we all have many things in common, such as food, language, values, culture, and so on. An advantage to exercising, other than just doing it, is the interaction that takes place. This is why, rather than tennis or golf, a sport like soccer is better, in my opinion. In soccer, one is forced to come into physical contact with another. In the midst of the fatigue that comes from all the pushing and shoving, it becomes easier to open up to each other and form a close bond.

A similar theme was also obtained from interviews with a 34-year-old first-generation male Koran immigrant, who immigrated to the United States 12 years ago:

People say that when you come to study in America, in order to improve your English, you purposely try to immerse yourself with Americans and try to avoid Koreans altogether. But, I tried to reserve that time for myself when I have leftover time. I’m a pretty unsocial person in general, so I don’t really do many sports with people. When I passed through the initial adaptation period, it was really not easy to find the American gym partners and interact with them without any discomfort not only because of my personality but also because of my lack of overall adaptability to the new life, as well as the inadequate English skills.

Moreover, the findings of this study identify Korean immigrants’ increasing level of participation in physical activity without the English proficiency during the initial period after the arrival in the United States to gradually lead to the improvement of their language skills. Their ability to speak English fluently through physical activity participation with peers further led to their active involvement physical activity. Interestingly, this result was only pronounced among the interviewed one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants regardless of their gender.

As an 18-year-old female college student, Hyo-Ri, a one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrant, who immigrated at the age of 8 to the United States, stated,

When I first came to America, I played with kids who couldn’t speak Korean. They were born here and are Korean American. But instead, my brother and I got to learn English a lot more quickly. I used to walk everywhere and exercise outside with the other kids for the first two to three years. We just met outside and spent our time playing outside. Especially in the summer, I swam with really close friends including them. After swimming the whole summer and going back to school, I was still not fluent but I could communicate with kids through the language of sports and had much more confidence. As
I used English while exercising, I realized that I learned English so much faster than I could’ve imagined. The kids were played with were Korean Americans who could not speak any Korean. So the only way for us to communicate was for us to learn English. We learned so much from them and we used all the words and phrases at home over and over again until we got used to them. Then, English wasn’t a problem anymore.

Also, she added that, “If you are good in any sport, I believe that gives you confidence. With that, it’s implied that it’s an easy way to make friends”. A similar response was also obtained from the second interview with a one-and-a-half generation male Korean immigrant, Sang-Woo Kwon, who immigrated to the United States at the age of 10:

When I first came to the United States, I’d go play sports and games with my neighborhood friends and school friends, and become friends with them easier. You don’t need to speak English as much during playing. I guess, since you make more friends, American friends, so English gets better.

In response to a question about the roles of physical activity during the initial period after the immigration, Eun-Hae, a 39-year-old female Korean immigrant, who immigrated to the United States 28 years prior to the interview, explained that she handled the language barrier and very stressful post-arrival experiences by actively engaging in physical activity:

When I first came to America, I couldn’t speak any English so I felt so frustrated and from that… I really had a lot of stress. Even though my heart ached to be back in Korea, I did not want to worry my parents so I tried my hardest to show them the best face I could put on. I really enjoyed swimming then because nobody bothered me when I was swimming, I felt really free from the need to learn English only then. I had so much stress that when I lay asleep at night, I could hear the “tick-tock” sound. When I heard that sound, all I could think about was ‘every tick and tock, it was closer to the time for school’. I was so afraid to think about it and couldn’t go to sleep. In the school, I was afraid that kids might come up to me and try to talk to me and that was stress in itself. In the swimming pool, I didn’t have to worry about being bothered and it was free to swim all day. When we lived in the apartments, I swam until I was tired so that I could go to sleep without hearing the tick tock sound at night.

It is obvious that language is one of the immigration-related constraints influencing Korean immigrants’ physical activity participation. As the details of this study’s findings showed, the immigrants who have insufficient language skills have difficulty in interacting with the
mainstream populations and so could not follow the participation patterns that are similar to those of the host culture.

Age

The findings of the study suggested the age at the time of immigration and current age level of first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants to be influencing factors affecting their sport behavior. The first-generation Korean immigrants feel more comfortable and are more active in physical activities while interacting with other Korean immigrants. In contrast, the one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants, who immigrated to the United States as children, stated that they tended to participate in various types of activities by not only interacting with mainstream individuals, such as with English-speaking classmates and American neighbors, but also socializing with the Korean people. In the case of one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants, the issues of language difficulty were not anymore the constraining factors that limited their physical activity participation patterns or preferences, although all of them experienced the language barriers at the beginning stage of their immigration. This theme is clearly illustrated by each of the following quotes from first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants. The first interview quotation from Woo-Seong, a middle-aged first-generation Korean immigrant points out the following:

If I fall into a sport, the fun that I have from it is enough to get me to play it. Especially with church people or other close Korean people, playing sports that include several people brings everyone together. And dining together when we are hungry after the tennis game or practice is a really fun to do with them. I think I cannot live apart from the Korean community. Particularly, when I came to the U.S., I was really involved in Korean society. I felt I belonged to the Korean community by participating in tennis or other physical activities with my Korean friends… Of course, tennis is still one of my favorites after the immigration. And I got to know different people through those physical activities at the beginning period of immigration.
As opposed to the first-generation Korean immigrant’s involvement in physical activities within their ethnic enclaves, a 21-year-old one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrant described his experience playing U.S. sports with his Korean friends and mainstream friends:

With my Rugby team players, I play pretty much anything. From basketball, soccer, football, tennis, racquetball and such. I mean, the university [the name of university was omitted] has really fine facilities. Just go out to intramural field and gym. There are a lot to do. And I usually play with my Korean church friends and rugby friends. There are all in my age group. But they have totally different attitude towards the game. (Clearing throat) When I play with church people, it’s very social and friendly. But… when I play with my rugby friends, the game turns very competitive in a second. Anyway… I like both. We play the game usually at night, since all of us are students. I really love the people I play with. They are such an awesome group of people.

In addition, the current age level of the participants constrains their level of involvement in recreational sports and physical activities and participation patterns. As they reach a certain age level, the life-stage constraints, such as lack of time and physical exhaustion due to the tight work schedule and being occupied with household duties and the care of children, are minimized and eventually diminished. That is, each life-stage represents different constraining factors of daily physical activity participation. The findings of this study confirm this theme. As Eun-Hae, a 39-year-old female Korean immigrant commented,

Couples who have immigrated here exercised a lot before they were married but after marriage, that sort of exercising lifestyle just takes a break until they reach their fifties when they realize that their whole bodies are aching and realize the importance of exercise. Once the kids are grown up, you are free to participate in sports and different physical activities. When I see my parents, I see them hiking in the mountains three times a week and going to the YMCA after they reach the retirement age. They do lots of things like that. As for my case, because of the responsibility to my kids, there just aren’t too many opportunities. When my husband and I get old, I believe that we’ll get an opportunity to realize how important your health really is. But for now at this age, mothers have too many obligations to the household and your kids constantly need the move of their mother. I watch my kids play the sports that they like and I spot the kids when they are riding on their bikes. I always say that I will have free time when my son is five years older and my daughter ten years older from now.
Mrs. Yoon described the housework and supporting her children as constraints affecting regular physical activity participation, and she had no doubt that taking away the constraints that she currently faced with will definitely trigger the active pursuit in the near future. Another Korean immigrant interviewee, in his forties, described his hard work during the initial period of adaptation:

> When I first arrived in Atlanta, I was too busy to think about how to live and make money. So I didn’t even think about exercising. Since I am a lot more financially stable now, I have more time so I exercise more. When I first got here, I’d go play bowling and go out for drink with my friends. But recently, I usually play golf with my friends because most of them, who are in the same field of business, enjoy playing golf a lot.

In his case, the life-stage constraint on recreational sports and physical activities was financial difficulty. Thus, after he achieved a certain level of financial success, he started to engage in physical activities in which he had longed to participate but was unable to do so due to deficient finances.

Besides, the distinction of age-appropriate sports was strongly stated by some of the interviewed participants, in addition to the distinction of gender roles. Jun-Gi, a 43-year-old first-generation immigrant, commented on his passion for playing tennis but also expressed his concern about its appropriateness according to his age:

> I can say baseball and golf when I compare when I was in Korea and now. I played baseball a lot when I was in Korea. But now I am not as fit as back then, so I do golf a lot more. I want to play tennis with my friends. They are really good. So I was just thinking I can learn from them and someday I can join with them. But, I don’t play tennis that often. I try to start again, but I am concerned about my age. Tennis is somewhat dangerous. I probably won’t go chase all the balls, give them up if I can’t get there. When I feel like I need to sweat, recently. I usually walk when I play golf, so I go for a round once a week or two. I sweat at the practice range. I think I spend about an hour at the practice. I go to the driving range maybe twice a week.

Similar to Mr. Lee’s consideration, another first-generation Korean immigrant also expressed his concern about age-appropriate sports throughout the whole interview:
It’s good to keep exercise as a consistent base in your life. But I think it is important to choose the right exercise for your age so that you will have less pressure on your body. Sometimes I see older people running and their forms are right but you can see how much pressure is being put on their body. For example, when you swim, you are almost like floating and that’s why there is less stress put on your joints. When you age, you have to exercise according to what your doctor say about your heart condition. People often think that regardless of any condition, just running amuck is good. I believe that frequent exercise and controlling the amount depending on your stamina is very important.

Affiliation with ethnic organizations and/or religious institutions

The fourth factor influencing Korean immigrants’ physical activity experience was involvement in ethnic organizations. Several Korean immigrants mentioned that their participation in sports and physical activity within their own ethnic community was an efficient way to overcome the loneliness and feeling of social isolation during the first period after immigration. The findings of this study also showed that the Korean immigrants were more likely to participate in social gatherings and casual physical activity settings during the post-arrival period for the following purposes. First, the immigrants who recently arrived to the United States initiated building ethnic networks in their own community because they were in need of tremendous amounts of information that would enable them to start a new way of life, such as finding housing, registering vehicles, shopping information, and acquiring school district information for their children. Second, Korean immigrants were stressed and had feelings of loneliness during their post-arrival adaptation period; however, immigration-related stress and feeling of loneliness or homesickness could be eliminated by actively engaging in various kinds of social activities organized by the Korean community or ethnic organizations. A middle-aged female Korean immigrant, Young-Ae, described why she could develop the social contacts through the physical activity participation and/or her children’s after-school activities:

You know… the mothers often sit in together and talk while their children are playing a sport. Through that, I learned about a lot of things. When I first arrive in the United States, it’s nice to get important sources for living here and I realize, ‘Wow, I guess there are things like that here’. With the helpful tips, it’s easier for me to get used to living here. I
and my two adorable children got together with people who live on the other side of town just to get together and exercise together. People who live in the neighborhoods are able to tell us about what we should do or helpful tips so that we can get used to living here more easily. Sometimes, my family did play sports together but I also exercise with other families who lived in town but first, we had to find a location. We played in places like nearby sporting facilities or parks and we exposed and learned much about the mainstream culture here.

Woo-Seong, a middle-aged first-generation Korean immigrant described in detail his experience during the first few years after the immigration:

When I first came to the States, for the first two and a half years I was living here alone. I got to exercise a lot more. I suppose it was because I missed my family. At the beginning, I missed them so much. Thinking about the family I left behind in Korea, I exercised every time I missed them.

Surprisingly, most of the first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants had been affiliated with either religious organization or various types of ethnic associations such as business-related organization, social associations, and ethnic sports clubs. Consequently, the Korean immigrants who were affiliated with ethnic organizations or religious institutions and actively participated in community events or social gatherings were less likely to feel social isolation, and this dimension of constraints did not influence their physical activity participation.

Socio-Economic Status

The fifth influencing factor of Korean immigrants’ physical activity participation identified in this study is socio-economic status. During the initial adaptation period, Korean immigrants’ participation in recreational sports and physical activity was severely limited due to the socio-economic constraining factors such as lack of money, lack of time, and physical exhaustion after hard work.

Mrs. Han, a 37-year-old first-generation Korean female immigrant, who regularly engaged in mountain climbing in Korea, pointed out the lack of time and lack of money as
factors constraining her participation in physical activities during the first period after arrival in the United States:

When I first came to America, it was really impossible for me to exercise. During those days, I had to leave my little baby at someone else’s house. As soon as work ended, I had to go pick up my daughter and come home to clean up, and it would be 9 o’clock before I knew it. I really had no time and no money to think about exercising then.

Similarly, another first-generation Korean interviewee, Mr. Joo, attributed his low level of participation in certain recreational sports and physical activity to inadequate financial resources:

Tennis is the sport that I like the best, and I also enjoy golf. Tennis is an enjoyable exercise and doesn’t cost much to play, but golf just doesn’t fit with my lifestyle. I’m not a big fan of the high competition in golf… and also the financial demands of golf. I mean, after all, this neighborhood is relatively cheap. My wife manages a very tight budget with the household income, and it costs me $25 to play a single game of golf… So, golf is reserved for special occasions. With tennis, I play regularly and frequently.

For individuals who held working-class occupations or held a job that requires a large amount of physical labor, their lack of interest due to physical exhaustion after hard work is also highly related to the low level of involvement in recreational sports and physical activities. Instead of actively participating in various types of physical activities, they preferred a sedentary lifestyle and tended to have an inactive leisure pursuit. For example, as a 34-year-old Korean male immigrant, Dong-Won, who performed a physically demanding job, explained the following:

One of the things that I have to do at the office is installation. I only have to do it one or two times a week, but say I have to work 8 hours; I spend 3 out of those 8 hours using all my physical strength. I do that for three hours, and the remaining time is me sitting in front of the computer, taking care of technological things. The rest of the several hours left are for training. If you add it all up, I spend a total of 12 hours engaging in using physical strength. When I come home, I don’t do anything in particular… not any actual exercise. Honestly, other than moving around at work, I don’t exercise at all. My work in itself requires a certain amount of physical labor. Just because it’s a computer job doesn’t mean that it’s all about computers, but said bluntly, it’s more of a physical labor. You have to tear apart ceilings, carry them, lay out cords, move around heavy things…. This is why the type of installation site that I hate the most is one with a lot of stairs. You have to keep going up and down, and in order to install the cords in the ceilings, you have to keep
going up and down ladders. Doing all that for one day feels like a hiking trip. And… I just don’t have time. Just before this interview, I received a phone call. That was not a call I could ignore. It was not from just anyone but actually my office paging me. The voice mail came on… because of these things, I have a lot of stress. Sometimes I’ll receive a call in the early mornings from a customer who is having a problem with a certain site. Because of these interruptions, it’s hard for me to find time for any physical activity. Sometimes, all I do is sit in the car and talk on the phone. I hardly have time for my family either. I think the biggest reason as to not exercising would be lack of time.

After the Korean immigrants passed through the initial adaptation period, they reported that the desired employment was received after several years of hardship, and an increased level of participation in physical activity was obtained. This was because the constraining factors they experienced during the strenuous period after the arrival, such as lack of free time, financial resources, and lack of interest due to the physical exhaustion, had been removed. Even though many Korean immigrants acquired stable employment in the mainstream job markets or successfully ran the family business following the establishment period, they still claimed the lack of time as the main influencing factor in their pursuit of physical activities. This is echoed in the words of a 43-year-old first-generation male Korean immigrant, Jun-Gi, who had a fairly stable family business:

The factors that influence me from exercising… I’d say the difficulty of making time. For my kids and my wife, I can easily exercise all day and not going to the work, but just play. I just enjoy play sports and exercise. But, time management… I can make some time, but I still have to make some time for family and my business. My wife and I switch the working time. I work during the day, and my wife works during the afternoon. After she gets off, she cooks dinner and does other errands and we eat around 8:30. After dinner, it’s about 9:00. That’s the possible time I could exercise, but when I do, I’ll neglect my family, so she will say something. She doesn’t really get ready for breakfast, but you know. Georgia has longer day lights, especially during summer, so I want to be more active, but I have to spend time with my kids. So, I seldom work around the neighborhood with my kids.

Health Status

Lastly, the findings of this study describe that, besides commonly identified immigration-related influencing factors on the immigrants’ participation in recreational sports
and physical activities such as language difficulty, age at the time of immigration, and socioeconomic status, the first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants expressed very strong constraining factor that affected their daily physical activity participation, and their health status: (physical health status, mental health problems and emphasis on their mental health), the family medical history and future health concerns. First, the physical health status that the interviewed participants currently face is closely related to their level of involvement in daily physical activities. A sedentary lifestyle and physical inactivity after the immigration to the United States are the factors causing Korean female immigrants to gain weight. Yoo-Jin, a 50-year-old female first-generation Korean immigrant, described her experience as follows:

In Korea, I didn’t regularly walk or ever feel the need to exercise. But the good thing about Korea is that you get exercise throughout your daily life, whether it be through riding a subway, going up and down the stairs, riding the bus, or walking to the store. Compared to how active I was in Korea, I have definitely grown inactive while living here, so I have also gained a lot of weight.

A similar response was also recorded from an interview with a 19-year-old female one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrant, Hyo-Ri:

During middle and high school years, work overtook me and the added stress kind of prohibited me from exercising. This neighborhood really wasn’t too apt for many exercising opportunities. Those circumstances made it hard but from last year, I realized how important exercising really is and I really felt compelled to always move. I am trying to exercise as much as I can this summer. If you don’t have enough activity, everything gets so stretched out. I gained so much weight in the United States because almost all foods I usually have is fat food such as cheese pizza and hamburgers.

In this study, a higher level of physical health concern about their current physical health status was found to be an important influencing factor for the Korean immigrants’ participation in physical activity. Following the establishment period, many Korean immigrants had an increased level of participation in recreational sports and physical activity. One possible explanation is that they began to realize the significance of physical health and quality of life after they completely
passed through the strenuous initial adaptation period. Several interviewees mentioned that they stopped participating in physical activity during the first period after immigration due to immigrant-specific constraining factors such as language difficulty and financial difficulty; however, the immigrants tended to restart participating in daily physical activities after they had time to adjust to the new environment. Their growing health concerns were directly related to the higher level of involvement in various types of recreational sports and physical activities. As Ye-Seul, a 37-year-old first-generation female Korean immigrant explained,

> When I first came to America, it was really impossible for me to exercise. During those days, I had to leave my daughter at someone else’s house. As soon as work ended, I had to go pick her up and come home to clean up, and it would be 9 o’clock before I knew it. I really had no time to think about exercise then. Now, she has grown a little, and I can leave her by herself to take a walk around the neighborhood on my own. But, it’s being busy even though I don’t have a set work schedule.

Mrs. Han continuously expressed her increased desire for exercising and commented on her better circumstances for participating in daily physical activity compared with those during the initial period after the arrival in the United States:

> As I said earlier, I do not have a set work schedule, so I have as much time as I want. Circumstances are obviously better for me now, though. But, I hardly exercise at all because I think I am too lazy. I do have intent to do it, because I have high blood pressure. I even bought a running machine. At first, I would run three miles, four days out of the week. But I couldn’t keep up with it, despite people saying that becoming addicted to exercise is a good thing…. I couldn’t do it. Nowadays, I probably use the treadmill maybe 1-2 times a month. Maybe every once in a while when I have a really bad headache, I get scared for my health and run on the treadmill for a bit, but I can’t seem to make a habit out of it. If I get any exercise at all, it would be the walking involved if I happen to park my car far away. And also, my job involves sales, so, finding time to do any exercise, other than walking, is hard. I always tried to convince my husband to go hiking with me, at least once or twice every month. I definitely have the intention and will to exercise, but it’s easier said than done.

Another female first-generation Korean immigrant, Yoo-Jin, in her fifties, also described her low level of participation in physical activity after settling in the United States, explaining her
increased level of involvement in physical activity to be due to the removal of constraints and higher expectations for her quality of life:

When I first came to America, I was unable to do anything. First of all, my kids were really young, and I had to take them around with me for the most part, so my circumstances really didn’t allow me to exercise. That was when they were very young. As they grew up a bit, I became to be able to exercise and enrolled my children and myself at the YMCA for swimming lessons and such. I think I didn’t do anything for the first several years after the immigration. After having meals, walking around the neighborhood with my kids would be the most I did. I always have the intention to exercise, but I’ve never thought that the regular physical activity became the essential part of my life until I had to take the medication for my high blood pressure. It’s already been eight years since I’ve been taking medication for high blood pressure. Compared to my age, I started taking medicine a little early. I didn’t get high blood pressure a sodium-rich diet or anything, but my parents have high blood pressure, so my medical problem is an unavoidable genetic one. Because this means I’ll have to be on medication for life, the doctor did tell me to exercise regularly. He always tells me that walking is the best, so I walk almost everyday and try to eat food as bland as possible.

Second, the findings of this study also described that the participants’ mental health conditions, which are associated with the immigration-related variables such as acculturation stress, lack of language fluency, financial difficulty, changes in lifestyle, feelings of marginality and isolation, and their growing consideration of the mental health status play a key role in immigrants’ seeking a high quality of life and highly influenced their level of involvement in physical activity. As interviews from the first-generation Korean immigrants who held a family business pointed out, the participation in physical activities was considered as the primary way to keep their mental health, such as relief of work stress. A 52-year-old grocery store owner, Tae-Hyun, offered the following comments:

For the health sake, yes; but it’s more like to release my stress. When people play golf for their health, they are more older people, but less in my age. When I look at myself, I don’t think so. Golf helps in physical aspect, but I think more in mental. In my case… (pause) I release my stress while playing golf. Even if I am healthy, I think stress can ruin my health. I think that’s a positive effect of exercising. I get rid of a lot of stress while playing golf. I have so many things that I have to be taking care of, from my personal problem to work related. So, the only activity that takes me away from all those stresses and problems is golf. It’s about 4 hours. For that many hours, I am free. Then I get back to work.
In addition, the quote from Jun-Gi, another first-generation Korean immigrant, who had immigrated to the United States 19 years prior to the interview, also indicated that the increased level of participation in physical activity was regarded as the foremost means of removing immigration-related stress:

The biggest stress was the language barrier. For example, when I go to McDonald and order coke, coffee would come out. Back then, they didn’t even have their menus numbered. I would even spell out the order but the workers there won’t understand and that was very stressful. There are a lot places where I could release places in Korea, such as sports bars or pool house. But, there are not that many in America, so I definitely release the stress when we, just men, exercise together and drink. My immigrant life would be different if I didn’t have that. I don’t know. A lot of ladies would watch Korean dramas and videos or shop to release stress. But Korean men in the United States are very humbled. Koreans in the United States are a lot more naïve compared to Koreans in Korea, especially the people who have lived here for long, not the new comers. The old comers are kind and very family oriented. They are always thinking about just their family and work. That’s it. So without exercise, I don’t know how I could live. To live through new life as an immigrant, exercising and hangout with my Korean friends definitely played a very important role.

As the Korean immigrants have gradually assimilated to the mainstream society, they have the tendency to put an emphasis on their mental health, and this is often associated with their increasing level of daily participation in recreational sports and physical activities. Asked about the reinforcing factors that affected physical activity participation, an 18-year-old female college student, Hyo-Ri, mentioned the importance of mental health as an influencing factor in her involvement in physical activity:

The most important thing is the mentality of the person. I am often in an annoyed mood before I go out to exercise. But after I run or do some other form of exercise, I feel so much better. No matter how tired you are or how much you may be complaining, you always feel better after exercising. Your tension is intensely alleviated. I do definitely exercise for my health but it’s also to calm my mind and that encourages me to exercise even harder.

A similar response was common not only among one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants settling in the United States, but also among the first-generation Korean immigrants. At the close
of his interview, Ji-Hoon a 54-year-old male Korean church pastor, commented on the importance of an active lifestyle by participating in various types of physical activities:

I really recommend exercise. After graduating from college, for 10 years, I have not exercised and have even remained ignorant of what exercise really was, but coming here, I feel like I have been placed in a great surrounding for my ministry. While here, I have learned golf and tennis, but I consider these to be my life sports. Exercise like weight-lifting and jump role, I recommended to everyone because they can be done anywhere and anytime. I always try to get my wife to exercise by asking her to walk with me, but she refuses. She is quite stubborn about it. So, I bought her a treadmill. She has to get exercise in some way. Even in Korea, you can buy weights anywhere. Weights and jump ropes. It doesn’t cost to walk. Exercising gives you confidence and energy. This causes your self-esteem to go up. Because not exercising can cause a person to become more easily depressed, I recommend exercise even more. We can be 100% assured that we will not exercise will not cost us anything. We can get injured if we exercise too much, but regardless of what it is, you have to find an exercise that you are able to enjoy.

Furthermore, the findings of this study suggest that the Korean immigrants tend to pay more attention to their future health, considering their current health status and family medical history as they adjust successfully into the host society. Thus, their greater concern about the future health continues to play a critical role in their wanting to have a high level of participation in daily physical activity, a view prevalent among several Korean immigrants, regardless of their age, gender, length of stay, and socio-economic status. This concern was expressed by Na-Young Lee, a 20-year-old female college student:

There is a big difference between the days I exercise and the days I don’t. On the days I don’t, I easily become exhausted. Um… In that sense, I don’t like the days when I don’t exercise. If I don’t exercise, it’s a burden on my mind. A desire to exercise keeps coming up. Um… I think exercising is very important. At my age, there are reasons such as keeping in shape and such, but like eating, it’s good to exercise every day. When you’re older, you’re prone to disease, so it’s important to start a habit of working out every day at a young age.

It was also noted that Ji-Hoon, a first-generation Korean male immigrant, in his fifties, mentioned light weight-lifting and jump roping as activities in which he had recently started to
participate. He focused on his future health after noticing his physical health status -- high cholesterol level and his family medical history:

I did not know I had high cholesterol. Actually, nobody ever really knows, even if the level of cholesterol is as high as 240. If I had not received any medical consultation, my cholesterol would have probably gone much more up. My mother’s bloodline, as an elderly person, has grown weaker, and she had a stroke and had to have surgery. Because cholesterol is related to the bloodline, I take extra precautions. The doctor didn’t really recommend a specific type of exercise that would specifically lower cholesterol. But, a friend of mine who also has high cholesterol told me that his cholesterol level went down after he started lifting weights, hence my purchase of a membership at the YMCA. After working out for a while, I was satisfied to see that my cholesterol level did go down. To be honest, weight-lifting and jump-roping are not exercises I do for enjoyment. Both are strictly 100% dedicated to maintaining my health. These days, since I’m over 50, I’m beginning to feel more and more the importance of exercise, and I like to engage with my church members through golf and tennis.

Similarly, the importance of regular physical activity was also mentioned by a 19-year-old male college student, In-Sung:

I think… it’s really important to keep in shape in regular bases. (Pause) I’m already getting worried about my future health because… I’ve seen so many adults around whose health conditions are very struggling from lack of exercises. It’s not that a person should work out everyday, but I think… regular exercise or activities would always be positive on your health. So, I’ve tried to participate almost in all sports on a consistent basis.

Summary of the Chapter

First- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants in this study shared their perspectives on significant roles that participation in physical activities played after immigration and also shared their experiences in their daily physical activity participation patterns and preferences. In this chapter, the themes centered on the major immigration-related changes in terms of participation patterns such as their level of involvement in recreational sports and physical activities, preferences, and roles of daily physical activity participation during the adaptation period. Furthermore, the most remarkable constraints which influence the participants’ daily physical activity participation were discussed: (1) immigration-related
constraining factors such as language difficulties and age at the point of immigration; (2) other constraints on physical activity participation such as socio-economic status and health status, applicable to the general population but described as consistent with different circumstances experienced by the immigrant groups; (3) culture-specific constraining factors that were only applicable to Koreans such as clear distinction in gender roles based on Confucian philosophy.

The majority of immigrants experienced low levels of recreational sports and physical activity participation during the first post-settlement period; however, the findings of this study suggested an increased level of participation in various types of physical activities among the participants during the initial period of the adaptation. In order to better assimilate into the mainstream society and to adopt the new way of life in the United States or in order to escape from the immigration-related stresses and problems they encountered after the immigration such as language difficulties and post-immigration psychological problems, they tended to be more involved in physical activities and socializing-purposed sporting events. Although the primary reasons for participating in physical activity were quite different, both the first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants desired to assimilate to the host culture and longed to discover their own ways to escape the immigration-related stresses and problems that heavily influenced their increased level of involvement in physical activity during this period. As a consequence of these differences related to their physical activity participation, the findings of this study also determined that the roles of the physical activity participation among Korean immigrants were three-fold: They chose one of the traditional paths in the adaptation process: to acculturate to the mainstream society, to preserve their own ethnic identity and solidify their cultural ties, or to follow the distinct route in the adaptation process and assimilate to their own sub-culture in the United States.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Acculturation to the Mainstream Society

The findings of this study confirm the results of a number of previous research studies about the role of physical activity in the immigrants’ process of adaptation to U.S. society. Some of the themes that emerged concerning the process of adaptation include acculturation and ethnic preservation. During the first period of adaptation, both first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants residing in the Atlanta, Georgia Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) were likely to use recreational sports and physical activities as a vehicle to promote their acculturation to the host country’s mainstream culture. Those Korean immigrants, who developed interpersonal contacts with the mainstream population through recreational sporting events and/or daily physical activities, became exposed to the new cultural patterns and values of the mainstream society. Specifically, one of the findings revealed both first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants to initiate interactions with the mainstream population during participation in physical activities. This occurred during the initial adaptation for a number of reasons: to have an opportunity to adequately learn the language of the host country, English, and to accelerate their acculturation process to the mainstream society by acquiring the necessary information about the new environment.

While involvement in physical activities significantly promoted acculturation to the mainstream society during the first period after the arrival for both first- and one-and-a-half-
generation Korean immigrants, only the one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants continued
to engage in various types of physical activities and maintain social interactions with the
mainstream population following the establishment period. According to Stodolska and
Alexandris’s (2004) study of recreational sport participation of Korean and Polish immigrants,
“it is easier for children to establish contacts and to assimilate. … While some of the adults
remarked that they stayed home for several months after their arrival and thus limited their
outside contacts, children who attended mainstream schools had little choice, but to interact with
mainstream peers” (p. 401).

As opposed to one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants, the first-generation Korean
immigrants desired to participate in recreational sports and physical activities only inside their
ethnic community after the settlement in the United States. One possible explanation for the first-
generation Korean immigrants’ discontinuation of an interpersonal relationship with the
mainstream population after the establishment period is Nun-Chi, a key factor in developing the
social interactions in Korean culture. According to Kim’s (2001) definition of the term Nun-Chi,
“there is no direct translation of the Korean word Nun-Chi in English, but it can be interpreted as
an ability to perceive unexpressed emotions, attitudes, and thoughts of another person or
sensitivity to implicit norms and conventions. Nun-Chi also means the ability to read a situation
or environment and know what to do before being asked” (p. 131). Therefore, Nun-Chi may
prevent particularly the first-generation Korean immigrants from participating in the culturally
different and unfamiliar sporting events and/or physical activities for fear of embarrassment.

During the initial period of adaptation, first-generation Korean immigrants, particularly
those who had children attending the mainstream schools, had reluctantly established
interrelationships with mainstream population by getting involved in physical activities and
social contacts through their children’s sport-related activities and school events, necessary and
unavoidable due to their roles as parents. Although the first-generation Korean immigrants were
not able to free themselves from Nun-Chi, and they were reluctant to interact with the
mainstream populations mainly due to their lack of language skills, they interacted with the
mainstream parents through their children’s school-related activities and sporting events.
However, after the establishment period, the first-generation Korean immigrants were more
likely to be freely and actively involved in physical activities in which they had a sense of
freedom, Nun-Chi, and preferred to have more comfortable social interactions within their own
ethnic community by ceasing contacts with mainstream population. In contrast to the first-
generation Korean immigrants, who had the primary obstacle of the English language, almost
impossible to overcome, the one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants no longer had the
language difficulty barrier when they interacted with mainstream individuals. Thus, those one-
and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants who were fluent in English were able to enjoy
participating in physical activities with both the mainstream population and Koreans without
experiencing any discomfort or difficulties.

According to Kim’s (2001) study, which focused on the relationship between leisure
activity and cultural integration among older Korean immigrants in the United States, the
acculturation level of older Korean immigrants was closely related to their involvement in leisure
activities. However, the findings of this study did not confirm the results of Kim’s study; instead,
this study suggested that the types of physical activities in which Korean immigrants participated
could be considered as an imperfect indicator of their level of integration to the mainstream
society. Apparently, particular types of physical activities that were commonly found among the
Korean immigrants were not associated with their acculturation level, but rather to the overall
context of participation in recreational sports and physical activities as, for example, the
programs and facilities in which they participated and the social contacts that they developed
through the physical activity participation, which were considered as indicators of the
acculturation level. The reason is that their level of cultural integration was influenced by several
dynamically interrelated factors and cannot be determined solely by a single indicator, the types
of physical activities.

Ethnic Preservation

According to Stodolska and Alexandris (2004), “involvement in traditional sports
strengthened community bonds and allowed Korean immigrants to socialize with people with
whom they shared common culture and experience” (p.404). Consistent with the results of
previous research studies, this study confirmed the role involvement in physical activities played
in the first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants’ adaptation process; it reinforced
ethnic identity and strengthened ethnic solidarity. As Portes and Zhou (1993) and Waters (1994)
explained: Immigrants who chose to preserve their ethnic values and to strengthen the ties with
the members of their own ethnic community are often able to acquire tangible economic benefits.
Involvement in sporting events and physical activities that were organized and/or sponsored by
their own ethnic groups in some sense facilitated a social network within the ethnic community
and may have helped some business owners to run their businesses as well. However, the results
of this study indicated that the business owners’ participation in recreational sports and physical
activities points to the contrary; it did not lead to the achievement of economic benefits. Instead,
several of the participants of this study, both first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean
immigrants, expressed that facilitating social interactions with individuals in the Korean
immigrant society through involvement in physical activity programs or sport-related events helped them to share a sense of belonging and preserve their ethnic identity as Korean.

The findings of this study further revealed Korean immigrants, regardless of their age, age at the time of immigration, or socio-economic status, to be more likely to prefer the familiar physical activities that they engaged in while in their home country and continued to participate in while living in the United States. According to Stodolska (2000), “some traditional activities were not abandoned simply because they provided people with a sense of psychological comfort, allowed them to maintain connection with their former ways of life, or facilitated the retention of desired cultural elements. Traditional leisure activities helped immigrants to distance themselves from the problems associated with being placed in a new and unfamiliar environment, thus serving as a “buffer” that made the adaptation process less traumatic” (p. 61). For example, the ethnic sports clubs acted as significant sources for development and maintenance of ethnic identity for Koreans. Furthermore, participating in such activities provided the comfort zone for those who particularly had language barriers or still struggled with ways to promote social interactions with mainstream population in their daily lives. The findings of this study confirmed De Vos’s (1995) and Gal’s (1978) assertion that language familiarity is one of the influences affecting Korean immigrants’ preference for participation in familiar cultural activities for it allowed for interactions in the native language, thus strengthening their own Korean ethnic identity.

In addition, the results of this study are also consistent with the findings observed among Asian populations in Southeast England. Burdsey’s (2006) studies on immigration experiences and social significance of British Asian football clubs showed that participation in certain sports and affiliation with ethnic sport clubs, such as cricket and football clubs, played a significant role
in promoting their ethnic identity and facilitated contingent cultural bonds with their own communities (Burdsey, 2006).

Assimilating into the Sub-Culture of the Korean Ethnic Community

According to Portes and Zhou (1993) and Waters (1994)’s segmented assimilation theory, the next possible mode of the adaptation is the downward mobility. In the context of Portes and Zhou (1993) and Waters (1994)’s assimilation theory, among other contemporary assimilation theories, the role of recreational sport and physical activity in the adaptation process of certain immigrant populations, particularly racially distinct minorities in the United States, is also described as a way that acculturation into the U.S. underclass occurs. However, the findings of this study seem not to parallel contemporary assimilation theories. Instead of assimilating to the culture of the underclass, the first- and one-and-a-halfgeneration Korean immigrants tended to emulate the values of the sub-culture of their own ethnic minority. According to the Stodolska and Alexandris (2004)’s study on recreational sport and ethnic identity of Korean and Polish immigrants, certain sports came to be particularly popular and played an important role in assimilation to the sub-culture of their ethnic community, among specific immigrant populations. The researchers claimed that these sports “were not necessarily popular in the home countries of immigrants, but they had become a focus of interest among ethnic immigrant populations in the host country” (p. 403). Therefore, their involvement in recreational sports and physical activities played a unique role in this context of assimilation into the sub-culture of the Korean ethnic community in Metro Atlanta.

Further, the results of this study indicated that tennis and golf enjoy a particular popularity in the Korean immigrant community. According to Stodolska and Alexandris (2004),
“tennis and golf came to play a particularly important role among first generation middle class Korean immigrants residing in the United States” (p. 403). Consistent with the findings of Stodolska and Alexandris’s (2004) study, several of the first-generation Korean immigrants in this study also remarked about their increased level of participation in tennis and golf. The subculture activities that the first-generation Korean immigrants experienced were not popular in their home country and they had not developed any interest or had not been involved in these sports before immigrating to the United States; however, participating in these physical activities helped them to make these sports trendy only in the Korean immigrant community.

Furthermore, an increased interest in trendy sports among the Korean ethnic community was likely to affect sport participation patterns and physical activity preferences. A significant volume of sociological, economic, geographic, ethnic, and immigrant research studies tend to attribute the noticeable lifestyles changes of immigrant populations after their arrival in the new country to the influence of the demonstration effect (Hagen, 1962; Kindleberger, 1977; Murphy, 1986). According to Douglas (1989) and Grobler (1985), the demonstration effect involves apparent changes in physical activity participation patterns among ethnic groups. They tend to refrain from participation in traditional sports, in which they had regularly participated in their home country, and to initiate participation in Western sports. The immigrants usually adapt a new way of participation patterns in recreational sport and physical activity by acquiring a new sport discipline, affecting their traditional sports, or by embedding Western elements into their previous sporting experiences (Anyanwu, 1980; Douglas, 1989; Grobler, 1985). Stodolska and Alexandris (2004) asserted, “In the context of the demonstration effect, an increased interest in recreational sport among middle class immigrants can be attributed to the fact that after their
arrival in the United States, they discovered that sports were immensely popular in this country and were associated with a higher social status and a desirable way of life” (p. 397).

The emergence of participation in sub-culture physical activities among several first-generation male Korean immigrants could be attributed to the demonstration effect. It is quite likely that the booming of participation in certain physical activities within their own ethnic community motivated the Korean immigrants to attempt the so-called “trendy sports” not only because these sports especially help them to gain popularity among the Korean immigrants but also because their involvement in such trendy sports were considered as symbol of economic success in the host country. Therefore, the well-established Korean immigrants and even the recently arrived Korean immigrants expressed the great tendency to participate in the popular sub-culture recreational sports and physical activities, which were not particularly popular in Korea but were popular among Korean immigrants in the United States.

The findings of this study are consistent with the results from a number of studies with other immigrant populations in the Northern American region, United States, and Canada. As studies of Cuban immigrants in the United States showed, (Portes, 1969; Portes, 1984), most of the Cuban immigrants residing in the United States are well-established and well-educated individuals, fluent in English, and have successful occupations because the majority of Cubans that came to the United States after the Cuban Revolution were from the middle and upper strata in their home country; so they started resettling and integrating in the United States with the exclusive qualities, the high level of socio-economic status and professional/managerial backgrounds, even at the beginning stage of their immigration. Therefore, it is not surprising that “well-established Cubans found themselves portrayed as undesirables on a par with the least educated and skilled illegal aliens” (Portes, 1984, p. 394). In addition, a Gallop poll found that
“Cubans ranked at the bottom of all ethnic groups in terms of their desirability as potential neighbors for the Americans population” (Portes, 1984, p. 394). Unlike other immigrant groups, Cubans have their own sense of ethnicity and nationality based on their distinct political beliefs. Thus, Cuban immigrants formed their own sub-culture, which is distinct from the culture of dominant population in their home country and other immigrant groups residing in the United States. Furthermore, Stodolska’s (2000) study of Polish immigrants residing in Alberta, Canada, showed that post-immigration changes in leisure participation patterns were observed, and certain physical activities and sports such as fishing and hunting were considered as trendy “subculture leisure” only for them. After the immigration, the increased interest and level of participation in certain sports and physical activity among specific immigrant populations in the United States, particularly well-established immigrant groups, have been identified in several studies (Connor, 1985; Fitzpatrick, 1971; Hutchison, 1987; Hutchison & Fidel, 1984; Portes & Bach, 1985).

Factors that Constrained Daily Physical Activity Participation

A number of research studies documented that the immigration-related constraints on physical activity experienced by immigrant groups may differ from those of the mainstream population. The immigration-related constraints severely limit the immigrants’ participation in recreational sport and physical activity during the initial period of adaptation. Regardless of immigrants’ ethnicity or socio-economic background, “the initial period after settlement in the host country was usually associated with low levels of voluntary physical activity” (Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004, p. 392). Furthermore, immigration-related constraints such as language difficulties, increased stress, severe social isolation, and lack of awareness of existing
opportunities (child care access, community programs, and facilities) during the initial adaptation period could detrimentally affect immigrants’ experiences in recreational sports and physical activity (Stodolska, 1998; Rublee & Shaw, 1991; Yu & Berryman, 1996).

**Language Difficulties (Immigrants-Only Constraint #1)**

One of the main immigration-related constraints influencing Korean immigrants’ involvement in recreational sports and physical activities is language difficulty. As previously noted, immigration-related constraining factors are only applicable to the immigrants, not to the general population. Kim (2001) offered the following explanation:

Language is an important tool that enables people to establish and maintain relationships, as well as to think about the world, to interpret their experiences, and to convey information. In context of integration, language is a key obstacle to social interaction because people who cannot communicate tend to isolate themselves from the host culture (p. 50).

The level of language skills experienced by the immigrant groups vary with these groups’ immigration histories, socio-economic status, educational attainment, and the age at the time of immigration; however, a number of research studies have revealed that the lack of language proficiency facing most of the immigrants as one of the main constraints on physical activity participation, with insufficient language ability being regarded as an important determinant of integration into the mainstream society (Kretsedemas, 2005; Kim, 2001; Portes, 1969; Stodolska, 1998).

According to Hong and Hong (1996), “since the grammatical structure of the Korean language is antithetical to English, fluent English is very difficult for Korean immigrants to learn” (Hong & Hong, 1996, p.4). Consistent with the Hong and Hong’s (1996) result, the
findings of this study showed that both first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants experience language difficulty during the initial period of immigration, regardless of age at the time of immigration, pre-immigration socio-economic status, or educational attainment in Korea. Thus, it was not surprising that first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants faced language difficulties during the first adaptation period, regardless of age, gender, pre-immigration educational backgrounds, and occupations. Moreover, their participation patterns and preferences in physical activity were strongly influenced by their insufficient language skills.

**Age (Immigrants-Only Constraint #2)**

In the findings of this study, four age-related factors that influenced physical activity participation were identified: (1) age at the point of immigration, (2) current age, known as life stage, and (3) the notion of “age-appropriate sports.”

The first factor that influenced physical activity participation, applicable only to the immigrant group, was the age at the time of immigration, also known as an “immigration-related constraint,” which was interrelated with the level of English language fluency. However, the second influencing factor identified in this finding was the current age of participants, observable not only among the immigrant population but also among the general population.

The first age-related constraining factor affecting recreational sport and physical activity participation, the age at the time of immigration, has been considered by a number of researchers (Allison & Smith, 1990; Kim, 2001; Lee, 1986; Stodolska, 1998; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). According to Kim (2001), “when Korean Americans [first generation Korean immigrants] attend recreational activities and programs organized by Koreans, they have little difficulty communicating and interacting with others” (p. 51). Referring to the study by Lee (1986), Kim (2001) indicated that “older Korean immigrants in particular may prefer to remain in their own
ethnic community, keeping a distance from others because of language barriers and cultural differences” (p. 52).

In addition, a number of researchers stressed that the age at the time of immigration and the preferred language used in daily life are significantly related; thus, it can be a major determinant in level of assimilation level and in physical activity participation (Stodolska, 1998; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). The one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants were individuals who immigrated to the United States at a younger age and tended to acquire the host country’s language, English, more quickly and attain a higher language fluency than do those who immigrated to the United States at an older age (Furnham, 1984). Consistent with the previous literature, the results of this study showed that the first-generation Korean immigrants seemed to be isolated from the mainstream society and preferred to participate in recreational sports and physical activities with their own ethnic community or tended to participate in home-based physical activities such as walking in the neighborhood and using a treadmill facility inside their houses. However, as opposed to the first-generation Korean immigrants, the one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants were intensely involved in sporting activities that established both the social relationships with mainstream population and Koreans residing in the United States.

While numerous researchers have found a relationship between the age at the point of immigration and participation patterns in physical activity (Kim, 2001; Miller, Sorokin, Wilbur, & Chandler, 2004; Stodolska, 1998; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004), few researchers have considered studying physical activity participation patterns that depend on immigrants’ current age level (Stodolska, 2000). According to Stodolska (2000), “activities in which people participate in certain life stages depend not only on people’s wants, needs, and constraints currently experienced, but also on the constraints they experienced in preceding periods of their
life” (p. 58). A number of studies indicate that if constraints to physical activity participation are removed and opportunity to reveal their latent demand are acquired, individuals begin to participate in physical activities regardless of current age levels (Jackson & Dunn, 1988; Jung, 1990, 1994; Stodolska, 2000; Wall, 1981). This pattern of participation is observable not only among immigrant population but also among the general population.

Even though the relationship between the age level and the physical activity participation patterns was not only observed among the immigrants but also among the general populations, it is significant to examine the immigrant’s current age level and its relations to their daily physical activity pattern, as it can provide the important sources about their unique needs and other combined constraining factors on sports behaviors associated with the immigrant’s certain life stage. The findings of this study suggested that the relation between the Korean immigrants’ current age level and their physical activity participation patterns and preferences are not similar to those of the dominant culture. The reason is that the constraints that affected participation in physical activity after the arrival in the United States, such as language difficulties and post-immigration extreme economic hardships even at the mid-40s and 50s of their life, were not similar to those of the mainstream population; thus, the immigrants’ life stage in which the constraining factors were removed and the new opportunities were available will not be similar to those of the mainstream individuals.

The findings of this study suggested the notion of age-appropriateness in selecting types of physical activities, which is considered as one of the age-related constraints affecting immigrants’ physical activity experiences, a new theme in research on immigration. For example, the relationship between strong beliefs about age-appropriate sports and lack of involvement in recreational sports and physical activities was observed among some of the first-generation Korean immigrants. This pattern appears to be consistent with the findings of previous studies.
that found people to decrease their participation in vigorous physical activities as their age increases (Gordon, Gaitz, & Scott, 1976; Iso-Ahola, Jackson, & Dunn, 1994). However, the possible reasons for their lack of interest in daily participation in recreational sports and physical activities, regardless of the type of sports (team, dual, and individual), needs more in-depth examination in future studies.

In the majority of the literature, age at the time of immigration, current age level, and length of residence in the host country appeared to be important influencing factors on sport behavior in the study of Korean immigrants. Most frequently, a higher level of involvement in recreational sports and physical activities is associated with the immigrants who have had longer length of stay in the host country. However, as the findings of this study showed, the length of stay in the United States was not considered as a significant factor that influenced first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants’ physical activity participation patterns and preferences.

Social Isolation (General Constraints, But Somewhat Different in Contexts among Immigrants #1)

Social isolation is regarded as a chief constraining factor affecting participation in recreational sports and physical activity, which is applicable not only to the immigrants or ethnic minorities but also to the general population (Hultsman, 1995; Jackson, 1993). However, the social isolation experienced by the immigrant groups is closely associated with other immigration-related constraining factors but is different from those of the general population. According to Stodolska (1998), “individuals who find discrimination to be a significant problem would be less likely to seek social contacts outside the circle of their close friends” (p. 547). In addition, Stodolska and Jackson (1998) suggested that “regardless of the extent of one’s contacts within the ethnic community or lack thereof, a person who fears discrimination will be more
reluctant to seek new social contacts and consequently he/she will have more limited choice of leisure partners as well as potentially restricted awareness of existing leisure opportunities” (p. 547).

Similar to previous studies, the findings of this study showed that first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants experienced severe post-arrival social isolation. In Korea, socializing with neighbors, involvement in community services, and participation in church-related social activities such as picnics, sporting events, and trips were not as popular with Korean immigrants living in the United States. Under the current study, participants tend to affiliate with one or more ethnic organizations and actively participate in various kinds of social activities organized by ethnic associations for the following personal reasons: mainly for overcoming the post-arrival social isolation and forming the social network so that they can share helpful and valuable information while they live in the United States as immigrants. According to Kim (2001), “Korean churches in the United States have served Korean Americans for many purposes beyond religious practice. Korean-speaking pastors assume significant roles not only in the religious growth of Korean Americans, but also in providing various kinds of assistance with difficulties faced in everyday life” (p. 53). In accordance with Kim’s (2001) study, the findings of this study showed that the Korean churches became a place where the Korean immigrants shared the same cultural codes and maintained their ethnic identity by interacting with Koreans. In this study, the majority of Korean immigrants were affiliated with ethnic associations and/or Korean churches and actively were involved in one or more ethnic community organizations; therefore, those who had more social relationships with other Koreans and had more opportunities to participate in recreational sports and physical activities were less likely to suffer from social isolation.
A number of studies have addressed the significance of socio-economic status as a constraining factor of physical activity participation (Johansson et al., 1988; Lindström & Sundquist, 2001; Steenland, 1992; Yusuf et al., 1996). In general, socio-economic status influences participation patterns and preferences for recreational sports and physical activities, applicable not only to the immigrant groups but also to the general population; however, the fifth constraining factor, socio-economic status, may be considered as the immigration-related constraint on sport behavior in terms of the greater tendency of immigrant population’s downward social mobility and greater degree of homogeneity in their jobs (occupational status). Referring to the study by Erdmans (1998) and Jo (1999), Stodolska and Alexandris (2004) posited the following:

Such a decline is considered to be a quite common outcome of immigration and is often attributed to the differences in the job markets, discrimination, lack of understanding of American culture, inability to transfer skills to the adopted country, lack of language skills, or over-dependence on ethnic economy in the initial periods after arrival (p. 398).

According to Stodolska and Alexandris (2004), the downward social mobility following immigration is a problem among many Koreans who immigrated to the United States, particularly during the third wave of the Korean immigration period (1965- ). According to the findings of Stodolska and Alexandris (2004), the Korean immigrants mentioned that “lack of time, lack of interest, and physical exhaustion were responsible for their low levels of participation in active recreation during the initial period after arrival, [but] the circumstances usually changed when they had become better adjusted to life in the U.S.” (p. 395). The post-immigration downward social mobility among highly educated first-generation Korean
immigrants was identified in this study; furthermore, consistent with the findings of Stodolska and Alexandris (2004), the relationship between the low level of participation in physical activity and socio-economic factors during the initial period after arrival were mentioned by the first-generation Korean immigrants.

Moreover, consistent with the findings of Crespo (2000) and Stodolska and Alexandris (2004), the findings of this study showed that the third socio-economic factor, the lack of interest in active leisure pursuits due to the physical exhaustion after long hours and/or hard work, was an important constraining factor not only in the level of physical activity participation but also in the choice of physical activities.

Health Status (General Constraints, But Somewhat Different in Contexts among Immigrants #3)

Referring to the health status of the immigrants, Rapala and Manderson (2005) explained that the immigrants’ move to a new social environment can lead “on the one hand, to positive outcomes (i.e. better financial position, secure future, personal safety), but on the other hand, is weighted by the experience of loss of social status, which may lead to an increase in level of stress and health related problems” (p. 177). Furthermore, as has been suggested by Lindström and Sundquist (2001), the sedentary lifestyle and physical inactivity have been observed in immigrant groups and this result may explain the higher risks of a number of health problems such as cardiovascular disease and obesity.

Findings of this study confirmed that the first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants experienced both physical and mental health problems after immigration, which were closely related to the immigration-related stresses and changes in lifestyle, and their current health status gradually became one of the major concerns after the settlement period. Following the settlement period, the increased level of participation in recreational sports and physical activities was observed among the first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants. One
of the possible explanations is that they started to consider the importance of their own health after several years of their strenuous adaptation period. During the initial adaptation period, immigrants are likely to be exposed to various negative environments that would affect their physical and mental health such as depressive symptoms associated with immigration, language barriers, acculturation stress, social isolation, and changed family structure; however, it is difficult for the immigrants to set higher expectations for quality life, and obviously impossible for them to resolve the fundamental problems which caused their health problems during the strenuous adaptation period. Consequently, following the establishment period, the Korean immigrants’ growing interest in their current health status and removal of certain immigration-related constraints finally led to their interest in a high level of daily participation in physical activities. Furthermore, putting an emphasis on concerns about their future life would likely continue to influence their participation patterns in physical activity.

Confucianism and Gender (Koreans’ Only Constraints)

The perceived importance of several constraining factors on physical activity participation among first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants was found in this study. In addition to the immigration-related constraints, the findings of this study identified a clear distinction in gender roles and hierarchy in both family and social structure under Confucian philosophy as an explaining factor of gender-based differences in physical activity participation patterns and preferences. According to Kim (2001), “under Confucian values and traditions in Korean society, gender differences may also have a great impact on choices and decisions women and men make in their daily leisure activity” (p. 48). Regardless of the assimilation level to the host country and the length of stay in the United States, the Korean immigrants’ beliefs and attitudes toward physical activity participation were still associated with
the traditional value, Confucianism; thus significant gender differences in physical activity participation patterns and preferences still exist.

According to Hong and Hong (1996), “once most Korean women immigrate to the United States, they enter the work force to help out their families. Most Korean immigrant working wives, even after working long hours, are also responsible for most of the housework” (p. 5). Regardless of women’s participation in the work force, the Korean immigrant wives are expected to sustain the primary responsibility for the domestic work (Kim & Hurh, 1988; Min, 1992). A similar theme was also found in Stodolska and Alexandris’s (2004) study which mainly focused on the role of recreational sport in the adaptation of first-generation Polish and Korean immigrants in the Chicago area. Also consistent with the findings of this study were those of Stodolska and Alexandris’s (2004) study which revealed the following:

Many Korean women, who had been homemakers in their home country, to enter the workforce after having settled in the United States and also to continue to do domestic labor. While the newly found freedom and financial resources had relieved some of their previous constraints that affected their pursuit of leisure activities, the lack of free time and the frequently occurring marital conflicts related to their employment had a negative effect on their participation levels (pp. 395-396).

Expressed consistently, this study also showed that the clear distinctions in gender roles and notion of male superiority over female based on Confucianism greatly contributed to gender differentiation in the level of involvement in participation and preferences of physical activities. As all of the first-generation female Korean immigrants explained, their participation in recreational sports and physical activity was severely limited to the “female-appropriate sports”
that are socially acceptable for female participation, and also limited to the home-based activities such as a treadmill inside the house or walking in the neighborhood due to the lack of time as a result of double duty, housework and work load.

Implications for Future Research and Conclusions

The findings of this study provide an interesting look into the major immigration-related changes that occur related to the first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants’ physical activity participation, including influencing factors that affect their physical activity participation patterns. As previously expressed, the findings of this study reveal that several important factors affected the physical activity participation among the first- and one-and-a-half-generation Korean immigrants participating in this study. First, it is clear that the participants were subject to immigration-related constraints that were not applicable to the general population. Second, some of the factors that constrained Korean immigrants’ experiences were also found in the general population, but they differed in contexts. Furthermore, the traditional Korean culture acted as a constraining factor for involvement in daily physical activity participation. Even though some of the results may appear unexpected (e.g. lack of association between age at the time of immigration and physical activity participation pattern), the majority of the findings of this study corroborate those of previous research studies.

However, the findings of this study must be interpreted with the recognition of certain methodological limitations, and these could be addressed in future research studies. These concern issues of physical activity and ethnic minority groups. First, since this study used the qualitative research method of interview and the study was conducted with the use of a small sample size during a short period of time for data collection, further studies are needed for some
generalization to be considered. For example, although the length of stay in the United States was not associated with participants’ level of participation or participation patterns, results may differ or yield some other interesting perspectives if a longitudinal research design is followed. Besides, increasing the number of participants or using large-scale surveys on the same target populations could add some interesting insights. In future studies on this population, closer observation of ethnic sports clubs, social gatherings, sporting events organized by religious institutions, and traditional holiday celebrations in addition to interviews could also reveal further aspects of immigrants’ lives and could indicate additional roles that recreational sports and physical activities play in the Korean immigrants’ adaptation process.

Second, this study is limited by the voluntary nature of the interview-based participation. Even though a deliberate attempt to obtain a good representation of research participants in terms of gender, age, and socio-economic status was made during the participant recruitment process in this research, the group of interviewed Korean immigrants was highly homogeneous. During the initial adaptation period, some of the interviewees experienced financial difficulty and economic hardship that lasted several years; however, most of them were usually able to achieve some form of economic stability after the establishment period and a significant portion of the interviewees who participated in this study had obtained the middle-class status in the United States. This may be due to the voluntary nature of the participation. Thus, their level of participation, physical activity participation patterns, the adaptation paths they followed, and the role of the physical activities in their adaptation process may not be representative of other Korean immigrants, who are from other socio-economic status.

Lastly, the study mainly focused on the first-generation Korean immigrants who resided in the Atlanta, Georgia Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Accordingly, the findings of this
study are more centered on the ethnic identity preservation, which played a crucial role in physical activity participation in the adaptation process rather than cultural integration. Therefore, it is possible that future studies on physical activity participation patterns and constraining factors that affect the sports behavior of the second or later generations may reveal significant differences between the first-generation Korean immigrants and may provide new insights. Furthermore, future research focusing on the first- and one-and-a-half or later generations together within the same family structure could provide empirical results about intergenerational relationships and roles of physical activities in daily lives. The findings of this study show that the roles of physical activity participation in the adaptation process and the internal dynamics of the Korean immigrant community is quite complex, and that Korean immigrants’ participation in recreational sports and physical activities helps in reinforcing their ethnic identity and strengthening ties with other members of their ethnic community. Therefore, an expanded scope of future work and further research on the issues of sports behavior and immigrant populations are needed in order to understand the complex circumstances that affect both the decision-making factors, as well as the participation patterns, of immigrant populations.
REFERENCES


Imperato, P. J., LaRosa, J. H., & Schechter, L. (2005). The development of a master of public health program with an initial focus on urban and immigrant health at the State University of New York, Downstate Medical Center. Journal of Community Health, 30(6), 417-449.


APPENDIX A

The Informed Consent Form

I, _________________________________, agree to participate in a research study titled "SPORT PARTICIPATION PATTERNS AND INFLUENCING FACTORS ON SPORT BEHAVIOR OF KOREAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES" conducted by Sunhwi Kim as the investigator from the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Georgia (543-8516) under the direction of Dr. Chepyator-Thomson, Department of Kinesiology, University of Georgia (542-4434). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part in this research without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The purpose of this study is to understand daily physical activity experiences and interactions in sport contexts of first and one and a half generation Korean immigrants in the metropolitan Atlanta areas (Georgia Metropolitan Statistical Area: MSA) in the United States, using both participant observations and semi-structured in-depth interviews. This study will mainly focus on perspectives of their daily sport participation such as physical activity preferences, needs, and constraints of sport participation. The research will serve as a foundation for future studies in that it will identify issues and needs of the specific minority group.

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:
1) Participate in one or two semi structured in-depth interviews and answer questions about overall experiences participating in physical activities and perceived health beliefs, and each interview will usually takes 60 minutes
2) General description of the research will be given to me before interview
3) Have choice of language either Korean or English
4) My questions during the research will be responded by the researcher
5) All interviews will be audio-taped; however, if I feel uncomfortable on specific topics, I will pause and replay the tape recorder at any time of the interview
6) The researcher may contact me to clarify my information
7) The interview will be confidential and I will be contacted within 6 months for a follow-up
8) The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project

☐ Please check the box if you agree that I may contact you for follow-up questions on this topic
The benefit for me is that I will be able to be aware of opportunities in education field through sharing my perspectives, values, and physical activity experiences. In addition, I will be able to contribute to the future studies by providing resourceful information which is essential to use in implementation of appropriate sport services and programs according to Korean immigrants’ specific needs and expectations, and ultimately provide a better quality of life for them.

No risk is expected but if I may experience some discomfort during the interview or if I feel any discomfort, I am free to withdraw my participation at any point of research. Moreover, I will be provided the opportunity to pause and replay the tape recorder at any time of the interview if the topic becomes particularly sensitive or I become uncomfortable.

No individually identifiable information about me, or providing by me during the interview will be shared with others without my written permission. All interviews will be confidential. The Interviews will be audio taped and transcribed by the researcher using pseudonyms. Audio tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and will be destroyed after one year.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this study and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

____________________ ____________________ __________
Name of Researcher Signature Date
Telephone: _______________
Email: ____________________

____________________ ____________________ __________
Name of Participant Signature Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu
APPENDIX B

The Interview Guide
(Questions presented in Korean)

1. Tell me about yourself and what brought you to the US. And how long have you been here?

2. What was the main reason that you decided to move to Georgia?

3. Could you describe what a typical week looks like for your physical activity?

4. Could you describe differences related to your physical activity participation between the time you were in Korea and now in the United States?

5. How would you describe your general physical health?

6. Could you elaborate more on the ways that you use to maintain or improve physical health both in Korea and here in the United States?

7. What kinds of things stopped you from participating in physical activities?

8. What types of sports have you never tried, and why?

9. What kinds of things encourage you to participate in physical activities?

10. Could you list your favorite physical activities from the most favorable to the least favorable? And why?

11. Could you describe your feelings or opinions of the importance of regular physical activity participation?

12. Do you see any differences in your participation of physical activities from when you just came to the United States?
13. Is there any additional information that you feel would be important to my research that we have not discussed?