

THE EXPERIENCE OF KOREAN IMMIGRANT GRANDMOTHERS  
WITH THEIR GRANDCHILDREN

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my grandparents, those who are now grandparents like my parents, and my 14 participants who gave their time for this.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the following research question: “What is the experience of Korean immigrant grandmothers in their relationships with their adolescent, U.S. born grandchildren?”

In the United States, the situation of Korean immigrant grandparents is complicated because they live in two cultures. Immigrant grandparents face struggles not only with their own families, including their grandchildren, but also with the American culture which is considerably different from their Korean traditional culture (Kim, 1997). These foreign-born grandparents tend to be marginalized and have been underrepresented in the research literature (Treas & Mazumdar, 2004). The experience of Korean immigrant grandparents’ relationships with their grandchildren has not been a major focus of the research community, and, thus, their experiences merit further research.

The hermeneutic phenomenological method was employed for this study because this study focuses on Korean immigrant grandmothers’ everyday lives and their own perspectives of their world. Hermeneutic phenomenology is associated with interpretation of experience via some texts or via some symbolic forms (Van Manen, 2003).

The participants in this study were 14 Korean immigrant grandmothers living in Atlanta, Georgia. All of the grandmothers had lived or currently were living with their children and grandchildren. At the time of this study, all the grandmothers had adolescent grandchildren who had been born in the United States. Phenomenological interviews were used to create textual data. The interview texts were analyzed using procedures

specified by van Manen (2003) and Dahlberg, Drew, and Nystrom (2008). In addition, songs and poetry were identified to amplify the grandmothers' experiences.

Six themes were revealed. First, Korean immigrant grandmothers experience profound pain and despair as they lose their connection with their grandchildren. Among the several reasons for this disconnection, the lack of a common language is dominant. Second, the grandmothers experience a longing for social interaction which they do not have with their grandchildren. Third, the grandmothers experience a spatial separation from their grandchildren—whether or not they are in the same space. Fourth, the grandmothers pine for the past when they had close and caring relationships with their grandchildren. Fifth, the grandmothers struggle to accept the reality of the changed relationships with their grandchildren. And, sixth, the grandmothers live as Koreans and persist in instilling Korean values and identity in their grandchildren.

The results of this study could be the basis for developing an immigrant grandparenting education program which would ultimately enhance the quality of Korean immigrant grandparents' lives in the United States.

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## CHAPTER 1 PRELUDE

This chapter begins with a description of my personal interest in conducting a study of Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren, and a discussion of the related research that supports this study. Following this *raison d'être*, I present the central research question, definitions of key terminology, and a review of literature related to this study.

### **Raison d'être: Based on My Experience with My Grandmothers**

My experience with my own grandmothers has influenced me to write about Korean immigrant grandmothers. It is difficult for me to imagine how grandmothers feel exactly because I am not yet a grandparent or what one might call *elderly* or a *senior citizen*. I only know how I felt as a child, how I feel now as a mother, and how I experienced my own grandparents. Childhood is a road I have traveled, but grandparenthood is an untraveled road for me. In this sense, every adult is experienced in his or her own childhood, but every adult is not experienced with being a grandparent.

With this said, I will go down the untraveled road of grandparenthood and invite you to join me on my journey. During my initial research, I intended to write about the experience of Korean immigrant grandparents, but I changed my focus to that of Korean immigrant grandmothers after seeing my interviewing situation (to be described later). The reason I wanted to write about grandfathers as well as grandmothers was that I had many good memories of my grandfather. Though my paternal grandfather was one of four grandparents I knew, I was closer to him than to the others. My grandfather was reticent, and he spoke in a very clumsy manner. He mostly talked to his grandchildren,

often in an inarticulate way because he had no education. Sometimes he forgot what he said and repeated it, but his stories were so sweet that I have never forgotten them. I remember his eyes often filled with tears when he held me on his lap, and other times he would laugh heartily. His inner struggles seemed to stream into my body, like flowing electricity, when I was on his lap. Why did my grandfather try to talk to me eagerly, often working up a sweat? Might he want some connection with me? He was stifled by his lack of language skills when he struggled to express his love for me. Because I am an international student, I empathize with the pain in his breast and his struggle with language though I struggle in a different way. I have a special feeling toward him because of this.

In my experience, I have seen that most grandchildren seem to like their grandmothers more than their grandfathers. My interviews with Korean immigrant grandmothers provided me more time to think about my grandmothers. My paternal grandmother did not like granddaughters because she believed that women were nothing, and men were more important. Her granddaughters, including me, did not spend much time with her. Whenever my sisters and I visited her, she told us, “You should [have been] born....men, and you do not need to study. You just need to learn how to cook and sew.” She took care of my cousin because he was the firstborn grandson of her firstborn son. Also, she used to scold my mother because my mother had only daughters—a view that made me disinclined to like her. On the day she returned to the earth, I was there for her funeral only as her granddaughter. I was sad only because my father was sad and because my grandmother’s life had been filled with sighs and grumbles.

I lived with my maternal grandmother for about 10 years, starting from the time I finished fifth grade. I was not close to her. I was never as close to my other grandparents as I was to my paternal grandfather whom I wrote about previously. I never lived with my paternal grandfather, and he passed away when I was a sixth grader, so I have limited memories of him. However, I have more special feelings for him than for my maternal grandmother with whom I lived for 10 years.

I wonder if there is an age-related variable regarding my preferences for my four grandparents. My paternal grandfather was in my memory from a younger age than was my maternal grandmother. I began to know my maternal grandmother from around the beginning of my adolescence because she had lived far away from us, and I did not visit her before we began living with her. I had no memory of her from when I was very young. She did not play with me like my paternal grandfather had, but she just cooked, cleaned, and talked.

I remember my grandmother talking with my mother while cooking. Sometimes when I was half-asleep I could hear their conversation in the early morning while they cooked soup and side dishes for breakfast and while they prepared lunch boxes for me and my siblings. My grandmother talked about what had happened to her the day before or spoke of the issues of other families and sometimes even about her grandchildren. She was a talkative lady and had many stories to tell. I listened to her, but her stories were not like the stories my grandfather told. I do not know why her stories did not sound like storytelling, but maybe my adolescent self thought I was too old to listen to the stories she told. If I had been younger, her stories might have been more fascinating like fairy

tales and adventures. She was the grandmother of my adolescent period which might have made me see her differently than how I saw my grandfather as a younger child. Although I am thankful for my maternal grandmother, my memory is neutral about her. There was not a special emotional bond with her like there was with my paternal grandfather.

Based upon personal experiences, I have three reasons for choosing this topic. First, I think that the flow of time might have colored my relationship with my grandmother. For example, now I see her as a woman like me; she walked on the road as a wife, a mother, and a grandmother just as I have walked and expect to continue walking. I, as an adult, see her differently now than I saw her when I was an adolescent. In this vein, first, I ask myself how the age of grandchildren affects their relationships with their grandmothers. I want to focus on adolescent grandchildren because I think that period encompasses a very meaningful transition in the relationship between grandchild and grandmother.

Second, I am now questioning those memories I have of my grandmothers because they are being seen through my eyes and not through my grandmothers' eyes. I read some articles that were stories about the relationships between grandchildren and their grandparents—stories written from the perspectives of the grandchildren and not from those of the grandparents. I began thinking about how grandmothers' experiences with their grandchildren are different from the grandchildren's perspectives, so I am interested in learning about the experiences of grandmothers, not their grandchildren. I

think the research from the grandmothers' point-of-view will help us to understand some unexplored angles of the relationship between grandchild and grandmother.

Lastly, I am curious about the relationships between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their adolescent grandchildren in the United States. About four years ago, I happened to meet a Korean immigrant grandmother in Minneapolis around the time my maternal grandfather passed away in Korea. The intersection between my memory of my grandfather and my encounter with a Korean immigrant grandmother caused me to have new thoughts about the grandparent-grandchild relationship. Before that I had never thought about Korean elders living in the United States. The grandmother I met was a successful woman who had helped many other Korean elders in the United States. Though she emphasized the physical aspects of Korean immigrant elders' lives, I imagined what their personal lives were like as grandparents. I assumed Korean grandmothers' relationships with their grandchildren in Korea differed from that of Korean immigrant grandmothers' relationships with their grandchildren in the United States. Because of this chance meeting, I decided that I wanted to unfold the experience of Korean immigrant grandmothers with their grandchildren in the United States.

### **Raison d'être: Based on Related Research**

After reflecting on my personal interest in studying Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences with their grandchildren, I turned to the academic literature to see what other researchers had reported on this topic. The literature supported six reasons for continued examination of Korean immigrant grandparents' experiences.

The first reason why my research has value is because immigrant elders are less

focused upon in U.S. society. It is interesting to me that most people are more interested in children than in the aged though everyone is *the latent aged*. Because the ideology of modern society stresses that skills and knowledge of scientific and instrumental mechanisms are important (Kincheloe, 2004), modern society might call for more efficient persons and regard grandparents as less efficient in these areas. This ignorance of the value of grandparents is revealed even in the research community. The voices of grandparents are heard less than those of children, and their lives are marginalized (Cha, 1992). Their decreased physical versatility and economic productivity are regarded as incompetence (Kwon, 2000). Grandparents live as *surplus humans* in the society (Son, 2005).

Even though the tendency to marginalize elders is common in modern society, attitudes and social norms toward grandparents differ from culture to culture. In the United States, the situation of Korean immigrant grandparents appears to be complicated by conflicts between the two cultures. Immigrant grandparents face not only struggles with their own families but also with the American culture which is considerably different from their Korean traditional culture (Kim, 1997).

Second, there are some unique features of Korean immigrants and Korean immigrant grandparents compared to other Asian immigrant grandparents. As first generation immigrants, Korean American grandparents have less experience in the American culture than do other Asian American grandparents. Seventy two percent of Korean Americans are foreign born, whereas only 32.4% of Japanese Americans are foreign born (Barringer, Gardener, & Levin, 1993). Also, Korean American grandparents

tend to be first generation immigrants, whereas Japanese American grandparents tend to be from the second generation. In this vein, Korean grandparents are also more affected by Korean traditional culture and family values than by the American culture (Ishii-Kuntz, 1997). When compared with other Asian immigrant groups, Korean immigrant families tend to use the Korean language more and preserve Korean values and identity (Cha, 1992). Furthermore, 75.3% of Korean American families have minor children compared to 47.1 % of Japanese American families, which reflects the possibility that more Korean American grandparents participate in the care of their grandchildren than do Japanese American grandparents (Ishii-Kuntz, 1997).

In spite of these unique features, the experience of Korean immigrant grandparents' relationships with their grandchildren has not been a major focus of the research community. The increase of life expectancy, declining birth rate, and extension of grandparenthood weigh on the role of modern grandparents. Because there are few norms and behavioral guidelines for modern grandparents, the role of grandparenthood is ambiguous (George, 1980). Thus, research on the experience of grandparents is timely. In addition, since foreign-born immigrant grandparents tend to be more marginalized and have been underrepresented in the research literature (Treas & Mazumdar, 2004), their experiences need to be researched.

Third, a challenge that foreign-born immigrant grandparents face is that they have U.S born grandchildren. A gap exists between children who adapt rather quickly to the cultural environment and new values of the United States and grandparents who preserve Korean normative family values such as filial obedience; this situation leads to the

alienation of grandparents (Suh, 1989). Adults and children experience acculturation to the United States at different rates and in different ways. This *dissonant acculturation* could be the birthplace for intergenerational conflict. While grandparents slowly learn about the U.S culture, their grandchildren are immersed and rapidly take on a new role in the U.S. culture (Kenner, Ruby, Jessel, Gregory, & Arju, 2007; Kwak, 2003; Matsuoka, 1990; Portes, 1997).

The language barrier is a major issue in the relationship between immigrant grandparents and their U.S born grandchildren. Ninety percent of Korean immigrant adolescents say they have a language barrier with their grandparents who continue to use their native language; the second generation is bilingual, and the third generation speaks only in English. Consequently grandparents confront communicative difficulties with their grandchildren (Ishizawa, 2004; Kim, 1997).

As noted above, the characteristics of U.S born adolescent grandchildren are deeply related to family socialization such as the intergeneration relationship. The ethnic identity and the age of grandchildren are variables of dynamics in the relationship between grandparent and grandchild.

U.S born children learn about their ethnic heritage within the boundaries of family, not outside of family, which implies that they have immigrant family history and culture different from the non-immigrant family and that they have ethnic identity development. For example, immigrant grandparents can be resources for knowledge, especially about the customs and culture of their country of origin, and this can affect the grandchildren's ethnic identity development—negatively or positively (Kwak, 2003; Kenner, Ruby,

Jessel, Gregory, & Arju, 2007). Familial cultural values impact the process of family socialization, which is related to U.S born children's ethnic identity development and individual general development (Greenfield, 1994). The dimension of individualism-collectivism or autonomy-embeddedness is a useful frame for explicating the intergenerational relationships. Whereas children seek autonomy and independence from older generations, parents and grandparents want embeddedness and interdependence but this framework is also intertwined with an ethnicity of a family (Kwak; Phinney, 1990)

Along with the family's ethnicity, the age of the grandchild is a variable that affects the intergenerational relationships. For example, adolescent grandchildren perceive grandparents as less supportive than younger grandchildren do, and adolescent grandchildren argue less with grandparents than with their parents (Batistelli & Farnet, 1991; Creasy & Kaliher, 1994). U.S. born Korean adolescent grandchildren need to develop their independence and autonomy, but they may have conflicts with Confucian culture values that emphasize interdependence and filial piety. The developmental tasks of adolescents, establishing autonomy and identity, may be challenges for U.S. born children in Asian immigrant families. The grandchildren need to achieve and build their own identity and also their ethnic identity (Kwak, 2003; Phinney 1990). This developmental stage of adolescence brings attention to intergenerational relationships under the Confucian family system. The struggle of Korean immigrant grandparents may be predicted by the adolescents' "Strum and Drang." Thus, the relationship between immigrant grandparents and U.S born adolescent grandchildren needs to be examined under the Confucian family system.

Fourth, as noted above, the roles of grandparents are currently changing; the number of grandparents participating in child care is increasing, leading to a physical burden on grandparents and an acceleration of the generation gap (Smith & Drew, 2002). Recent social contexts such as divorce, unemployment, drug addiction, and child abuse mean that more grandparents take part in caring for their grandchildren (Ok, 2005). Presently non-normative life events are increasing which influences the relationships between grandparents and grandchildren indirectly, directly, or bidirectionally (Tinsley & Parke, 1984). One example of immigrant families' acculturative difficulties is found in intergenerational relationships when immigration occurs as a non-normative life event to those immigrant families. Immigrant grandmothers not only feel difficulties because of this life event that has occurred but also may greatly influence their grandchildren as their role of immigrant grandmother becomes that of surrogate mother (Smith & Drew, 2002).

The gender of the grandparent is another factor that needs to be considered in a study of grandparent-grandchild relationships. Though the role of grandmothers differs from culture to culture, grandmothers tend to participate relatively more in the caretaking or raising of their grandchildren (Creasy & Koblewski, 1991; Smith, 1991). Thus, the experience of grandmothers will be the focus in this paper. As the role of grandmothers keeps changing, the experience of Korean immigrant grandmothers with their adolescent grandchildren needs to be investigated in light of the current times.

Fifth, because few, if any, family education programs for immigrant grandparents have been developed in the United States, the results of phenomenological research will help to construct the content of such programs. Meanings revealed by a

phenomenological exploration will be a good source of content because one principle of selecting curricular content is learners' experience (Cho, K.S. Lee, W.H. Oh, K.W. Lee, & E.K. Oh, 2001).

Since most previously developed parent education programs have been grounded in research on mainstream American families, these programs are not entirely appropriate for immigrants. Also, most immigrant parent education programs are translated versions and are not culturally compatible for immigrants (Xiong, Detzner, Keuster, Eliason, & Allen, 2006). Because the number of immigrant families has increased for several decades (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), the foundational research for culturally sensitized immigrant family education programs is in high demand.

Cultural differences and senility may cause various difficulties and struggles in Korean grandparents' relationships with their grandchildren. I would like for my research to eventually help relieve Korean grandparents' difficulties and enhance the well-being of Korean immigrant grandparents and their families by being a fulcrum for the development of other Asian grandparent programs.

Sixth, I expect that my phenomenological research can partially fill the disciplinary gap because previous research on grandparents, though not immigrant research, was conducted in sociology and psychology, and a gap between the two disciplines exists.

More practically, most research, though there is little, has focused on statistical information and not the experiences of grandparents. Understanding Korean immigrant grandmothers' lives from their own perspectives is helpful for taking further action and

for filling gaps in the research on this topic.

### **The Research Question**

Based on personal and scientific *raison d'être*, my research question is: What is the experience of Korean immigrant grandmothers in their relationships with their adolescent, U.S. born grandchildren?

### **Terminology**

At this point, I will define two terms used in this paper. Other terms will be explained as they appear.

**Immigrants:** Individuals who move to one country after leaving their country of origin. In this paper, *Korean immigrants* refers to those who have permanent residence status in the United States or U.S. citizenship; the term Korean immigrants will be used equivalent to Korean Americans. Temporary visa holders such as students, religion visa status holders, and refugees will be excluded from this definition of immigrant.

**Grandparents:** Generally said, *grandparents* are parents of a child's father or mother. It is the term used by the grandchildren. From the view of the grandparents, grandparents are those who have grandchildren. In this paper, the term grandparent will include grandfather and grandmother and sometimes will be used as equivalent to seniors or elders.

### **Contexts for the Phenomenon**

To understand Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences with their adolescent U.S. born grandchildren, this section turns to the issues relevant to such understanding. The characteristics of Korean immigrants will be illuminated in terms of Confucianism

and Korean family culture. Korean grandparents' relationships with their grandchildren will be also examined.

### ***Korean Immigrants and Korean Culture***

In this section, I will illuminate how Korean immigrants are constituted in the U.S. population, how Confucian values influence interpersonal relationships, and how Korean family culture functions.

***The history and characteristics of Korean immigrants.*** Historically, in the 1900s, Hawaiian sugar plantations needed many laborers, and, to meet this need, many foreign workers were brought into the United States. Korean immigration to the United States started with this phenomenon along with Koreans' need to escape from the Japanese colonial oppression at that time. Also, some time later, Korean women immigrated for the purpose of arranged marriages with Korean plantation farmers in Hawaii (Patterson, 2000).

After the Korean War in 1950, a few Koreans, such as military spouses and students, could immigrate to the United States. Since the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, the number of Korean immigrants has increased tremendously and peaked during the period from 1970 to 1980 (Hurh & Kim, 1984). In 1970, the number of Korean immigrants was 70,000; by the late 1980s there were 798,849 Korean immigrants in the United States. In 2000, the number of Korean Americans had grown to 1,076,872, making them the eighth largest and one of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States (Berry & Kim, 1988; U.S Census Bureau, 2002). Unlike the earlier period of immigration, some Korean immigrants were urbanized middle class individuals whose

conditions were influenced and motivated by the Korean industrialization movement. They sought better home and school environments, and they aspired to have their children gain entrance into prestigious universities and achieve high status occupations (Zhou & Kim, 2006). Many of the Korean immigrants who came to the United States 20 to 30 years ago are now of the age when they are likely to be grandparents.

In this section, I reviewed the history of Korean immigration in the United States and the characteristics of the immigrant Korean grandparent population. In the next section, I will explain how Korean Confucian values are significant in interpersonal relationships.

***Korean Confucian values about interpersonal relationships.*** Because orthodox Confucianism has been dominant and deeply rooted in Korean consciousness for 700 years, Koreans tend to respect the mind over the material and follow the principles of interpersonal relationships based upon Confucianism (Bahm, 1992; Lee, 1996). Three virtues, wisdom (지, 智), good will and compassion (인, 仁), and courage (용, 勇) make up the ideal human nature. Among these, compassion is the most essential virtue because it is the foundation of loving people (Yoon, 1995).

To actualize these virtues in human life, Confucian ethical codes of conduct were established for harmonious human relationships. Confucian ethical codes of conduct comprise three moral bonds and five ethical codes 삼강오륜(三綱五倫) (Naver Dictionary, 2008).

The three moral bonds are:

1. Parents should love children; children should respect parents and be filially pious (부위자강, 父爲子綱).
2. Rulers should be just; the ruled should be loyal (군위신강, 君爲臣綱).
3. The husband should lead; the wife should follow (부위부강, 夫爲婦綱).

The five ethical codes are:

1. Between parents and children, there shall be love (부자유친, 父子有親).
2. Between rulers and the governed, there shall be justice (군신유의, 君臣有義).
3. Between husband and wife, there shall be distinction (부부유별, 夫婦有別).
4. Between the aged and the young, there shall be order (장유유서, 長幼有序).
5. Between friends, there shall be trust (붕우유신, 朋友有信).

The code about the relationship between the rulers and the ruled is no longer in effect in modern society, but the other codes still govern Korean society and are especially strong in Korean families. In the family, the realization of compassion starts and is magnified and applied to other relationships. Filial piety is given a great deal of weight in actualizing this compassion because it is the foundation of compassion. Compassion is expressed in how a person treats others, and people should realize it by performing filial responsibilities in the family. As such, the relationship between the parent and child, based upon the child's filial piety, is the foundation of all other relationships (Yoon, 1995). Recognizing that children's filial piety in the family and society is essential to understand the relationship between Korean immigrant grandparents and grandchildren.

Because the moral and behavioral codes and principles of the parent-child relationship include and extend to those of the grandparent-grandchild relationship in Confucianism, I will introduce the relationship between parent and child for explicating the relationship between grandparent and grandchild. The Confucian concept of *parent* 父(父) means generally “father,” but it means also “heaven” or “kings” or it can refer to paternal and maternal family line elders, and male family members. It can be used as an honorific title of all elders (Yahoo Chinese-Korean Dictionary, 2010). Likewise, the literal meaning of filial piety 孝(孝) is to take care of all family elders (Kamo, 1998). Thus, the discussion about filial piety and interdependence between parent and child is in general for all the similar family relationships, not just for the parent-child relationship. In this context, I will address Confucian parent-child relationship for understanding grandparent-grandchild relationship. I will write about the filial piety of children and filial expectation of parents more in the next section.

It is not surprising that Confucianism governs the relationship between family members and is regarded as the family ethics system (Yoon, 1995). The family relationship is also considered to be the prototype of every relationship (Kim & Choi, 1994). Family culture expounded by Confucianism will be discussed more below.

*Korean family culture.* As noted above, Confucian principles of interpersonal relationships are nested and nurtured in Korean families. In this section, I will discuss collectivistic aspects of Korean family culture, Korean families' exclusivity toward other families, and the interdependent atmosphere between Korean family members, especially the parent and child.

First, the Korean family is influenced by a traditional gender role structure and family oriented ideology, patriarchal system, and filial duty of children (Kim, 2002). This family culture produces the family unit-centered consciousness, which means that family members should sacrifice for the reputation of the whole family, and each family member tends to regard one family member's success as his or her own success. This is related to collective consciousness. Koreans focus on their own identity in a collective way, such as being a family member, a member of a lineage, a member of an academic affiliation, a member of a village. These values influence people to cooperate with each other and also to think of their group's identity as their own identity.

Second, Korean family members clearly delineate the boundary between their family and outside the family, often recognizing others exclusively and presuming that outsiders are challengers to or competitors for enforcing the family's own success as opposed to theirs (Kim, 2002). Additionally, the Korean family has strong emotional bonds between family members, and kith and kin function exclusively as a unit as opposed to other families (Park, 2004).

Another feature of Korean families' exclusivity is the consciousness of *saving appearance or honor*, a dominant phenomenon in Asian style social relationships. This

consciousness is a kind of self-esteem, but it is formulated by recognition and evaluation of others so persons highly laden with this consciousness tend to rely on others' judgment and to value others' thoughts more than their own (Kim, 1997).

The third salient feature of the Korean family to be discussed here is the interdependence between family members. It is important to understand how the Korean culture is formed from parent and child relationships because parent-child relationships are the foundations of human relationships in the Confucian world. Korean parents and children are mutually dependent in a unique way and very closely connected to each other (Kim, 2002). European American parents influenced by individualism focus on independence when raising their children, whereas Asian parents prioritize interdependence with their children which is characteristic of collectivism (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Also, interpersonal relationships and social norms are emphasized in Asian parenting while self-esteem is more valued in European family parenting. Asian parents are involved actively in their children's socializing to reinforce children's interdependence between family members (Bornstein, Toda, Azuman, Tamis-LeMonda, & Ogino, 1990; Bornstein, Tamis-LeMonda, Tal, Ludermann, Toda, Rahn, et al., 1992).

As mentioned above, interdependent relationships are shaped by Confucian values, and filial piety is the most important quality in the interdependent relationship between parent and child. Because Korean families, like other East Asian families, are governed by Confucian philosophy, filial piety (obedience to parents and elders), patriarchal authority, and children's respect for and honor of parents, even in their adulthood, are

important (Sung, 1995; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Filial obedience is the central value of the Asian immigrant family (Yanagisako, 1985).

The expectation of Asian parents for filial duty from their children is important to consider when explaining interpersonal relationships in the family. The expectation of Asian immigrant parents for familial duty from their children is higher than that of European immigrant parents (Bornstein et al., 1992). Asian parents prefer to live with their children, and they expect more filial responsibility and maintenance of kinship relationships from their adult children and grandchildren than mainstream American families (Kamo & Zhou, 1994). However, interestingly, filial expectations of parents do not guarantee actual assistance from their children (Lee, Netzer, & Coward, 1994).

### ***Grandparents: Their Roles and Relationship with Their Grandchildren***

The relationship between grandparent and grandchild is important to both grandchildren's social and personality development, and grandparents' quality of life (Kivnick, 1982; Kivnick, 1983). To gain a contemporary picture of grandparenting, I will review the role of grandparents, emphasizing grandparent care of grandchildren and the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren.

***Grandparents' role and care for their grandchildren.*** The grandparent role is defined in the dynamics of family members and their relationships (Hayslip, Henderson, & Shore, 2003), and it should also be illuminated in terms of the cultural, ecological, social, and familial contexts (Ikels, 1998; King, Russell & Elder, 1998). For example, recent social contexts demand that grandparents provide care for their grandchildren. Divorce, death, and unemployment of parents cause Korean grandparents to take care of

their grandchildren, while parents' drug addiction, divorce, and child abuse require many American grandparents to nurture their grandchildren (Ok, 2005). With social change, 3.37 million American grandparents are involved in caring for their grandchildren, and one million American grandparents constitute the basic grandparent-grandchild family unit. Recently there is a tendency for grandparents to be increasingly involved in child care, as shown in the statistics that 2.3% of grandparents cared for minor children in 1970, but the percentage increased to 5.7% in 2000 (Cox, 2000; Fuller-Thomson & Minkler, 2000; Ishizawa, 2004). Also, grandparents who reside with their children tend to care for their grandchildren more (Lee et al., 1994).

Additionally, the average age of American grandparents is between 53 and 57 which is 10 years younger than that of Korean grandparents. The emergence of younger grandparents compared to the past and the increase of grandparents being involved in the care of their grandchildren shows the need for more research on the experiences of grandparents with their grandchildren (Ok, 2005).

Most research consistently shows that grandparents negatively evaluate their experience of grandchildren care and even regard it as a burden on them (Dowdell, 1995; Dowdell & Sherwen, 1998; Kelly, 1993; Kelly, Yorker, & Whitley, 1997; Kwon, 2000; Ok, 2005). Although a negative perception and evaluation are associated with the age, gender, education, health, and previous individual history of grandparents, the most predictable factors of a negative experience are the health and age of the grandparent (Choi, 2003).

In Korea, the satisfaction of grandparents and the effects of grandparenting have been more positively appraised than in America. One main research topic is the comparison between grandparenting in the extended family and in the nuclear family. The nuclearization of the family by western individualism and industrialization has caused growing concern in Korean society because the changes in families disintegrate the relationship between grandparent and grandchild. Consequently the trend toward nuclear families is believed to lead to family members' alienation from each other (Yoo, 1980).

Grandparents from the extended family are assessed more positively than grandparents from the nuclear family. In the nuclear family, grandparents mainly carry the role of disciplining grandchildren, whereas in the extended family grandparents provide emotional stability, release of adult children's stress, alleviation of domestic chores, and creation of a harmonious family atmosphere. Also, they equip their grandchildren with more social networks and various role experiences, and they act as their role models (Hwang, 2003).

Furthermore, Korean grandparents transmit and preserve traditional values, moderate the conflicts between family members, and partake in domestic duties. For their grandchildren, Korean grandparents offer an educational environment, proffer maternal roles and play programs, and become the teacher as children sit on their laps (Yoo, 1980).

The role of immigrant grandparents may differ from that of American grandparents. Foreign-born grandparents in the United States carry strong responsibilities and affection in order to maintain kinship with their children. Grandmothers are the

primary caretakers and perform maternal roles. Doing housework, helping with grandchildren's homework, and caring for the sick are counted as their duties in the immigrant family. Immigrant grandparents also consider their responsibility to preserve traditional culture and enhance the intimacy of family as significant. In terms of preserving traditional culture, immigrant grandparents cook traditional food and teach grandchildren their original language and religion. Most of all, the symbolic existence of immigrant grandparents signifies a family bond more than any domestic duty or grandchild care. Despite the frailty and limitation of language skills of foreign born immigrant grandparents, they make a huge contribution to their families. Unfortunately, their experiences and lives are unnoticed by outsiders (Treas & Mazumdar, 2004).

***Korean grandchildren's perceptions about their relationship with grandparents.***

Most research on the relationship between grandparent and grandchild has been conducted from the grandchildren's view; the amount of research from the grandparents' viewpoint is limited. Now I will marshal related research on Korean grandchildren's perceptions about the relationship with their grandparents.

Young grandchildren's attitudes and perceptions toward grandparents are positive in Korean agrarian areas. The number of grandparents' visits and interactions are significantly related with grandchildren's perceptions about their relationships with grandparents. That is, grandchildren who have more frequent visits from and interactions with their grandparents have more positive perceptions of their grandparents compared with grandchildren who have less frequent visits and interactions (Han & Kim, 2003; Suh, 2003). Korean college students do not recognize the relationship with their grandparents

as positively as young grandchildren. College students perceive that grandparents do not provide emotional support (Lee, 2001), but the negative evaluation toward grandparents by college students is also influenced by the number of contacts with their grandparents. Grandchildren who have more frequent contacts with their grandparents have more positive interactions with them than do grandchildren with less frequent contacts (E. G. Kim, 2003; Y. S. Kim, 2002). Grandchildren prefer grandmothers to grandfathers, and female grandchildren, when compared with male grandchildren, show a more positive attitude toward their grandparents (Kim, 2003). Adolescents who receive financial and emotional support from their grandparents regard the relationship with grandparents as positive (Jang, 2002).

In comparative research, both American adolescents and Korean American adolescents perceive the relationship with grandparents positively, but both recognize the generational gap regardless of their age and gender. The quality of the relationship between grandparent and grandchild depends on the health and age of the grandparent. However, discrepancies exist between American adolescents and Korean American adolescents. In the case of Korean American grandchildren, first born Korean American adolescents show more negative attitudes toward their grandparents than do American adolescents. Also, Korean American adolescents experience conflicts with their grandparents about different issues than American adolescents, such as living habits, observance of traditional values, academic needs, and choice of a partner. Korean American grandchildren spend their time with their grandparents in static activities such

as conversation and emotional care, whereas American grandchildren are involved in more active pursuits with their grandparents such as trips and shopping (Kim, 1997).

### **Chapter Summary**

My *raison d'être* for doing this research is twofold: my own personal experiences and the findings (and the lack of findings) from previous research on Korean families, especially Korean immigrant grandparents. My experience with my grandparents, my curiosity about grandparents' perspectives, and my relatively new reflections about the experience of immigrant Korean grandparents with their grandchildren being raised in the U.S. culture led me to think of this research topic. In addition, my search of related literature uncovered a need for further research on the elderly, intergenerational relationships of Korean immigrant grandparents, changing roles of grandparents, and immigrant grandparenting education.

Based upon my *raison d'être*, I formulated the following research question: What is the experience of Korean immigrant grandmothers in their relationships with their adolescent U.S. born grandchildren?

To understand Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences with their grandchildren, the context of this phenomenon was described. First, I examined the history and characteristics of Korean immigrants in the United States, and Korean Confucian values related to family culture and interpersonal relationships. Second, I contemplated recent research on grandparents' relationships with their grandchildren.

## CHAPTER 2 TURNING TO HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

Hermeneutic phenomenological methodology was chosen for this study because this study seeks to understand Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences with their grandchildren. Hermeneutic phenomenology is the interpretation of experience via written text or some other symbolic texts. The basic purpose of phenomenology is to understand the essential meaning of human experience (van Manen, 2003).

In this chapter, I will address some fundamental and methodological issues for hermeneutic phenomenology, and then I will explain research procedures, such as how participants were selected and how the text was analyzed.

### **Fundamental Issues for Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

In this section, the epistemological and ontological aspects of hermeneutic phenomenology will be explored. In order to do this, several crucial concepts of this methodology will be explained.

Essentially, phenomenology and hermeneutics are the same in terms of the methodological principles used to do reflective *lifeworld* research. Since both positions are commonly grounded in lifeworld theory which seeks to thoroughly understand the hidden meaning of a phenomenon, their approaches can be explicated in one manner. The concept of lifeworld is central in phenomenology and hermeneutics, thus also in hermeneutic phenomenology. The notion of lifeworld is deeply associated with ontological and epistemological angles of this methodology. The idea of lifeworld

especially defines epistemological aspects of the methodology; thus, lifeworld as the center of epistemological inquiry will be examined first.

### *Lifeworld, the Center of Epistemological Inquiry*

Epistemology is created by two Greek root words: *episteme* which means knowledge and *logos* which means discoursing. Epistemology then is a “theory or science of the method or grounds of knowledge” (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). Epistemology includes the essential nature of knowledge, knowledge acquisition, and the knowledge boundary of humans.

Since Husserl, epistemology has been the core of phenomenology as a scientific and philosophical principle. Lifeworld is epistemologically the heart of phenomenological inquiry. For example, the root of knowledge acquisition resides in the relationship between the object and the subject, that is, between the researcher and the being researched in hermeneutic phenomenology.

Inquiries into the nature of knowledge and knowledge acquisition are of importance in phenomenology when searching for meaning, and this inquiry ultimately gives birth to meaning. A researcher’s own epistemological claim should paradoxically be limited while doing research. As a matter of fact, phenomenology started a branch of philosophy rather than that of methodology. It is the epistemological inquiry that makes phenomenology a methodology. We cannot be phenomenologists if we do not understand the philosophical foundations of phenomenology. Thus, I feel a need to discuss the epistemological aspects of this methodology and the seriousness and weight of lifeworld in this methodology.

Hermeneutics and phenomenology maintain an essential stance that people live in a natural world, a pre-reflexive and pre-conscious lifeworld that includes complicated, complex, and multifaceted life features. Because what a person knows is not generated in a vacuum but is context-dependent, the lifeworld is of significance as the foundation of knowledge construction. Epistemologically, these notions of lifeworld and natural attitude are the roots for comprehending this methodology. Simply said, the lifeworld is “the world of lived experience” (van Manen, 2003, p. 182) and lived experience is “what persons go through as they conduct their day to day life” (Hultgren, 1989, p. 50). The basic form of lived experience is pre-reflexive and immediate. A natural attitude in everyday life means that one lives and experiences what is often taken for granted without critically reflecting on immediate actions (Dahlberg et al., 2008).

In this methodology, lived experience is experience prior to reflection, theorizing, and conceptualizing (Dahlberg et al., 2008; van Manen, 2003). Phenomenology attempts to understand a human’s lived experience of some phenomena. This methodology uncovers the meaning of the “taken for granted” in everyday life experiences (Hultgren, 1989).

The fact that doing research is carried out in this natural lifeworld means that researchers possess their own history or traditions which affect their understanding and produce pre-understandings and prejudices (Gadamer, 2006). Hence, a problem exists: How can research be scientifically conducted in this lifeworld that generates prejudices in researchers? This question is also related to epistemological inquiry for this methodology.

Pre-understandings or prejudices which hinder researchers to see things as they are cannot be avoided in a natural world. Since every human being is context bound and cannot leave his or her natural lifeworld, human beings carry their own prejudices because of their natural attitude. But pre-understandings and prejudices are not always negative for research if researchers can be made aware of them. Pre-understanding is the initial interpretation a person makes about a phenomenon, so it is meaningful as a first guess when embarking on research. The pre-understandings or prejudices of researchers reflect their own historicity with a phenomenon. Their own personal and cultural history cannot be removed from their existence, or their storage of knowledge, even if it is necessary for them to reflect on it (Dahlberg et al., 2008).

The idea of pre-understanding is coupled with the notion of *intentionality* that refers to the indivisible relationship from the lifeworld. An individual can never be separated from the lifeworld, and an individual has pre-understanding toward a phenomenon within intentional structures. This intentionality allows individuals to analyze, reinforce, and integrate their experiences and their pre-owned image about similar experiences, that is, appresentation (Gadamer, 2006; Husserl, 1970).

Gadamer (2006) introduced the concept of horizon to explain various levels of understanding entangled with the concepts of temporality or historicity, but the idea of horizon implies intentionality also. An existing horizon of understanding that was constructed through an individual's personal history collapses with a new horizon of understanding. This pre-understanding is the product of historicity and intentionality of individuals which is not only natural but also a part of their lifeworld.

More importantly, a researcher must be aware of pre-understanding which renders the first step in scientific research. Awareness and reflection are like a magic chant to break a wicked spell. How the scientific attitude breaks the spell will be discussed in the section titled “Methodological Issues for Hermeneutic Phenomenology” later in this paper. In the next section, another point of the lifeworld which is intertwined with the ontological aspects of this methodology needs to be examined more closely.

### ***Being-in-the-World, Ontological Inquiry***

Phenomenology began by opposing the logical thinking ascribed to the empirical psychological process. The incipient phenomenological inquiry about the relationship between consciousness and objects in terms of epistemology has evolved into an ontological question which is related to the relationship of existence and non-existence and structures of the lifeworld. Phenomenology developed by striving to explore what existence is. Ontological inquiry in phenomenology was started by Heidegger who was a follower of Husserel, a pioneer of phenomenology, and Heidegger linked epistemological ruminations into ontological pursuit and widened the area of phenomenology. The warp thread of epistemological inquiry is woven with the woof of ontological query in the fabric of hermeneutic phenomenology.

As noticed above, the apex of epistemological speculations is put in the concept of the lifeworld, which makes one think how multifaceted the lifeworld is and what it means in research. The idea of lifeworld also extends into ontological questions. Heidegger (2008) opens a new horizon with the concept of *being-in-the-world*, the idea

that human existence precedes consciousness and knowledge and emphasizes existential and relational ways of being.

Being-in-the-world implies not only the significance of human existence but also modes of being, particularly being with others. In other words, being-in-the-world indicates that the lifeworld is not only true-to-life or true-to-the heart of human existence but also the source of human knowledge. If how an individual reacts to the world is examined from his or her point of view, this relationship with the world can be defined through the concept of intentionality that I explained previously. If this inseparable relationship with the world is comprehensively explained from a bird's-eye-view, this relationship could be defined by the concept of being-in-the-world.

Merleau Ponty's (1995) idea of *being-to-the-world* also suggests that the world existed before human consciousness, and the world is inevitably related to humans. Connectedness to the world is part of human nature, and this idea presumes humans are interacting with each other. Merleau Ponty (1968) also proposed the idea of *flesh-of-the-world* which is an ontologically substantial idea. This idea suggests that all is connected and reciprocal upon each other, and my thoughts and the thoughts of others originate ultimately from one being. The individual difference is possible within a person because it has been provided by the world. Conversely said, otherness is a way to enter a common and shared world. The inseparable relationship with the world is also the aspect of the lifeworld. Similarly Heidegger (2008) states:

The answer to the question of the "who" of everyday Dasein is to be obtained by analyzing that kind of being in which Dasein maintains itself proximally and for the most part....being-in-the-world that basic state of Dasein by which every mode of its being gets co-determined....being-in-the-world, the world is always

the one that I share with others. The world of Dasein is a with-world. Being-in is being-with others. Their being-in-themselves within-the-world is Dasein-with. (pp.153-155)

In this respect, humans can understand others, and researchers can do research because they live in the same lifeworlds. However, every lifeworld has differences because lifeworlds are multifarious, and otherness exists in each person's lifeworld. Thus, the lifeworld has a commonness as well as an otherness. Phenomenologists should be aware of both facets of lifeworlds.

Dahlberg et al. (2008) summarize the importance of Gadamer's philosophy: "[H]uman experience is a happening within and a meeting with the world. Human beings are best understood when they are expressed as existence; as dialectic and creative involvement with the world" (p. 79). Gadamer (2006) also stresses the importance of the relationship with the world. Though Gadamer focuses on the epistemological aspects, it is easily understood that his insight into humans is deeply related to relational and existential beings.

In this section, lifeworld is expressed in other ways, such as being-in-the-world and flesh-of-the-world, emphasizing mutuality and relational aspects between the world and human beings. The lifeworld theory that I have discussed is in terms of the being as Dasein. Dasein is the subject not defined only by consciousness but by temporality as a present existence, so the being that I discussed previously was Dasein in the lifeworld. Dasein is an entity of humanness which can ask its existence and seek the meaning of being while living in a temporal world. This leads to the meaning of being through reflective procedures (Heidegger, 2008).

Heidegger's (2008) theory of phenomenology focuses on the potentiality and interpretability of Dasein in the relational lifeworld but also on what Dasein is. To understand being, the concept of time is also needed, which was partially noted above in the discussion of the importance of historicity as the result of temporality. The original and untouched way of being is existence, but existence is placed in time. However, human beings regard being-in-the-time unrelated to them because of the repetition of everyday life. Along with the fixed ways of being and behaving as influenced by others, the insensitivity to time is problematic since humans lose their real being-ness and develop existential problems related to time such as anxiety. Heidegger argues that human beings need to be recovered as original beings from their existential problems (Heidegger, 2008).

The concept of being was not clear or obvious and was hard to define until Heidegger explained it in his theory; but he turned it into an existential question. In other words, being should be explored in terms of existence. By the fact that the essence of Dasein is existence, Dasein is situated in the being-in-the world. The being of Dasein has the mode to form relationships with others. Thus, Dasein's analysis of relationship between existence and being is important for the recovery of being-ness and is a form of hermeneutic phenomenology, the methodology for revealing the relationship and for uncovering the hidden meaning in it. Dahlberg et al. (2008) articulate the role of hermeneutic phenomenology as it relates to being on the ontological pivot: "Being is the ontological manifestation of the lifeworld and interpretation is the way in which we

understand its ambiguity. Interpretation arises from the manifestation of the things of the world that meet our gaze and that we experience through wonder and curiosity” (p. 74).

### **Methodological Issues for Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

While exploring hermeneutic phenomenological methodology, I felt a bit like I was walking in a fog on this journey because this methodology does not have a manual describing specific roles for researchers. However, if there is no examination of the researcher beforehand, it is hard to comprehend the methodology itself because the researcher is the method used for this type of research (Dahlberg et al., 2008; Gadamer, 2006). Thus, I feel a need to discuss key concepts involved in being a hermeneutic phenomenological researcher. I will write about the researcher as an artist first, and then I will delve into features of the researcher as a lifeworld scientist.

#### ***Researcher as Artist***

While preparing this dissertation using hermeneutic phenomenology, I began to feel more like an artist than a researcher. Hermeneutic phenomenology seeks the meaning of a phenomenon, looks for what the data have to say, includes several symbolic forms of texts, and provides room for the researcher’s imagination and creativity. This form of methodology regards a researcher as a research tool, but, concurrently, a researcher lives in the lifeworld and cannot be free from context-boundedness. This methodology emphasizes the researcher’s insights and reflections as a living tool used to uncover the meaning of a phenomenon. In this sense, hermeneutic phenomenology has felt confusing

at times and has driven me to frustration sometimes because there are no methodological steps to follow.

The creativity and imagination of researchers along with thorough reflexive reasoning revives “the frozen existence” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 66) into a living existence. A researcher pursues research by carving the outer layers from the essences he or she is trying to discover, not unlike a sculptor who carves a form from a mass of deadened stone. Researchers should let research be more than “frozen existence” and “have the capacity for a sublimated existence” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 66). In this definition, no distinction exists between research and art (Dahlberg et al., 2008).

To allow for human understanding to be open, pliable, and creative, researchers should also be open and creative. If they are not, the result of their search for more meaning and understanding is futile. Dahlberg et al. (2008) state this about the researcher’s directionality in relation to the goal of the research:

The way we go ahead, to aim at human understanding must instead be open, flexible, pliable, sensitive and creative enough for the phenomenon we investigate and the people that we meet, in order for them to convey even enigmatic meanings of human being and its phenomena. (p. 333)

A researcher needs to wait until the data have said all they have to say and to tolerate uncertainty until the meaning of the whole is revealed; that means the researcher needs to have an open attitude. While seeking the meaning while waiting to see what the data say, researchers live as artists. Giorgi (1989) states this about artistry: “[T]here’s more spontaneity, a little more creativity, a little more making last-minute decisions and a bit more dwelling with things during the execution of the procedures” (p. 51).

Since the concept of openness is of importance in this methodology, more of an explanation about openness is needed. Simply said, openness as a methodological tool means tolerance toward uncertainties, flexibility in the research process, and sensitivity to what the data say. The concept of openness applies not only to methods but also to “the expression of way of being” (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 98). This means that researchers should be open to themselves, others, phenomena, the lifeworld, research itself, and research procedures, such as planning, choosing specific methods, interviewing, and allowing room for others’ reinterpretation of the results. Openness is a methodological attitude.

If the researcher does not have an open attitude, he or she cannot see what is already there. Thus, the openness of the researcher is not only prerequisite but also a tool for research. Researchers require an ability to be surprised and to wonder about the unexpected and unpredicted. Heidegger (2008) terms this type of openness as curiosity:

The basic state of sight shows itself in a peculiar tendency-of-being which belongs to everydayness—the tendency towards ‘seeing’. We designate this tendency by the term, curiosity, which characteristically is not confined to seeing, but expresses the tendency towards a peculiar way of letting the world be encountered by us in perception. Our aim in Interpreting this phenomenon is in principle one which is existential-ontological. We do not restrict ourselves to an orientation towards cognition....Therefore curiosity is characterized by a specific way of not tarrying alongside what is closest. Consequently it does not seek the leisure of tarrying observantly, but rather seeks restlessness and the excitement of continual novelty and changing encounters. (pp. 214-216)

### ***Researcher as Scientist***

Not only are phenomenological researchers artists, they also are scientists. They scrutinize lived experience with the scientific thoroughness that any other researchers would.

Basically, phenomenological researchers must be aware of their natural attitude and their intentionality and how these attitudes affect their research. In order to do this, researchers should grasp epistemological implications of the lifeworld and how this reasoning reflects on their research. Researchers are not only constituents of their lifeworld and the knowledge base of it, but also they are co-constructors of their lifeworld embedded in and belonging to the larger social context. Also, the intrinsic nature of researchers is to sense and search for the essence of the inner parts of themselves.

More importantly, researchers using this methodology should know what they are doing even if they do not know what the data will say at a certain point, how they will handle the data, and why their research is important even though there are not specific sets of procedural rules (Dahlberg et al., 2008). This procedural understanding requires profound epistemological knowledge. Researchers' epistemological understanding will be the navigator when they are lost during their research journey. Epistemology will help to reestablish the relationship between researcher and the being researched when he or she is lost and seeks to resume the journey for reflective lifeworld research. The epistemological journey requires that a researcher be thorough; in other words, a thorough epistemological inquiry produces a phenomenological researcher.

***Phenomenological reduction.*** When writing about the openness of researchers, I discussed the researcher as a tool. The meaning of this is that researchers must become sharers of their lifeworld with their informants when extracting the essence of their lived experience. As a research tool, a researcher needs to be the sieve for extracting already-there essence. Hermeneutic phenomenology seeks openness in searching for an essence

and stresses reduction, an attitude essential to phenomenological research. Reduction is one aspect of openness. The word *openness* means to disclose something, while the word *reduction* means to reduce, close, or limit something: More accurately, the term reduction means reducing “the world as it is considered in the natural attitude to a world of pure phenomena” (Valle, King, & Halling, 1989, p.11). Though openness is the golden rule for phenomenological research, it is not a sufficient condition. Speaking paradoxically, limiting and reducing something is necessary to optimize openness.

The approach a researcher takes as a sieve creates a reflective attitude, and this sieving process is referred to as reduction. In order to uncover meaningful experiences as an individual, a researcher must attempt to assume the phenomenological device of reduction. Reduction has several forms or stratum. The first technique is to animate the wonder about the enigma of the world and to renew the meaning and beliefs of experience. Second, researchers need to restrain their private feelings, such as predilections, inclinations, and expectations that hinder the phenomenon to be revealed as it is. The third technique is to denude theoretical and scientific conceptions and frameworks and to see things in a more concrete way. The fourth technique is eidetic reduction with which a phenomenologist seeks essence and reduces the phenomenon into essence. From particularity and concreteness of lived experience, the generality of essence is sought in eidetic reduction (van Manen, 2003). The mental process of eidetic reduction is similar to imaginative variation, which will be addressed in the section on research procedures.

In particular, bracketing is one form of reduction which is generally known as phenomenological reduction. Bracketing occurs when a researcher puts aside his or her past knowledge that is related to what is being researched. In other words, a phenomenologist parenthesizes, brackets, and excludes the actual experience embedded in natural attitude and then sees other possibilities for meaning. Since human beings live in the lifeworld with their own natural attitudes that prevent the data from saying what is actually presented, researchers need to recognize their natural attitudes and be aware of their nature as historical beings and the complicatedness of the lifeworld with a reflective attitude (Dahlberg et al., 2008; Giorgi, 1997).

Openness renders researchers able to see their subjects in a new way, while reduction or bracketing helps them draw near to the essence of their research. Reduction makes the researcher concentrate on the hidden meaning. Openness does not bear the power to concentrate on the latent meaning but provides the researcher with the ability to see otherness. Researchers are providing the sieve for extracting what is taken-for-granted into the already-there. The researcher has two functions within himself or herself: sieving and searching with openness. After sieving, the researcher keeps seeking meaning with an open attitude, repeats the sieving, and seeks until he or she reaches the essence of the search. This repetitive work involves concentration and tenacity. Though the outcome of bracketing has various levels of meaning, such as a tentative and fixed meaning, the outcome through reflection is not taken-for-granted, which means the outcome is closer to data already presented.

*Exploring my assumptions about the relationship between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren.* Because my pre-understanding could be my initial interpretation, it needs to be considered. In order to understand the lived experience of Korean immigrant grandparents, I bracketed past knowledge to enter into reduction and to seek an understanding of the meaning of these grandparents' experiences. My assumptions about the relationship between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren are as follows:

First, Korean immigrant grandmothers have limited relationships with their grandchildren in the United States because the grandmothers do not speak English. This negatively affects their relationships with their grandchildren.

Second, although Korean American grandchildren do not show filial piety to their grandmothers as much as grandchildren in Korea, they respect their grandmothers: Korean American grandchildren have more Confucian family values than mainstream American grandchildren.

Third, both grandmothers and grandfathers are involved in grandparenting based upon my childhood memory.

Fourth, Korean immigrant grandmothers' relationships with their children affect the relationships they have with their grandchildren.

Fifth, there will be increased possibilities for positive changes, and the quality of Korean immigrant grandmothers lives could be improved in American society, if the experience of Korean immigrant grandmothers' relationships with their grandchildren can be illuminated.

## Research Procedures

The research procedures for this study included selecting participants, collecting data and analyzing texts.

### *Selecting Participants*

The setting selected for the interviews was Atlanta, Georgia, which has one of the highest Korean immigrant population densities in the United States. Many Korean elders in the United States are foreign-born, and they are more prone than any other Asian elders to keep their traditional culture by communicating mainly within their own ethnic community (Kim, 1997). In an area so densely populated by Korean immigrants, one might expect to obtain rich descriptions of Korean immigrant grandparents' experiences with their grandchildren.

The inclusion criteria in my research stated that participants must be Korean immigrant grandmothers who had or have experience living with their adult children and with their grandchildren. Also, participants had U.S. born adolescent grandchildren who were in middle school or high school, had specific experiences related to their relationships with their adolescent U.S. born grandchildren, and were willing and able to describe their experiences.

Participants who have lived in the United States for more than 10 years were selected, and only grandmothers were recruited because grandmothers are more actively involved in grandparenting than grandfathers. Also, Korean grandmothers provide more childcare than grandfathers for their own grandchildren (Smith, 1991; Suh, 1989).

Sixteen participants were recruited, but two were excluded from this research because they had situations that were different from the other participants. One was a grandmother who had a grandchild with mental disabilities, and the other was a grandfather. The grandmother who had a disabled grandchild was excluded from my research because she said that she did not know how to interact with her grandchild at all, so she just interacted with her child not her grandchild. In addition, since the flyer solicited help from grandparents, the grandfather eagerly wanted to participate in my study. My initial thought was that both grandmothers and grandfathers were involved in taking care of their grandchildren, but I found that immigrant grandfathers often had little experience with their grandchildren after interviewing one of them and talking informally with other grandfathers. Also, it is possible that the experience of grandfathers differs from the experience of grandmothers. Consequently, my participants were 14 Korean immigrant grandmothers.

While seeking participants, I found that Korean immigrant grandmothers are very reluctant to converse about their family if they think they may reveal some family problems. Though I expected this tendency before starting the interview, it was more serious than I anticipated.

I intended to recruit my participants through a Korean ethnic church because the church functions to maintain ethnic ties and provides social services to the Korean community (Chong, 1998; Kim & Kim, 2001). I posted flyers in the church, but the participants I expected did not contact me. I then contacted the Korean Elderly Association and got approval from them to post fliers on their entrance bulletin board.

They proposed that I introduce my research at their meeting where, after explaining my research, I could hand out flyers and invite the members of the association to participate in the study. After the meeting, I collected contact information from about 10 potential participants. From these 10, I ended up with only 2 interviews. Two of the 10 were the grandfather and the grandmother with the grandchild with special needs. The other six initial volunteers changed their minds at their children's requests or because of busy schedules.

My next step in recruiting participants was to contact another Korean ethnic church that has a class for elders. I asked the instructor if I could hand out flyers right before the class. I was able to find the rest of my participants at this church with the help of one grandmother. This grandmother was not an official church staff member, but she was the one who influenced the other grandmothers to help me with my research. She had helped many grandmothers, so she knew many women and could hand out my flyers to the appropriate people on my behalf. If I learned one thing from this experience, it is that the authority of the church was not as helpful in recruiting Korean immigrant elders as were personal relationships. In Asian cultures, people do not like to talk about family matters to those outside of their family. They may be less inclined to talk about their family if there are problems because it is regarded as shameful or seen as a stigma in Asian cultures (Shelton & Rianon, 2004). Since the elder who approached my possible participants was not an authority figure, my participants appeared to feel more secure talking with me. I could then feel more comfortable trying to create deeper relationships between myself and the participants once they felt acceptance and relief.

Because confidentiality about their family issues was of the utmost importance, I did not seek much demographic information from my participants. I did ask for their approximate age, the length of time they have lived in the United States, their grandchildren's ages or school levels and gender, and whether or not they have lived with or currently live with their grandchildren. This was all done in order to check whether or not my participants met the inclusion criteria for this research project. Most of my participants provided the personal information I asked for, but some grandmothers did not provide all of the information.

All of my participants were born in Korea, but they have lived in the United States for 10 to 29 years. Eight of the participants have lived in the United States for more than 20 years. Six participants have lived in the United States between 10 and 19 years. All the participants live in Georgia. Two participants are currently living with their children and their grandchildren. Twelve participants previously lived with their children and grandchildren between 2 years and 20 years. Though I did not ask their marital status, my participants stated their marital statuses during their interviews. All of them were or are married; 12 of the participants are widows. One participant still lives with her husband. Another participant has lived alone for 30 years since her husband left her for another woman. Regarding the age of my participants, five were between 80 to 89 years old, and seven were between 69 to 78 years old. I do not know the other two participants' ages exactly, but I think they are in their 70s. All of my participants have at least one adolescent grandchild. Five have more than two adolescent grandchildren now.

In this research, *adolescent* is operationally defined as a student either in middle school or high school.

In order to maintain participant anonymity, I used pseudonyms for the grandchildren's names in transcribing and translating interviews. Because the names of elders are not used in personal conversation and asking names is not polite in Korean culture, I did not ask my participants' names. My participants stated their grandchildren's names many times which I changed when transcribing my notes. If I needed to call my participants' names, I called them the grandmother of their grandchildren's names with a respectful suffix. Because Koreans put value on collectivism and elders' authority, I needed to be respectful of their culture in this way.

I tried to protect my participants as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) requests. I received approval from the IRB at the University of Minnesota in 2008 and renewed my research status with the IRB in 2009. The IRB protocol requirements for my research are presented in Appendix A.

Finally, I debriefed my participants on the research process if they needed clarification or had questions. The purpose of this debriefing was for me, the researcher, to explain the nature of the research process and to understand what the participants may have perceived and assumed about the research (Eyed, 2001). A second purpose of the debriefing process was to reduce any possible harm to the participants.

In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the nature of the interviews I conducted and the interview process for this research.

## *Getting Data*

*The nature of the interview.* Polkinghorne (1989) states that the purpose of data collecting is “to collect naïve descriptions of the experience under investigation” (p. 46). The researcher should obtain naïve descriptions of experience from whatever data are collected and focus on the expressed meaning of a lifeworld experience (Champlin, 2007). For my research, I chose the phenomenological interview as the main data collection method I would use.

The phenomenological interview does not seek an opinion but a description of a specific embodied experience of the interviewee. Polkinghorne (1989) explains how the phenomenological interview is different from a positivistic interview:

Survey interviewing is considered a stimulus-response interaction; the interviewer’s question is the stimulus, and the subject’s answer is the response. According to survey-interview theory, it is assumed to be possible and desirable for the questioner to present a constant stimulus to all subjects. Thus the questions must be presented in the same order, and the interviewer must not respond in a manner that would bias responses.

The phenomenological interview, by contrast, is conceived of as a discourse or conversation (Mishler, 1986). It involves an interpersonal engagement in which subjects are encouraged to share with a researcher the details of their experience. The researcher’s behavior, although individualized, is also disciplined in its focus on the research question....The focus of the interview is on the life-world or experience of the interviewee and is theme-oriented, not person oriented. (p. 49)

As noted above, a phenomenological interview is more than just two people having a conversation. It calls for the researcher to bracket what he or she already knows in order to reduce prejudices and encourage an open attitude. By reducing prejudices and increasing openness, the likelihood of obtaining new understandings is enhanced.

Creating the capability to remain open is also essential during the interview process. “Openness is the mark of a true willingness to listen, see and understand”

(Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 98). In order to see the phenomenon as it is, the interviewer needs to listen to the interviewee's experience without imposing or inserting his or her own preconceived ideas. Dahlberg et al. describe the receptiveness and open attitude the researcher needs to have toward participants:

[O]pen-mindedness refers to the receptivity of the researcher to the subjects and the subject matter. An immediate openness exists when a researcher is able to engage with a participant, establishing trust and confirmation and a level of nearness that allows the possibility of disclosure....In the moment of listening, the researcher belongs to the world, to the phenomenon, and to the research data. (pp. 100-101)

The above phenomenological guidelines regarding bracketing and openness still do not provide specific lock-step interviewing procedures. During the interview, the researcher works as the research tool because the lifeworlds are multifarious, and one interview method cannot be applied in all situations. Though there are not clear instructions for interviewing, it is necessary for the interviewer to be mindful again that openness to the lifeworlds of each participant must be used during actual interview and analysis procedures.

For example, the interview with my first participant was not a success because I was too immersed in what I wanted to do. Based on the advice of my advisor, I began to see myself as an open research tool to the lifeworld of my participant even though it was still not fully satisfactory to me. I learned that collaborative work for reflection and the research process helps the researcher obtain insight and a deeper understanding of a phenomenon under study.

*Conducting the interviews.* The interviews were conducted over a span of eight weeks, from October 2008 to December 2008. The interviews were conducted in Korean

in order to draw out the grandmothers' experiences more completely since the intent of the interviews was to listen to the grandmothers' experiences with their grandchildren.

If it was possible, I scheduled the interviews during a quiet time of day and at a quiet location. The locations of the interviews were mutually agreed upon by participants and me, but the locations of the interviews were chosen by the participants. For example, one participant wanted to meet at her home at first, but she changed her mind because she did not know me and felt safer if the location was outside the home. Another example was a participant who wanted to be interviewed at a fast food restaurant, but I found the surrounding background noise to be too loud even though it was early on a weekend morning. So I asked her if she would mind being interviewed in the car in front of the restaurant, and she accepted my request. Thus, interview locations were at the homes of 10 participants, a church meeting room for one participant, a car for two participants, and a community center for one participant.

To understand the meaning of the phenomenon, "researchers should also attend to expression of emotion or uncertainty, pauses and hesitations and other expressive qualities which can provide clues to the content of the conversation, and its meaning if the data consist of interviews" (Dahlberg et al., 2008, p.253). While interviewing participants and after the interviews ended, I jotted down brief field notes about the environment, some items related to their grandchildren, and any unique gestures and non-verbal expressions used during their interview.

Before beginning each interview, I introduced myself to the participants and gave them a brief biographical description of myself. Then we had casual conversation to help

build rapport. The purpose and procedures of the research and the voluntary nature of participating were briefly reviewed again although these procedures had been presented in an invitation letter in advance [Appendix B]. I started with comments such as these: "Tell me about a time when you were with one of your grandchildren. What were you and the grandchild doing? What was said? What was the tone of the interaction?" From then on the dialogue was led by participants' responses rather than relying on prepared questions. Examples of comments I made to encourage a participant to expand or clarify her response were "Please tell me more about that" and "Could you give me an example of that?"

The duration of interviews was from 40 minutes to 2 hours. Since the interview was conducted in Korean, the interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim including some of their pauses and unique facial expressions. The transcripts were then translated from Korean to English and back-translated to check for accuracy and clarity where it was needed. The work of transcription and translation took four months, and the translated transcription totaled more than 350 pages. The translation was not an easy process because of subtle nuances and cultural differences between Korean and English. In order to be accurate in translating participants' responses, I discussed the interview text with a Korean colleague. In order to maintain confidentiality, the data recorded and transcribed did not have any direct identifiers, names, social security numbers, addresses, or telephone numbers.

*Selecting additional text.* In hermeneutic phenomenology, various forms of text are regarded as lifeworld research data. To reinforce and amplify the interview text, I selected passages from poems and songs.

### *Analyzing Texts*

Text analysis was conducted on the interview transcripts from the 14 grandmothers. Interpretive analysis was employed for searching for patterns of meanings or themes. According to van Manen (2003),

Theme analysis refers then to the process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meanings and imagery of the work.... Phenomenological themes may be understood as the structure of experience. So when we analyze a phenomenon, we are trying to determine what the themes are, the experiential structures that make up that experience. It would be simplistic, however, to think of themes as conceptual formulations or categorical statements. (pp. 78-79)

One precept that researchers should be aware of in their analysis and writing is the balance of part and whole. Researchers need to “balance the research contexts by considering parts and whole” during text analysis and text presentation (van Manen, 2003, p.161). Van Manen also writes about the importance of the organic wholeness of text, emphasizing the relation between the whole and parts:

It is useful, however, to think carefully about the structure or form of one’s research study, even though that structure in its decisive form only emerges as one textually progresses with the work. Sometimes a researcher is unsure what direction to take....To get out of this predicament try to keep the evolving part-whole relation of one’s study in mind. While it may not be possible to anticipate one’s study with a fixed outline or table of contents, it should be possible to organize with broad brushstrokes the overall sense of the approach required by the fundamental question or notion one is addressing. Compare this approach to what a painter does in the preparation of a canvas for the imagery it is to serve. (p. 167)

Considering parts and the whole as a basic hermeneutic principle is the journey to find the “organizational form” and “organic wholeness of the text” which is coherent with the research methodology (van Manen, 2003, p. 168). Ultimately, researchers want to understand the meaning of the phenomenon of interest as a whole, but they need to attend to parts during actual analysis because it is difficult to analyze all the data at the same time. Thus, the text needs to be divided into smaller parts for digging out deeper meanings (Dahlberg et al., 2008; Giorgi, 1997; van Manen, 2003). These smaller parts are *meaning units*, to use Giorgi’s (1997) term. According to Dahlberg et al. (2008), “the term meaning units signals that the division of the whole of data into parts is not carried out randomly, but with respect to the meaning that one sees” (p. 243).

I began the analysis of my data by reading transcribed texts several times because they showed nothing significant to me at first glance. While reading, my pre-understanding and assumptions popped into my mind as a conceptual theoretical framework. I knew my assumptions worked as an initial idea when they are on-alert, but in reality, I frankly admit to being tempted to take the stance of “expert interpreter” (Hadjistavropoulos & Smythe, 2001, p. 164). My advisor helped me to see past this by discussing the text with me in order to reduce bias, prejudices, and assumptions. The experience of procedural analysis was not easy for me, but I learned to understand phenomenology in my own lifeworld, not the lifeworld in scholars’ books.

To identify similarities and differences, in other words, meaning units, I tried carefully to bracket my personal biases and theories. I read and re-read the text

thoroughly, asking myself which sentences represented the fundamental and significant meanings of the text holistically and then highlighted these sentences.

If I regarded particular sentences as important components of the experience, I clustered those parts of the grandmothers' narratives and wrote them down on tables I made about that cluster. When reading sentences in the same cluster, I tried to think about a shared theme. I did this several times because sometimes I had to thoroughly examine the sentences to make sure I grasped their meaning. I created some clusters and then eliminated them because they did not develop into a theme. I would then try to make new clusters. Through these procedures, I grouped the similar theme statements together and then grasped the shared meaning in the statements.

The back and forth movement between tentative interpretation and fixed interpretation applied throughout the analysis process. This back and forth movement is related to the consideration of part and whole, and efforts for the balance of back and forth or part and whole lead to a possible comprehensive understanding. This principle is directly related to the presentation of writing. To me, in this methodology, writing is doing research itself and journeying for possible meanings. Analyzing does not equal writing, but analysis is a part of the writing.

***Imaginative variation.*** As noted previously, imaginative variation is a major process of reduction along with bracketing. Imaginative variation is the mental experimentation used to interrogate concrete and actual experiences or to validate the permanency of theme structure. This transformational process helps the property being discovered as a phenomenon for what it really is, its essence. The imaginatively

proffered transformation boosts one to the zenith of understanding where participants' genuine experiences can be fully manifested and elucidated (Dahlberg et al., 2008; Giorgi, 2006; Spielberg, 1981; Polkinghorne, 1989; van Manen, 2003).

The mental working of imaginative variation is essential for phenomenological research because it is a device for maximizing the openness of the researcher; in other words, it is a central way of seeking the essence. In my paper, I have accentuated the balance between openness and restrictedness, in which imaginative variation carries gravity in terms of a balanced reduction process.

In the end, six themes were formulated in my research through the analysis procedure. Four themes were categorized into lifeworld existential elements, and the other two were classified as other lifeworld elements of Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences. I will address the structure of themes in the next section.

### **The Structure of Themes**

The thematic analysis of the interview text produced six themes that I have grouped into two categories: existential lifeworld themes and other lifeworld themes. By *existential*, I refer to the lifeworld existentials as used in phenomenology.

The four fundamental existentials of spatiality, corporality, temporality, and relationality may be seen to belong to the existential ground by way of which all human beings experience the world, although not all in the same modality of course. In the phenomenological literature these four categories have been considered as belonging to the fundamental structure of the lifeworld (see, for example, Merleau-Ponty, 1962)...Spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality are productive categories for the process of phenomenological question posing, reflecting and writing. (van Manen, 2003, p.102)

Van Manen's (2003) presentation of the existential way of writing as spatiality, temporality, corporality, and relationality motivated me to think of writing on an

existential level about Korean immigrant grandmothers. Also, while reading their interview materials, I sensed that the experiences of Korean immigrant grandmothers are deeply related to their existential problems.

As I clustered anecdotes from my interviews based on the existential levels as van Manen proposed, I noticed my interview materials lacked the aspects of corporality. Originally, I had created the theme of corporality to look at more closely, but I then eliminated it because I recognized my own greed. In other words, I was too much immersed in my pre-understanding. While working on my text analysis, I learned how important language is to the grandmothers in this study. Hence, I divided the existential theme of relationality into two parts: language and sociality. I think of language and sociality as the two sides of the relationship coin.

I followed van Manen's style of writing and suggestions for writing about existentials. Though being-in-the-world is a major precept that researchers need to keep in mind while doing all of their research, concurrently being-with-others-in-the-world is also an existential field of human life. As the base of human life, the experience of being-with-others-in-the-world will be unfolded and unveiled. More specifically, in this paper, the experiences of Korean immigrant grandmothers with their grandchildren will be examined first in the context of other being-with-others (relationality) and in the context of spatiality and temporality.

A few additional comments might clarify why I included the language theme in the relationality discussion. Frankly, language issues are very complicated, so it has been difficult for me to even choose the right terminology for this. For example, Heidegger

uses *discourse*, *speech*, and *language* with different implications (Heidegger 1975, 1982). The discussion of language itself has many layers, some of which may not be phenomenological or existential. But in this dissertation I will focus on existential aspects of language as an entity of relationality, and I will continue using the terms *language* or *discourse* in general though Heidegger differentiates between these terms. According to Heidegger (2008), the term discourse is the aspect of human language that applies to relationships with others and the world, while the term language does not always apply to human relationships because “language itself brings itself to language” (Heidegger, 1982, p. 59).

According to Heidegger (2008), discourse is the equipment to detect everydayness in the world; discourse is related to the existential structures of the understanding of being-in-the-world. Though Heidegger emphasizes the instrumental function of discourse, I think we need to understand the inherent value of discourse in everyday lives as the way of being-in-the-world. Dasein as the discursive being is deeply related to the world and being-with-others. I believe that language as discourse has a significant impact on the way a person can get tangled up with the world and does not have only an instrumental function in the search for real meaning. In the lifeworld, language is used for interacting with others. In this sense, humans are having living relationships with others via language, as well as having relationships with space and time in the world. Language as discourse occurs in being-with-others, and it is “constitutive for Dasein’s existence” (p. 204). Discourse is not only for understanding but also it constitutes Dasein’s existence. Because discourse is in being-with-others, the

language experiences of Korean immigrant grandmothers as they relate to their grandchildren will be examined.

When we examine the existentials of time and space, we realize that they are not just physical properties and cognitive attributes of humans, but also they are a part of the relationships that humans have with the world. If the human body is an agent of being-in-the-world and other people are the field of being-in-the-world, time and space are attachments or adapters of being-in-the-world.

Time and space are subjective and perceived relationships with the world when humans are in-the-world and have living relationships with them. Whether or not humans recognize the force of time and space, time and space are both in relationship with humans in the world (Heidegger 2008; Merleau-Ponty, 1995). Thus, being with others in space and in time is an existential matter, and needs to be examined when we examine the experience of Korean immigrant grandmothers with their grandchildren.

Because not all human experience is best reflected upon in terms of lifeworld existentials, I have included two additional lifeworld themes that express important elements of Korean immigrant grandmothers' experience. One of these themes is that grandmothers' struggle to accept a new reality and the other theme is that the grandmothers persist in living their lives as Koreans.

### **Chapter Summary**

Hermeneutic phenomenology was employed for this study because the study strives to understand Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences with their adolescent U.S. born grandchildren. To understand the experiences of Korean immigrant

grandmothers, it is appropriate that this type of methodology is used. Because phenomenology does not have step-locking methodical procedures, some philosophical inquiries related to this methodology were examined.

First, epistemology in hermeneutic phenomenology was looked at because epistemological inquiries are at the center of any phenomenological journey. This epistemological exploration is deeply grounded in the concept of lifeworld, where people live naturally, pre-reflectively, and pre-consciously. Phenomenologists must recognize the entities of the lifeworld and the way humans live in the lifeworld. This journey of being aware of entities in the lifeworld is phenomenology.

Second, a phenomenological search is also related to ontological issues because it deals with the existence and non-existence and the structure of the lifeworld. One ontological concept in terms of lifeworld is being-in-the-world which connotes the meaning of human existence and the mode of being as being-with-others. A human's inseparability from the lifeworld in various ways shows us the ontological meaning of a human being and the potentiality of a human's search for the truth.

Third, as noted above, phenomenological researchers need to be armed with philosophical comprehension; in particular, they must comprehend that epistemological reasoning is the compass used when searching for meaning. With this in mind, phenomenological researchers benefit from attitudes as both artists and scientists. It is important that they face all phases of their research with an open mind and endure uncertainties until the essence of the phenomenological investigation is revealed, while rigorously bracketing their preunderstandings and predilections.

Being mindful of these fundamental and methodological philosophical issues, I recruited 14 participants in Georgia who met the inclusion criteria for my study, interviewed each of them, and transcribed and translated their interviews. The phenomenological interview was chosen as the data collection method for this study. I also selected poetry and lyrical texts to amplify the themes expressed in the grandmothers' interviews.

The transcribed interview texts were analyzed and grouped into two categories: existential lifeworld themes and other lifeworld themes. These themes are presented in the following two chapters.

## CHAPTER 3 EXISTENTIAL LIFEWORLD THEMES

This chapter presents the existential lifeworld themes found in Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences with their adolescent U.S born grandchildren. The themes reveal the grandmothers' experiences of relationality (language and sociality), spatiality, and temporality.

### **Theme 1 Relationality-Language**

One day in late fall of 2008 I met one of my participants, a 90-year-old Korean woman, at her small apartment. She was the first Korean immigrant woman I met for my research. I had not made an appointment with her so she was not expecting me. I intended to meet another participant, but she did not show up. Later I learned through other participants that Korean immigrant elders were reluctant to talk about their stories because they feared revealing negative family issues or faced opposition from their children.

The woman's apartment was roomier than I had expected it to be, but it was dark, smelly, and cold despite the bright daylight outside. She sat on the concrete floor while trimming vegetables and talking to one of her neighbors. She greeted me, an unexpected guest, while she was busy working on the vegetables. She told me she cooked for her grandchildren when they visited her. While I explained my research and asked for her participation, her hands kept busy with the vegetables. Her living room floor was scattered with many kinds of vegetable, so I could not walk without stepping on them. On one side of her living room, there were a lot of jars and jugs storing Korean food. My

participant told me that they were for her grandchildren. Right after her neighbor left, we started talking to each other.

It was a very weird moment for me. I expected to meet a grandmother like mine in Korea, but I sensed that this woman was different from my grandmother though I did not know what made me feel that way. One of the noticeable differences was that she used some English. My grandmother did not use English at all. Rather, sometimes my grandmother used Japanese words because she experienced Japanese in colonial times. Also, my first participant's English pronunciation was different from that of Korean graduate students I have met in the United States. I had never heard that kind of accent and pronunciation before.

During the interview, the woman spent most of her time trying to tell me how important the Korean language is regarding her relationship with her grandchildren. She told me how she taught Korean to her grandchildren. Giving an example of how important Korean is in her relationship with her grandchildren, she described how even after her death she wanted her grandchildren to speak in Korean at her grave. She stated: "Then, I told [my grandson], please pray for me in Korean after my death at my grave. So he told me, 'I am a Korean.'"

The description of this woman's wish for her grandchildren to speak Korean shows one aspect of Korean immigrant grandmothers' relationships with their grandchildren. What does her desire for her grandchildren to speak in Korean even after her death mean? What does her thirst for her grandchildren to learn Korean mean in her relationships with her grandchildren? What is the experience like with her grandchildren

regarding this dual language situation?

Having these questions, I am attempting to uncover Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences with their grandchildren regarding the Korean versus English language situation. It is like untangling twisted knots. Thus, in this section, there are four knots I will untangle: The loss of connection, negative emotions, attempting to communicate and struggling for connectedness, and the strong desire for Korean language proficiency of grandchildren.

### *Experiencing the Loss of Connection*

Korean immigrant grandmothers can speak only Korean and have a limited English vocabulary; in contrast, their grandchildren have a limited ability to speak in Korean. This two-language situation creates various nuances regarding Korean immigrant grandmothers' relationships with their grandchildren.

First, because of the different languages, a gap exists between the grandmothers and their grandchildren. Korean immigrant grandmothers feel distant and isolated from them. This gap between them and their grandchildren is a recurring theme throughout my paper, and I will first write about how the grandmothers' lives are disrupted by two languages. The interview excerpts below offer illustrations of this gap between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren caused by the differences in the two languages:

He told me, "Grandma, today seems to be a family meeting." Then, "Grandma, please don't read the Bible so much. Ha Ha. Please, Grandma, let every child read only three verses. If we read a chapter, it takes a long time. Also, it is too difficult to do because of our accent. It is easy for you to speak in Korean, but it is easy for me to speak in English."

Speaking two different languages, Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren have a clear distinction between them. They cannot interact with each other because of the two different languages, like oil on water. They are not on the same team but seem to be on two separate sides. The grandson above clarified that there is no interface between his language and his grandmother's language, saying that English is easy for him, and Korean is easy for his grandmother.

Second, however, these two different languages appear to show more than just a language problem. This distinction appears to be related to the loss of interactions between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren. Another example further reveals details of the loss in their interaction:

I can't speak in English. When my grandsons speak English, I can't understand them at all. So, how can I talk to them? I just speak in Korean and ask them to speak in Korean. But they prefer to speak in English. To them, it is easier to speak in English, so they won't speak in Korean. They just greet me in Korean and kiss me. That's it.

Because she cannot speak in English, she cannot understand her grandsons at all. The meaning of *understanding* is "to apprehend clearly the character or nature of a person" and even sometimes "to be confederates" (OED, 1989). Grandmothers cannot comprehend not only their grandchildren's words but also the character and nature of their grandchildren. The grandmothers and their grandchildren cannot be companions or "confederates" with each other. This obvious distinction between the grandmothers and grandchildren restricts interactions and the relationships between them. What must this barrier be like for the grandmothers?

Also, the above interview reveals a hint about the loss of their relationship. The grandmothers cannot talk with their grandchildren which means that they stop talking to each other and initiating interactions with each other. There is no interaction between grandmothers and their grandchildren, except for a possible greeting and kiss.

**Interviewee:** I was looking out the window and then I hurriedly opened the door when they arrived. I was listening for the sound of their car engine....Entering the living room, I spoke to her and her brother, “Al lov view [I love you],” I spoke in English to them. “Al lov view [I love you].”

**Interviewer:** What did you say to Dohee when she followed her parents?

**Interviewee:** I just said to her, “Al lov view [I love you].” I all the time say “Al lov view [I love you].”

What can I say to him? There is nothing I can talk to you about. Also I can't speak English.

They can understand each other's sentiments. But I can't understand them at all. I don't know what they say. Maybe I don't know if they call me names. Ha ha ha. I don't know if they call me names.

When we cannot understand another's language, we might imagine that hurtful and even disrespectful comments are being made about us. Not only do grandmothers lose intimacy with their grandchildren, but they also are vulnerable to feeling ridiculed.

Third, as another feature, this gap between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren has another meaning in the family structure. The fact that all family members speak in English except the Korean immigrant grandmothers reveals a deep distinction between the Korean immigrant grandmothers and not only their grandchildren but also other family members. The interview excerpts below reveal the depth of the gap between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren:

Dohee only speaks in Korean to me, but she speaks in English to everyone else. They speak in English which I can't understand at all. They speak only in English.

They don't speak in Korean at all. Only English. If I am with her and them, she and they speak in short Korean. They just speak in English all the time.

**Interviewee:** I have nothing to add. We just laugh while watching TV. Just being frivolous. Being with them. That's it. What more can there be with grandchildren?

**Interviewer:** What does "being frivolous" mean?

**Interviewee:** While watching TV, he and his siblings play with each other frivolously. They just laugh and play together. They do childish mischief and speak in fun, but they speak in English. They speak in English even to his father. Every family member speaks in English except me.

She just talked to her siblings in English. Also, she spoke in English to her mother and me. Sun feels more comfortable when she speaks in English. She asked me a question in English, but I responded in Korean. Her mother and father can understand everything she speaks in English, but I can't understand much at all.

Some Korean grandchildren speak in Korean only with their Korean

grandmothers which appears desirable to Korean immigrant grandparents at first glance.

However, as noted above, Korean immigrant grandchildren use limited Korean-like greetings, and there is little interaction between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren. Some grandchildren prefer to speak in English even in front of their grandmothers. In this context, every family member speaks English except Korean immigrant grandmothers; Korean grandmothers are left out. They may be an island in an English ocean.

Korean immigrant grandmothers cannot access any area of their grandchildren's lives because their grandchildren only speak in English with other family members. Despite being with their grandchildren and watching TV together, Korean grandmothers cannot be connected to their grandchildren's lives because of "Only English." Korean immigrant grandmothers just sit with their grandchildren without having any interactions with them.

For example, when the grandchildren are being frivolous, the grandmother sees that her grandchildren are happy with each other, but she feels excluded. While they are laughing and playing, the grandchildren seem to be happy, but their grandmother is not included in the fun. Though the children laugh, the grandmothers do not understand why. The two languages create two different worlds even in the same room. Usually when family members talk or play with each other in a casual manner, the other family members ask to join in and play with them. However, Korean immigrant grandmothers cannot ask to join their grandchildren because of the language barrier. Grandmothers cannot join any other part of their grandchildren's lives even within their own families. Korean immigrant grandmothers are isolated from their grandchildren even within their families. If grandmothers cannot be connected within their family lives with their grandchildren, can they join their grandchildren's lives outside the family?

Fourth, Korean immigrant grandmothers also feel isolated from their grandchildren's lives outside the family:

**Interviewee:** Recently I spent time with her when it was Thanksgiving, when I was alone and worked at her home, and when she gave me a ride. Since she was busy with her own matters, she didn't talk to me in detail....She thinks in English and lives that way. How can I know her life? The only thing I can do is to ask her what I see on the spot.

**Interviewer:** What does that mean "thinks in English"?

**Interviewee:** I don't ask her what she talked to her friends about in English because I don't understand it all. What she talked to me about was, "I went to theater and I went with some friends." That's all. The simplest answer is only what I can get from her. I don't feel sorry, but I wonder what she is doing.

The lack of a common language leaves the grandmothers wondering about how their grandchildren live and think. What do they do with their friends? What do they think about life?

The grandmothers are “pushed aside” from their grandchildren’s lives in a way similar to that found in Chiasm’s song, “Isolated” (Lawrence, 2001).

Have no choice but be isolated  
 Struggling left alone apart  
 Pushed aside made segregated  
 Struggling left alone apart  
 See I have no choice but be isolated  
 Threatened forced to extract the heart  
 Pushed aside made segregated  
 Have no choice but be isolated

The monsters make me hide  
 Perhaps I'll eat myself alive  
 Internally what is there left for me to be

In summary, Korean immigrant grandmothers feel a definite distinction between themselves and their grandchildren because of the two languages. Korean immigrant grandmothers do not have access to their grandchildren’s lives because of this language barrier, and the grandmothers are isolated and lonely. In the following section, I will write about Korean immigrant grandmothers’ negative emotions related to this language barrier.

### ***Having Negative Emotions***

Korean immigrant grandmothers suffer from disconnectedness from their grandchildren because of the language barrier. Korean grandmothers feel various negative feelings too. These negative feelings caused by the language barrier have slightly different meanings. I will attempt to uncover the meaning of their feelings.

In many of the interview excerpts, it can be seen that grandmothers have negative emotions when they cannot talk to their grandchildren. First, the grandmothers are sad and disappointed.

I felt sad...because [my] children feel comfortable with English. Anyhow, they speak English better than Korean because they were raised here. But I am still disappointed.

The literal meaning of *disappointment* is “To frustrate the expectation or desire of a person; to undo or frustrate anything appointed or determined; to defeat the realization or fulfillment of plans, purposes, intentions” (OED, 1989). The Korean immigrant grandmothers’ disappointment is that they expect and desire that their grandchildren will speak Korean well. Grandmothers seem to think that their grandchildren’s mastery of Korean speaking skills was planned, determined, intended, and regarded as something that must be fulfilled. However, reality does not match the grandmothers’ desires, plans, or intentions. Grandmothers experience disappointment—a collapse of expectations and a frustration with unaccomplished wishes.

Second, the Korean grandmothers feel disabled when their grandchildren cannot speak in Korean:

Well, I was like a disabled person... a fool. I couldn’t talk at all. Since they go to school and speak in English, it is natural to speak English between themselves. That’s the language they use at school. I just feel thankful that they didn’t forget Korean. That’s what I am trying to think....Because he can’t express himself fully in Korean, so he speaks in English....He speaks Korean and English, so his mother translates for me.

It is common for these grandmothers to be more troubled by their lack of English language skills than by their grandchildren’s poor Korean skills. These grandmothers see themselves as failures, disabled persons, or even fools. A *disabled* person is one having a “physical or mental condition which limits her activities or sensation” (OED, 1989). Grandmothers appear to believe that their mental condition limits their conversation with their grandchildren. Grandmothers who feel disabled in conversations with their

grandchildren might even deprecate and devalue themselves especially if they need a translator to communicate with their own grandchildren.

Even if grandmothers had little opportunity to learn English in Korea more than 50 years ago, they might blame themselves for not being able to communicate with their grandchildren.

I tried hard to understand, but I don't understand English well. I didn't study English well even in middle school ....I have an English complex.

Third, the grandmothers' negative emotions are accompanied with physical pain. One grandmother said, "I felt very sad. I felt [a] tightness in my chest." "Tightness in my chest (가슴이 답답해서 미어지다 in Korean)" means that this grandmother experiences actual pain along with emotional difficulties. With what is the chest filled? What makes one's chest feel like it is bursting? Is the expression "tightness in my chest (가슴이 답답해서 미어지다)" related to accumulated anger or stress? One definite thing is that negative emotions are related to corporeal pain.

Another type of physical pain that the grandmothers experienced was that of feeling stifled or choked. One participant stated, "I felt stifled. But my grandchildren are comfortable when they speak in English." The definition of the word *stifle* is "to kill or deprive a person of consciousness by covering the mouth and nose" (OED, 1989). The inability to communicate with their grandchildren can, in the extreme, lead some grandmothers to feel like their mouths and noses are covered and breathing becomes difficult. What produces this choking sensation?

One variation in the theme of experiencing negative emotions with physical reaction is the experience of disgust.

We can't speak well to each other. I can't express myself well. They can't either. At that time, I was not happy. I feel disgusted. Because (she stops talking about her reason). Korean kids should speak Korean well. His father came here for graduate school and met his wife who was born here and speaks in English....Heechang was born here, and he can speak English well like his mother.

In this excerpt, we hear from a grandmother who does not consider the lack of communication as her inability alone. She does not ascribe the language barrier to herself but may find other objects to reflect her frustration upon. She may regard the situation as both parties' responsibility. This grandmother's negative emotions arise from a sense of disgust. The word of disgust includes the object somebody hates. The meaning of the word *disgust* is "to have a strong distaste for or repugnance to; to excite physical nausea and loathing in a person; to raise or excite such aversion in a person as dissuades or deters him from a proposed or intended purpose" (OED, 1989). This grandmother has a strong repugnance to some objects. What or whom does she loathe? Her grandchildren? Her daughter-in-law? Or the situation where she cannot communicate with her grandchildren? Regardless of what the particular object is, this grandmother loathes the situation when she cannot talk to her grandchildren or to family members who speak in English.

In summary, Korean immigrant grandmothers have negative feelings when they cannot communicate with their grandchildren because of the language barrier. As a noticeable feature, when Korean immigrant grandmothers express their negative emotions, the meaningful portion of the interview includes a description of physical pain in their negative expressions.

Now, I will illuminate how Korean immigrant grandmothers say that they try to communicate with their grandchildren. The next two sections will include the Korean immigrant grandmothers' struggle for communication and their desire for their grandchildren to have Korean proficiency.

***Attempting to Communicate and Struggling for Connectedness***

Korean immigrant grandmothers' attempts to communicate with their grandchildren vary according to each grandmother's situation.

First, Korean grandmothers attempt to talk to their grandchildren in Korean.

Luckily they didn't forget Korean because their parents speak in Korean in their home....His parents let him speak Korean at home, and he tries to do so. But Tae speaks in English, too. Because he can't express himself fully in Korean, so he speaks in English. If Tae speaks in English, I asked his mother to translate it for me.

In the situation above, talking to her grandchildren in Korean does not work because the grandchildren's Korean language skills are not sufficiently strong. A translator is still needed to facilitate communication.

In other cases, Korean immigrant grandmothers can communicate with their grandchildren in Korean even if it takes extra effort:

When I pulled up the weeds in their garden it rained, so I asked Heechang to bring "Usan." He said to me, "What is Usan?" So I said to him, "It is the Usan. We need it when it rains. You don't know it?" Then, he said to me, "Umbrella?"

Explaining the context for how a word is used seems to be an effective strategy for some grandmothers though it is noticed that the conversation between this grandmother and her grandchild is not easy in Korean.

Second, some Korean immigrant grandmothers endeavor to communicate with their grandchildren in English, but their communication in English with their grandchildren is not like native English speaking people. They struggle with English rather than proficiently speaking in English with their grandchildren.

I can understand what she said intuitively, or I guess. Half of my talking is Korean, and half of it is in English. But I sometimes make a dumb show or make gestures using all my body. I understand half of their conversation by guessing. I can understand it intuitively. For example, when my grandchild said the word “hero” in the conversation, I asked what the word “hero” means. It is “YoungWoong.” I get to know new words in this way one by one. As another example, she told me, “Grandma, nice, bla bla, nice.” I guessed the middle part or what I didn’t understand.

She can’t speak in Korean, but she can understand it. It is the same as me. I can understand English roughly. If I know one or two words, I just guess the meaning of the conversation. That’s the way we live. But English is difficult.

According to the definition of the word *intuitive* (OED, 1989), the grandmothers understand their grandchildren’s English without the intervention of any reasoning process or learning experience, and understand their grandchildren’s English with innate mental perception. In situations like this, grandmothers’ abilities to understand their grandchildren’s English is heavily dependent upon innate abilities such as intuition, guessing, and making gestures. Do these grandmothers rely on guessing mostly when they speak in English with their grandchildren? Do they understand their grandchildren’s English roughly and not exactly?

Third, there are times that Korean grandmothers cannot understand at all what their grandchildren are saying, even if they try to speak in English using the previously mentioned techniques.

But I can't understand much at all. Whenever I can't, I just gaze blankly and vacantly at her.

According to the OED (1989) definition, to look *vacantly* is to be “unoccupied with thought and disengaged from in contemplation.” That means that in situations where what grandchildren say in English is meaningless to the grandmothers, the grandmothers see their grandchildren without thought. Similarly, when grandmothers gaze *blankly*, the communication between grandmothers and grandchildren is “empty from, without substance, anything insignificant or nothing at all” (OED, 1989). At this level, the Korean grandmothers do not use their intuition, guessing, or body language because they cannot do anything for communication when they cannot understand at all. The disconnection between grandmother and grandchild just exists.

In summary, Korean immigrant grandmothers attempt to communicate with their grandchildren in Korean or in English. However, the communication is limited when Korean immigrant grandmothers speak either in Korean or in English to their grandchildren. Relying on intuition, guessing, and body language sometimes works, but it also concurrently brings limited communication between grandmother and grandchild. Understanding these communication difficulties helps us to explain why Korean immigrant grandmothers have little interaction between themselves and their grandchildren despite the efforts they make.

### ***Having Strong Desires for Korean Language Proficiency of Grandchildren***

Because Korean immigrant grandmothers cannot speak in English and their grandchildren cannot speak in Korean, grandmothers cannot communicate with their grandchildren. Do Korean grandmothers desire that their grandchildren speak Korean

fluently? For various reasons, Korean immigrant grandmothers believe that their grandchildren should speak Korean.

First, some grandmothers want their grandchildren to be able to speak proficiently in Korean because that would make it possible for them to communicate with each other.

We speak in Korean. Sometimes she speaks in English if she can't express [herself]....Because her mother and I can't speak in English, she should speak in Korean.

In order to communicate with her grandchild, this grandmother believes that her grandchild must speak in Korean.

Second, other grandmothers argue that their grandchildren should learn Korean not only so they can communicate with one another but also so the grandchildren can know their cultural identity and represent it in the broader American society. Although the grandchildren were born in the United States, the grandmothers think of them as Koreans.

I heard that a student applied to Yale University or Harvard University. He was asked what Korean culture was like. He couldn't respond to them. So the student heard why he couldn't go to the university: he didn't know Korean culture. In the past, parents only teach English but now times have changed. Americans need to know their mother tongues. So they are able members of society. So I told them, "Speak in Korean. It is everyone's thought. It's our society's thought. Of course, it's my thought, too....Second, if you can't speak in Korean, we can't communicate with each other. I can't talk to you."

But I asked him "Are you a Korean?" He responded to me, "Yes, I am a Korean." Then I told him, "So you should speak Korean well because you are a Korean. English is not everything."

Koreans should speak in Korean. First, you should speak in Korean because you are Korean.

Regarding this aspect, I will introduce more interview excerpts and reveal its meaning deeply in the chapter titled “Koreans in America.”

Third, Korean grandmothers think about what they would like to see accomplished before they die. One of their wishes is that their grandchildren will speak Korean well before they die:

My wish before my dying is that you speak in Korean and learn Chinese better than now. I want to teach these languages to you.

I said to them, “English is not the only thing. You have a lot of opportunity to speak in English, but you don’t have much time to speak in Korean.” I am the person who emphasizes this to them.

These excerpts express the grandmothers’ strong desire to be able to fully communicate with their grandchildren while there is still time to do so. Not surprisingly, the grandmothers even think about how important the Korean language will be after their death.

Please pray for me in Korean after my death at my grave.

But I know they speak English when I am not with them. They speak in Korean only when I am with them.

Is this evidence for the grandmothers’ strong desire for their grandchildren’s Korean proficiency? Is this counter-evidence that one grandmother wants to enjoy her grandchildren’s Korean fully before her death? Is this showing dramatically the grandmother’s accumulated distress by the language barrier in her lifetime?

In summary, Korean immigrant grandmothers want their grandchildren to speak Korean well. The grandmothers provide various reasons why their grandchildren should

speak Korean well, with the most important reason being that of enabling communication between the grandmothers and grandchildren.

### ***Theme Summary***

Basically, a dual language situation brings about the loss of connection between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren though there are several different nuances in this situation. The grandmothers are isolated by the language barrier. Also, Korean grandmothers have negative emotions that accompany their sense of disappointment, disability, self-deprecation, and the physical pain.

Because of this barrier, Korean immigrant grandmothers try to communicate with their grandchildren in various ways such as using Korean, using limited English, intuition, and body language. But their endeavors are often thwarted. Then, accordingly, they want their grandchildren to speak Korean well in order to communicate with them.

### **Theme 2 Relationality-Sociality**

When I stepped into her apartment, the elderly woman led me to her tiny dining table which had four chairs, but only two of the chairs were available for sitting in her small combined sitting and dining room. On the other two chairs there were stacks of food boxes. On her half of the table were various kinds of fruits, a fruit knife, plates, and some cruets filled with Korean spices. This set up of her dining table seemed to take shape a long time ago. The woman told me she ate her meals there alone while watching TV. Since her combined sitting and dining room was so small, I easily could watch TV from where I sat. The apartment was bare of warm air but was saturated with the smell of solitude. She told me, “Since I came to the U.S., I have lived this way. I used to be

lonely; now I am not lonely. I live in the U.S., and you may understand me.” What does it mean that she is not lonely while doing everything alone at home? Is she not a social animal like other humans? Could she really live socially in a vacuum?

This woman wanted to meet her children and grandchildren, but several situations, such as economic difficulties and working overtime, did not allow her to see her grandchildren often. When I asked if she missed her grandchildren, she answered,

Now I don't think I miss my grandson much....My only wish is that I don't want to be a burden to my children and grandchildren. That's my only wish now. I don't want to be trouble to them. For example, if I fell or have a serious illness, they will suffer from my illness. I don't really want that. I would hate that. My wish is that I die silently while sleeping. That's my wish. I don't want to make trouble for them. I want to pass away silently. I have no other wish.

The woman appeared to live in a social vacuum and had given up her intention of meeting with her grandchildren. However, does she really not miss her grandchildren? Or does she not want to meet her children and grandchildren at all in order to reduce their burdens? Does she really want to visit her children and grandchildren as a dead body without contacting them much during her life? I sensed her deep love toward her grandchildren and children. But what does her wish to die silently in her sleep really mean? Might this be a reflection of her present relationship with her grandchildren and children, and her ultimate loneliness?

I perceived that this grandmother has experienced the loss of connection not only from her grandchildren but also from other people. She is alienated and disconnected from the social world. What does her absolute loneliness in her relationship with her grandchildren mean? I began to wonder what Korean immigrant grandmothers' relationships with their grandchildren mean in the context of other relationships. I have

been trying to uncover the meaning of Korean immigrant grandmothers' relationships with their grandchildren throughout my paper, so I may not need this theme because sociality covers "being with others." However, every relationship is intertwined with and layered over another relationship, so I feel it necessary to study the context of other relationships when studying the relationship of grandmothers with their grandchildren. As mentioned above, I will peel off the layers of Korean grandmothers' experiences with their grandchildren in the context of "being with others except grandchildren."

Another grandmother said to me that the lives of her grandchildren were totally different from the lives of adults. Since she did not want to interfere with her grandchildren's lives, there was nothing to say to her grandchildren. She expressed the following:

I was talking with her mother downstairs. She was not involved in our conversation....She didn't want to talk to us. Also we didn't ask her to join our adults' talk.... However, youths gathered and played together. There were many cousins. We just ate together, but that was all. Youths have their own world so they went together to the playground and played and talked....But if there are youths and grandchildren, it is impossible to converse together. Grandchildren gather together, and adults gather together. Like attracts like. Kind talks to kind. It was impossible to talk to her on a theme.

What does it mean to grandmothers that their grandchildren have their own social world? What does "like attracts like" mean to them regarding their relationships with their grandchildren? I will endeavor to uncover the hidden meaning of grandmothers' experiences of separation from their grandchildren's world as it affects their relationships with their grandchildren. In this theme, first, I will delve into the tendency that children attract children and adults attract adults for relationships and how that affects Korean grandmothers' relationships with their grandchildren. Second, I will write about Korean

immigrant grandmothers' other relationships and how that relates to their relationships with their grandchildren. Lastly, Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences with their own children will be examined in terms of their relationships with their grandchildren.

***Becoming Birds of a Feather Flock Together***

As seen in the above grandmother's example, distinctly different social groups exist for children and for adults. Let's unveil the meaning of "between themselves" and "between ourselves" concerning Korean immigrant grandmothers' relationships with their grandchildren.

Three grandchildren, Meeso's boyfriend, children of relatives came into my granddaughter's room. Her room was filled with people. Kids get along by themselves, and adults get along by themselves. We had dinner separately. The kids were loud and laughed in her room. They brought food into Meeso's room and ate there by themselves. The kids were speaking in English there....So I couldn't have dinner with Meeso. I had no time to talk to her. We adults ate dinner at the dinner table.

This excerpt illustrates how children and adults gather separately. The Korean grandmothers belong to the group of adults, and their grandchildren belong to the kids' group. The meaning of the word *separate* is "parted, divided, or withdrawn from others; disjoined, disconnected, detached, set or kept apart." Adults and children are "parted, divided, or withdrawn" from each other. They are "disjoined, disconnected, detached, or set apart from each other" (OED, 1989). No social connotation is found between adults and youth. Social separation between adults and children exists.

All the family ate together. But after that, we adults play...together.  
Grandchildren played together by themselves.

Grandchildren. Adults. Birds of a feather flock together.

We enjoyed our time only with adults. Adults attract adults. Children attract children.

Adults were in a group, and kids were in another group.

The above excerpts reinforce the idea that birds of a feather flock together; grandmothers socialize with adults and grandchildren play with children their own age. The meaning of the proverb *Birds of a feather flock together* is that persons who have similar interests and characters tend to spend their time together. The proverb that the Korean grandmothers spoke is 유유상종 in Korean. 유유상종 was originally from the Chinese, and it is written as 類類相從 in Chinese. 類 means “a group or a company.” 相 means “each other” and 從 means “get along or follow.” Then the meaning of 類類相從 is that people of the same group keep company with each other. For grandmothers, it means that they are separated from their grandchildren.

The definition of the word *group* is “A number of persons or things regarded as forming a unity on account of any kind of mutual or common relation, or classed together on account of a certain degree of similarity” (OED, 1989). Each group, adult or children, has a collective property, but each group is formed by “any kind of mutual or common relation, or classed together on account of a certain degree of similarity.” An adult group gathers those who have similarities, and a children’s group does the same. In other words, within groups there is commonality and similarity among group members, but there is no similarity between the two groups.

When we had dinner together, adults talked to each other. Kids talked to each other. Adults and kids didn’t talk to each other because there was no common topic.

Because we don't have any special topics to say to each other, I think I don't talk much to her.

Also what topics can we have? Do you really expect that a youth can talk to me about her? To an old person like me? No. It never happens.

No. I have nothing to talk to her about. What topic can I talk to her about? There is nothing.

If we talked, adults talked to themselves, and kids talked to themselves. Kids have a reason to talk to themselves: They speak in English. My grandchildren that are single watched TV together and talked to each other. They played with each other. We adults talked to each other about business, etc.

This last excerpt suggests that one of the reasons why adults and children form separate groups is because they do not share a language or a conversation topic. Groups created by a common language may be natural in this sense.

Korean grandmothers lose connection with their grandchildren by losing accessibility to their grandchildren's social group. There is no point of reference between Korean grandmothers and their grandchildren in terms of social relationships, even within the family.

Second, I question whether or not the composition of adult groups versus children groups is a voluntary action of the Korean grandmothers.

He ate and played with children of his own age. Then they went out. Likewise, I also didn't play with the other kids. They just left after eating. Though we had dinner together with kids, we, adults, sat together. After eating, children went out together. He enjoyed his time with his cousins [and] the other children.

If grandmothers go to family gatherings in order to be with their grandchildren, they must be sorely disappointed and lonely. After the grandchildren leave, the grandmother and other adults are left behind. Only the adults who stay at home are the

ones with whom this grandmother could socialize. But, sometimes the grandmothers are alone at home even without any other adults.

So I didn't have much fun there at all. Though I was there, I was alone all the time....I think I am alone all the time if I am here in my apartment or if I go there to my grandson's. Wherever I go, I am alone. If I go to my grandson's home, Tae is always upstairs....So I am alone. I am lonely everywhere.

Korean immigrant grandmothers join mostly the group of adults, not their grandchildren, which is an unavoidable situation for Korean immigrant grandmothers. Grandmothers want to be with their grandchildren, but the grandchildren do not want to be with their grandmothers. Thus, Korean grandmothers have no option but to get along with other adults if other adults are at home. As one grandmother said, "My grandson didn't want to be with us." Korean grandchildren do not want to socialize with their grandmothers, so grandmothers should be with other adults. Three participants used different phrases to describe their experiences, but their words conveyed a shared meaning:

It is just eating. There is nothing more than it. The grandchildren ate together bringing what they wanted. They sat together, and we, the adults, sat together when we ate. If they, the grandchildren, wanted to talk, they just talked to themselves. They didn't talk to adults.

There is no use. There is no time to be with my grandson. Separately. They don't enjoy being with grandmother. Just eat together....That's it.

Why should she talk to me, an old person, about her school life? Is there anything I know? I don't ask her questions....But if she talks to me, I listen to her....If I ask her about her school, she will hate me. These days, youth hate to be questioned. So why can I ask her about anything? I don't.

In closing, Korean immigrant grandmothers gather with adults when their grandchildren choose to be with children their own age. Since Korean immigrant

grandmothers have no commonalities with their grandchildren, such as conversation topics and a common language, Korean immigrant grandchildren exclude their grandmothers from their social gatherings. Thus, Korean grandmothers and their grandchildren have no social interactions. Korean immigrant grandmothers also lose a social connection with their grandchildren.

### *Seeking Grandchildren's Replacement*

Korean immigrant grandmothers disconnect with their grandchildren and sometimes also with their own children. There are losses of connection between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren across every domain of a Korean grandmother's life. Though Korean grandmothers want to connect with their grandchildren, their grandchildren refuse to associate with their grandmothers as displayed in this excerpt: "There was nothing we could talk about. When I met her, she didn't talk to me about her school and her friends. Grandchildren don't talk about them[selves] to grandmothers."

Grandmothers form new relationships to replace the relationships they would like to have with their grandchildren. Some grandmothers expressed—sometimes in jest—how important TV is to them:

The other day, Hwan called me, "Are you bored? Are you lonely?" So I answered him, "I am ok. I am watching TV." Yesterday, suddenly he brought up that issue again. He doesn't come here frequently. He said, "Being alone is ok with you?" I told him, "Hey, boy. Why wouldn't I be ok? Why are you worrying about me? I watch TV all the time, so it's ok." He said that he would not call me because I just needed the TV set. Ha ha ha.

Grandmothers soothe their loneliness by watching TV. Are they really okay with only being with the TV instead of their grandchildren or children? What does it mean if

they watch TV all the time in place of their relationships with their grandchildren?

Might TV be an anthropomorphic substitute for grandchildren? Does their attachment to TV suggest a deep loss of connection with their grandchildren?

Although other grandmothers described their anthropomorphic friends as flowers and plants, there is a disparate nuance from the grandmothers' relationship with their TVs.

As one of [my] daily chores, I gardened....We had a large field. Though I was born in a city, I asked my friend about how to raise plants and flowers. My plants and fruits were bigger than my friends'. I worked on the topsoil everyday. So the soil was soft. I raised a lot of zucchini. After I learned to garden, I was happy because I didn't get happiness from my children and grandchildren. It was great. The plants and fruits gave me something as I gave my heart to them. I suffered much from my children and grandchildren. Do you understand me? Humans are different. Humans can't give me even 1/100 of happiness. I felt that way. Do you understand what I am saying? Even plants and flowers gave me back as much as I gave my time to them. They returned happiness since I raised them. The flowers showed beauty when I poured my energy into them. I enjoyed them. I like flowers. I was happy. I talked to flowers a lot. I said to them, "Thank you." At that time, I had few friends. I talked to flowers....If they were about to die, I said to the flowers, "Where are you hurting?" I removed the dead leaves, and I gave them water and nutrition, and then they revived. If they were not dead, I was so happy. Also I thanked...them. I felt happy. I lived this way. I dug the ground, and I poured a lot of energy into the flowers and plants. They gave me fruits and fed me. Also I could give them my love. I gave a lot of fruit to the church and priests. I felt happiness when I gave them.

What might flowers and plants mean to this grandmother as it relates to her relationship with her grandchildren? We see that flowers and plants bring them happiness and do not hurt their feelings. That is not always true with grandchildren and children. And when grandmothers pour their energy into gardening, they experience love in return. They have two-way interactions with their anthropomorphic friends growing and blooming again and again. In contrast, relationships with grandchildren are one-sided. The grandmothers do not experience reciprocal relationships with their grandchildren.

Grandmothers are the givers and their grandchildren are the receivers; there is no reciprocity. Is this sad that grandmothers can talk to flowers and plants but not to their grandchildren? Does this show how deep and huge the grandmothers' agony is over losing connections with their grandchildren?

As grandmothers talk further about their anthropomorphic friends, we learn that TVs, flowers, and plants cannot actually satisfy the grandmothers' longing for love from family members.

For example, when my birthday arrived, somebody remembers my birthday. That's what I want. Everybody is busy, so nobody remembers it. If one grandchild said, "Today is my grandmother's birthday," I would be happier. I didn't want a birthday party. I just wanted...someone [to] remember my birthday. When they skipped my birthday, I felt that I had no children or grandchildren. I was sad. Do you know what I said to myself at that moment? "Thank you, my late husband." We wrote and read the prayer for the dead...Then the priest prays for the person and let others pray for him as well. Whenever I felt distressed, I said to the late husband, "Thank you." After doing this, I got...peace. I don't know why. But after the offering, I felt comfortable. That was the way I lived.

This grandmother keeps seeking to fill her empty heart with something after being ignored by her children and grandchildren. She cannot find comfort from other humans except for her late husband. She replaces children and grandchildren with her late husband, another anthropomorphic object in her relationship with them.

In summary, Korean immigrant grandmothers replace their relationships with their grandchildren with anthropomorphic friends such as TVs, plants, flowers, and dead husbands because they cannot connect with their grandchildren. Korean immigrant grandmothers want a relationship with a two-way interaction and a return of their love, and this is something they cannot obtain from their grandchildren.

### *Having Our Children as Mediators*

One way in which Korean immigrant grandmothers manage to have some connection to their grandchildren is to place their children (the parents of the grandchildren) in the role of mediators. Examples of four mediator roles are shown in the following interview excerpts:

I don't pry. If I want to know something about her, I know the facts through her mother.

My son always [says] to my grandsons, "Your grandma took care of you. Don't forget it." So they remember it. They do. My son reminds them of it, "You should respect your grandma. You should behave well in front of your grandma." My son educates my grandsons this way. "Kiss your grandma on her cheek." So they always kiss me, rubbing their cheeks on mine. Some kids don't want to kiss their grandparents because of the elders' smell. Some kids do not let their grandparents come into their room. They shut the door because of the smell. Luckily my grandsons don't do that.

My son said, "If I asked Hwan to call you, he called you. But if I don't ask him to do [this], he doesn't." Kids these days are like this. If their parents don't ask, they don't do something with their grandparents. Maybe some kids are not like this. Parents should teach their children about this point. Hwan doesn't call often, except at my son's request.

When [my granddaughter's] father was with us at dinner, her father asked her to speak in Korean because I can't speak in English. If her father asked her to speak in Korean, she said to us, "Grandma can understand English." But I said to her, "I can't understand English. And also I can't speak in English. So, speak in Korean." We talk more in Korean than in English if her father is with us. Her father forbids speaking in English. However, yesterday without him she spoke in English.

When Korean immigrant grandmothers are with the parents of their grandchildren, their relationship with their grandchildren differs. Korean grandmothers have more opportunity to talk with their grandchildren and to physically touch them. Under the authority of the grandchildren's parents, Korean immigrant grandmothers can savor a connection with their grandchildren.

### *Theme Summary*

Korean immigrant grandmothers do not interact socially with their grandchildren. Korean immigrant grandmothers cannot help gathering with adults because their grandchildren want to spend time with children their own age and because there are no commonalities between them and their grandchildren.

In this context, grandmothers replace Korean grandchildren with anthropomorphic friends such as TVs, plants, and possibly their dead husbands. Sometimes they use their own children as mediators in their relationship with their grandchildren. With their children's authority, the grandmothers have a bit more opportunity to feel a connection with their grandchildren.

### **Theme 3 Spatiality**

When I pressed the doorbell of her apartment, a deep, coarse voice came from behind the door. The voice contained a rich and emphatic Kyungsangdo dialect. It made me feel strange because I hardly heard that strong of a Kyungsangdo dialect in Seoul, Korea. The accent reminded me of my grandmother who lived in Kyungsangdo for 60 years from her birth. Now she is 90 years old and has lived in Seoul for 30 years. Her provincial accent is not as strong as that of my participant. My participant's voice behind the door had a strong country drawl that might be heard only in the boondocks in Kyungsangdo.

My participant was a woman of commanding presence when the door opened, but she walked very slowly and lamely. I thought she was not handicapped; her uncomfortable walk seemed to be due to aging.

Before being interviewed, the woman talked about her apartment. Her apartment was bright and had a good view even though it was tiny. She told me that she liked her place because it was small and never felt cold. When she lived with her children and grandchildren in a big two-story house, she felt chilly, so she hated that house. Before meeting her, I had met a couple of grandmothers who also disliked living in two-story houses, saying things like this: “My grandchildren played upstairs. But I was alone downstairs. While they were playing, I didn’t go upstairs to see what they are doing.” I wondered if she felt just physically chilly in her child’s two-story house? What does a two-story house mean to Korean immigrant grandmothers as related to their relationships with their grandchildren? In Korea, American style two-story homes are not common, so I began to be curious about the lives of grandmothers and their grandchildren in that type of space. What is their experience like with their grandchildren in a two-story house?

In addition, my participant said that she moved out of her children’s house, but she missed her grandchildren. She expressed that she wanted to see her grandchildren, but it was difficult because she did not have “feet.” She was not handicapped and had two feet. What makes her say that in this way? What does “having no feet” mean and how does it relate to her relationship with her grandchildren?

All questions I have here are related to where Korean immigrant grandmothers live now and where they visit their grandchildren. I am interested in the experience of Korean immigrant grandmothers with their grandchildren in their homes. I sense the disconnection between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren may be a recurrent theme in this section as also shown in the section titled Theme 1. I will attempt

to unveil the meaning of Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences with their grandchildren in a familiar space, their homes. First, I probe the meaning of Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences with their grandchildren in two different locations. Second, I will write about Korean grandmothers' experiences with their grandchildren when they are in the same space.

### *Feeling Separation in Two Locations*

Even though all my participants at some time had lived with their children and grandchildren, 12 of them moved out of their houses and live alone now. Since all of my participants raised their grandchildren, they miss their grandchildren and want to see them. But their situation does not allow some grandmothers to see their grandchildren frequently. For example:

Since he is a student, he doesn't come here often. He doesn't drive yet, so his parents need to give him a ride here. So it is hard to meet with each other.

Unless my daughter brings Sue to me or gives me a ride to her place, I can't see her.

The lack of some Korean grandmothers' driving skills alienates them physically from their grandchildren regardless of their intention. Also the public transportation system in the city where my participants live is different from that in Korea.

Since I can't go there because I don't drive, I can't meet Hwan. Here it is different from Korea. In Korea, public transportation, such as buses, are very developed so we can easily come and go. But here, only bus No. \*\*\* goes to Doraville. At Doraville, there is no bus line to Hwan's place. Korea has very good public transportation. So we can go anywhere. The U.S. is different. Here there is no bus except the No.\*\*\*. In Doraville, there are some buses, but they are not plentiful. So most elders here don't go outside at all and just stay inside the apartment. The church sends a shuttle bus, so we can go to church. That's it. Because most of us can't drive, it is the same. We seem not to have our feet. I mean, we can't drive.

That's U.S. life. Most elders aren't able to walk. We don't have strong legs so we can't go anywhere.

The situation goes this way. We have lived separately. I really love Sue a lot. When I moved here, I wanted to see Sue a lot. I wanted to walk, but I couldn't walk there. I didn't have my feet or legs to go there. I couldn't ask my daughter if she could give me a ride to her place every time....I can't see her.

When Korean immigrant grandmothers say they cannot be with their grandchildren because they have *no feet*, they are using this expression rhetorically and poetically to mean they have no movement or motion (OED, 1989). The grandmothers, for the most part, do not have cars, do not drive, and/or do not have the physical ability to walk the necessary distances.

### ***Feeling Separation in One location***

Although it is not surprising that Korean immigrant grandmothers feel disconnected from their grandchildren when they live in two different locations, the grandmothers also described a loss of connection when they live or visit in the same house as their grandchildren. I will categorize this section into three smaller parts: First, physical separation in the same house or space; second, Korean immigrant grandmothers' perceptions of this phenomenon; and third, no interaction between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren even while doing the same activity.

First, grandmothers often experience separation from their grandchildren in the same space.

He ate there, but I ate here. I just spend most of my time here by myself. Sometimes I have dinner with him.

The words from the interview above that define their common space such as *there* and *here* are deeply related to Korean grandmothers' experiences with their

grandchildren. The word there expresses locality or position. The meaning of there is “in or at that place; in that place pointed to, indicated, or referred to, and away from the speaker; the opposite of here.” Otherwise, the meaning of here is “in the place where the person speaking is” (OED, 1989). Their grandchildren are away from the grandmothers, opposite of where they are. In the same house, does the physical distance between grandmothers and grandchildren also cause emotional distance?

Though I went to his house, there was little contact with him because I was downstairs and he was upstairs. He is like an adult because he is silent. All he enjoys is being upstairs.

He went upstairs and then I had nothing to do. So I just kept watching TV and kept sitting. Because he studied in his own room, he didn't come downstairs. He just came for dinner and right after dinner he went upstairs. He didn't talk while eating. There was nothing to say to him. Nothing.

It's the same pattern. I always keep watching TV in the living room; she goes upstairs and studies in her room. Every time I visit there, it's the same. There is nothing more than this. I met their neighbors, elders. In this way, that's how I spend my time there. That's it.

Then she ate. Then she went upstairs and did whatever she wanted to. She read books. She really loves books. Then she worked on the computer. But I didn't know exactly what she did because she went upstairs, and I was downstairs. I didn't see what she was doing. She just wanted to do what she wanted to do.

When I sat on the sofa downstairs, he came home. I said to him, “Are you home now? Take a shower and have a meal.” That's it. There was no more talking than this. He also went to his room, working on the computer and studying.

At that moment, I was watching TV in the living room. When Lisa saw me, she said to me, “O shusseo yo? (Hi, you are here).” I told her, “I am happy to see you.” Then she went upstairs to her room. I kept watching TV. I don't remember when she came downstairs before...dinner. But I had dinner with her. We had dinner in the dining room. I am not sure of my memory, but she sat beside me.... There is nothing more than this.

If I draw a picture with the above interview excerpts, the same composition will exist in every interviewee's situation: A grandmother downstairs and grandchildren upstairs. This distinctive separation shows dramatically the alienated relationship between Korean grandmothers and their grandchildren. The physical distance shows the emotional or interactional distance between grandmothers and their grandchildren.

The lives of Korean grandmothers and the lives of their grandchildren are separated by the downstairs of the house and the upstairs of the house. They do not interact even under the same roof. The world of the downstairs and the world of the upstairs are totally different from each other. Grandmothers and their grandchildren live different lifeworlds between the downstairs and the upstairs. Between the downstairs and the upstairs of their homes there are physical stairways, but in their mental and emotional lives there is no stairway. They do not make contact with each other.

Another observation is that activities being done by the grandmothers are different from activities of the grandchildren. Grandmothers are sitting and watching TV alone downstairs, but upstairs their grandchildren are studying, reading books, and working on the computer. There are no encounters or interplay between Korean grandmothers and their grandchildren under the same roof. They do not participate in activities together. Though each story is about physical space, their stories also allude to their psychological space.

Although it was most common for the grandmothers to talk about the upstairs and downstairs separation, a few mentioned a lack of connections even when they shared a space with their grandchildren.

While I am reading a newspaper and cooking, she reads the book she brought.

Though we were together for a couple of hours, I think we didn't do anything together.

I rode in his mother's car with Tae. Every family goes there by car. In the car, I sat in the passenger seat, and Tae and his cousin sat in the back seats. They didn't talk to me. They talked to each other in English, so I couldn't understand what they said....Tae and his middle school cousin talked to each other and laughed a lot....But there was no conversation between him and me. In the car I talked only to his mother in Korean, and Tae and his cousin talked to each other in English.

In this last excerpt above, the front half of the car is the world in Korean, and the back half of the car is the world in English.

Second, I look at how Korean immigrant grandmothers feel about the being in the same house with their grandchildren but never interacting with them. Some grandmothers are puzzled, some are resigned, and some question if the house structure is really to blame. Are the grandchildren avoiding them or ignoring them?

Why don't you stop going upstairs all the time?

I felt strange. I wanted to talk to him. If I do, I feel great. But he never wants to talk. Only if he needed something downstairs, he came down. He doesn't ever ask anything from me. He may look for snacks, water, and other beverages. After drinking, he goes upstairs again. So the house is silent all the time.

My grandchildren enjoy playing the game downstairs also, but when an adult [probably grandmother in the context. The usage of Korean pronoun or noun differs from that of U.S.] came there they left. They went upstairs taking their games....I was alone downstairs as always."

To grandchildren, the grandmothers are like the "Invisible Man." For the grandchildren, the downstairs is just a place for food, not a place for spending time and conversing with grandmothers. Thus, the grandmothers are alone.

The grandmothers' sense of being "alone downstairs as always" is found in Chiasm's song "Isolated" (Lawrence, 2001).

Here I stand in this room  
Caged and trapped inside  
Seems I'm damned to live a lie....

Should I care  
For what's left me behind

And I stare at light that makes me blind  
Internally there's nothing left for me to be  
I'm here alone  
And isolated

Third, it is also interesting to look at the experience of Korean immigrant grandmothers when they are involved in doing the same activity with their grandchildren at the same time in the same place.

Though I was downstairs, [he] didn't talk to me at all [when] coming downstairs. Just his mother told them to have breakfast. Then [he] ate breakfast. That's it. I didn't talk to him. We just ate together in the same kitchen. The only time I can be with him is to have a meal. But he didn't talk to me while he was having breakfast. Just ate. He just asked if he needed something. Right after putting his spoon on the table, he went upstairs. Then I asked his mother, "Why does he go upstairs right after eating?" His mother told me that she also didn't know, but he just went upstairs after eating.

I just talked with my son and his wife while having dinner. Children didn't talk at all. They were just silently eating their dinner....After dinner, [they] went upstairs and I again kept watching TV. We just kept doing this way for a while and then I [went] home.

Then, having meal together is what we can do. That's it. There is nothing we can talk about with children.

Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren can share the same space and the same activity without interacting with one another. The meaning of the word *meal* is "a customary or social occasion of taking food, especially at a more or less fixed

time of day, as breakfast, dinner, etc” (OED, 1989). According to this definition, having a meal assumes there will be social interactions. To Korean immigrant grandmothers, could having a meal with their grandchildren be a social occasion?

In addition to eating together without interacting, grandmothers and grandchildren watch TV without interacting.

I told him, “Well, grandma can’t read English and can’t understand [the TV program]. So it is not fun at all.” After he watched for a while, he asked me again, “Do you want me to change the channel for you?” I told him, “Did you finish it?” Then he told me, “Yes, I did.” I said to him, “If so, change the channel.” After that, Sik went upstairs without saying anything. While he was watching his favorite show, he didn’t talk to me about what the story was like. He went upstairs after watching what he wanted to watch. I just saw pictures. I didn’t know the content, but I guessed some of it by the pictures. I can’t understand English, but I can understand pictures on TV. Sometimes I was not sure of the story. But there was no...other way except seeing pictures when I watched American programs with the kids.

I just sat and watched it. Since the program was turned on, I watched it. I just sat. But I didn’t understand it at all. What else could I do there?... I just sat with them. My grandchild watched TV, but I didn’t. I didn’t understand it at all. Also I didn’t understand at all because it was in English. Everything is in English. While watching TV, he also changed the channel for me and went to another TV in the room. I can’t understand American programs. How can I understand? It was not Korean. How can I understand when Americans speak in English? I didn’t ask him about what I didn’t understand. I just sat with them.

The action of sitting and watching are just physical reactions by motor and optic nerves. Grandmothers just perceive external objects with their eyes without understanding the TV programs they are watching when they are with their grandchildren.

A final example of not interacting with one another in spite of being in the same space at the same time and doing the same thing is when grandmothers share a bed at night with their grandchildren.

I shared a bed with her. We slept together on the same bed. Whenever I spend the night there, I sleep beside her on the same bed....While she slept, I just slept beside her. That's it. I entered her comforter on her bed. I just entered it and just slept there. When I saw her sleeping, she was so beautiful and cute. When she fell into a deep sleep, I went under her blanket. Because she fell into a very deep sleep, I didn't have to be careful of her waking. I just entered her blanket and slept. We shared same blanket and comforter. But I woke up first and took a walk. After talking a walk, I found she's already gone to her school.

Is it not common to chat with the persons lying next to us before we sleep or after we awake?

To summarize, the geographical division between grandmothers and their grandchildren sometimes denotes emotional disconnection between the grandmothers and grandchildren. But there is still a loss of connection between grandmothers and their grandchildren even in the same room while doing the same activity like eating and watching TV. Korean grandmothers and their grandchildren have little interaction even under the same roof.

### ***Theme Summary***

The separation of locations is associated with the connection between grandmothers and their grandchildren. Grandmothers' immobility and physical inabilities may affect the relationship between them and their grandchildren.

However, the loss of connection is also found even in the same space while doing the same activities such as having meals and watching TV. The invisible wall divides their worlds into two different worlds.

### **Theme 4 Temporality**

The make-up on her face stood out to me because the other Korean immigrant grandmothers I had met and my own grandmother in Korea did not wear make-up. My

participant wore bright red clothing which I am also not familiar with in Korea because my grandmother and other elderly women do not wear red. Her dress fit nicely, like she is an elegant lady who was going to a party. However, she was sloe-eyed and her mouth was set resolutely which made her look like an Amazon.

The woman was actually teary-eyed and eventually burst into tears during the interview. I was embarrassed because I did not think the questions I was asking were mortifying. She became a fragile fledgling in front of me at that moment. She kept sobbing as she talked about her granddaughter. She must have wanted to talk to somebody about her agony and deep sorrow.

Right before she began crying, she was looking for her granddaughter's photo. She had gone to her room and brought the photos to where I sat. Looking at her photos, the elderly lady said, "My second granddaughter was very pretty when she was young, so I took her picture. I took her picture. This one. That one. This one shows a younger granddaughter in that photo. She was three years old at that time. I spent a lot of time with her when she was young, and she liked me more than her mother."

I asked her how she felt whenever she saw these photos, and she answered, "I liked her. She was closer to me than her sister. I felt this way. I still have affection toward her. But the mind of a growing grandchild is different from the heart of a grandma. Grandchildren don't know my heart."

She cried after saying this. I was speechless at that moment. I was discomfited with her crying because she had wanted to show me her young granddaughter's photos. I also felt sad and sorry for her as she cried. What do her tears mean as she recalls

memories of time spent with her young granddaughter in the past? She told me she was happy with her granddaughter when her granddaughter was young. If so, does her crying mean that she is not happy with her granddaughter now? What does it mean that the grandmother was content with her granddaughter in the past but now she is not delighted with her granddaughter? What has been her experience with her granddaughter in the continuum of time? What does the past mean in her present relationship with her granddaughter?

I am interested in how the past experiences of this grandmother with her granddaughter affect her present relationship with her granddaughter and how she describes her present experience with her granddaughter as related to the past. I began to think that this grandmother's relationship with her grandchild differs according to the change of time. I think one particular "being" has a particular meaning in a particular time. No individual moment can be excluded from one's own historicity and tradition which shapes a collective set of memories. In my opinion, if this grandmother's experience with her grandchild would be carved out with a chisel of time, the meaning of her present relationship with her grandchild would revive vividly and entirely.

Thus, in this section, two angles of Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences will have light shed on them. First, I will elucidate how the past experiences of Korean immigrant grandmothers with their grandchildren are entangled with their present relationships with them. Second, the reduced roles and wishes of Korean immigrant grandmothers will be addressed in the dynamics between their past and present

relationships with their grandchildren. Also the meaning of and struggle for connection by Korean immigrant grandmothers will be examined.

*Living the Past in the Present*

For a significant portion of our conversations, the Korean immigrant grandmothers described how they spent time with their grandchildren in the past. Even though the past is definitely not now, the bygone days of Korean immigrant grandmothers exist in the present as they keep remembering and talking about these memories. Also, the grandmothers' descriptions of their previous relationships with their grandchildren are more than recollection. The meaning of Korean immigrant grandmothers' past experiences as they relate to the present will be ruminated upon.

First, Korean immigrant grandmothers are with their adolescent grandchildren in the present but also are clinging to memories of their grandchildren at a younger age. In their present loss of connections with their grandchildren, some Korean immigrant grandmothers begin to miss and regret their past. Strong attachments fade.

I raised all of them. When their mother didn't breastfeed them, my husband and I fed them. We took care of them. We woke up several times in the night to feed milk to them. We treated my grandchildren more precious than my children. We did. If you are old, you know how precious grandchildren are. They were so cute....I just let it go. That's life.

**Interviewee:** When I had moved out because of my remarriage, Jae [my grandson] had told me that he couldn't live without me. Jae did say that. Also Jae wished he lived with me after my second husband. But I had told him that he would not die but would live longer than he thought. After his step-grandpa's death, he had wanted to live with me. Whenever I called Jae, he asked me when his step-grandpa would die. Jae was young at that moment. I took care of Jae from when he was a newborn. Then I held Jae all the time, and we even slept together when I cared for him at night. So Jae must have felt sorry when I left. He must have thought that he could live with me if step-grandpa was not there. He had been very sad that we couldn't live together. He was eight at that time....Church

members told me that my grandchildren sat lonely. So they thought my kids were poor because they missed me a lot. [When] Jae became a middle schooler, he didn't talk about when his step-grandpa died. He didn't ask me to live with him though step grandpa was dead.

**Interviewer:** How do you feel now when comparing then and now?

**Interviewee:** I feel sorry and disappointed. Very disappointed.

As grandmothers perceive their relationships with their grandchildren to be changing over time, a sense of estrangement overcomes them:

I didn't have time to talk to Meeso because the kids stayed together. In the past when I was raising her, she just followed me and was held in my arms. After her mother and father went to work, there [was] just the two of us. So we weren't separated for a second. Now she is grown up, so she is estranged from me. She is swept along with her friends, but she is becoming alienated from me.

After she peeped in at me, she went to her room with her friend. If it were a younger Sue, she would have run to me to hug me. Now she is growing up and we don't live together. We have become estranged. When Sue was young, she liked me very much. I took care of her, so she followed me around. Since she is an adolescent, she doesn't follow me anymore like when she was younger.... Her affection toward me is disappearing. Also, she is now grown up. When I took care of her, she was younger....When I miss her, I must endure it. As I have borne up against her feelings toward me many times, I have become used to it. Her affection begins to be gone away from me. Now I am thinking of her and her gift for me, and it reminds me of how she loved me. Now she doesn't like me that much so she may not give me a gift. As she grows, she becomes estranged. She doesn't feel the love of her grandma. As time has passed, things go this way. Also I can't hug her and carry her on my back.

I asked other grandmothers about my feelings. Every grandmother has the same feelings as I do. Grandchildren like a grandmother just when they are young. Though a grandmother may raise grandchildren, grandchildren become estranged from their grandmother when they've grown up. Everybody says so.

Korean grandmothers reveal that their grandchildren's attachment to them disappears in the stream of time, and they face this with a bitter reality now. They have lost their past connection with their grandchildren but cannot find a point of contact with them in the present. What does this rupture in the relationship mean to the grandmothers?

The meaning of *change* is “substitution of one thing for another; succession of one thing in place of another” (OED, 1989). For something to change, two conditions must exist: one replaces something and the other is what has been replaced. First, the grandchildren substitute their previously warm and kind attitude with a cold stance toward their grandmothers. This substitution renders Korean immigrant grandmothers with feelings of confusion and distress in the present. Second, Korean grandmothers need to forget about their grandchildren’s past warmth and adapt as they struggle with their grandchildren’s recent coldness. In this sense, Korean immigrant grandmothers are choked with tears between the vestige of their grandchildren and their image of them now.

The grandmothers’ longing and regret for their past echoes lyrics in McCartney (1965)’s song, “Yesterday.”

Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away  
Now it looks as though they're here to stay  
Oh, I believe in yesterday.

Suddenly, I'm not half the man I used to be  
There's a shadow hanging over me  
Oh, yesterday came suddenly.

Why she had to go I don't know she wouldn't say.  
I said something wrong, now I long for yesterday.

Yesterday, love was such an easy game to play.  
Now I need a place to hide away.  
Oh, I believe in yesterday.

Thus far, I have examined the meaning of Korean grandmothers’ past relationships with their grandchildren in the present and Korean grandmothers’ distress with the discontinuation from the past. Now, while continuing to discuss this theme, I

will focus on the sacrifices of Korean immigrant grandmothers in the past because their sacrifices are prominent features in their experiences.

All of my participants raised their grandchildren or have raised them at some point when they were younger. When Korean grandmothers brought up their grandchildren, they made arduous efforts for their grandchildren.

After that, they picked me up to go to their house, and I stayed there until they gave me a ride home. I held my two grandsons in both my arms. At that time, it was so difficult for me. I prayed to the Lord because I had very hard times. "Lord, what can I do? I don't know what to do. I can't take care of them. But I can't say that I can't take care of them." I just felt troubled. I lived separately from my husband when I raised them. I just felt troubled. I did live that way.

In spite of these strenuous efforts, the bond between grandmothers and grandchildren deteriorated over time.

Actually [my granddaughter] was a kind of character at that moment. But I felt poorly for two grandchildren because they were young and poor. I tried to endure it. When she was young, she wouldn't eat school cafeteria food, so I cooked for her. She only ate what I cooked. While I was cooking Kim chi, I would leave home to pick them up at school. When I was working in the fields, I would leave home to pick them up. While I cooked breakfast for her mother, she told me, "Grandma, I need to go to school now." I stopped cooking breakfast, and I gave her a ride. After dropping her off, I kept cooking. I lived this way. I don't know how to live otherwise. I don't know how I could have lived that way. At that moment, I didn't know how I was living. I just hoped that my grandchildren would be okay....I strongly hoped so. But they didn't give any time to me, because they were with their friends. All the time they got along with their friends. If they were angry, they screamed at me and hit me, defying me....I told you before. I was bound up with my grandchildren, and I spent all of [my] life with them. Since they don't have a father, I took care of them, and I didn't want them to take the school bus. I drove for them. U.S. people are not interested in others' matters. The school bus driver was not interested in what students did on the bus....I was worried about my grandchildren. I didn't want them to become bad people on the bus. So I dropped them off every morning, left home at 2:00 p.m., and picked them up every afternoon....Also I gave them rides for their activities. I arranged for their piano lessons and Nunnophyee. Everything. I was busy with driving for their extracurricular activities. Moreover, my grandson was not doing well at his school, so I [gave] him rides to his tutor....Frankly, I had no time to

think about myself because every day was hectic. Almost every morning I cooked Korean sushi for my grandchildren's breakfast and let them eat in the car. I put sushi in my car and told him or her, "You must be hungry. Eat this Korean sushi." Also, I cooked sushi for snacks between lunch and dinner and let them eat in the car on the way to extracurricular activities. They loved the foods I cooked. I raised them this way. By the way, though they ate sushi in the car, I didn't eat with them because I had to focus on driving. They asked me to eat sushi, but I couldn't eat it. I didn't want to be distracted while I drove the two kids. Then they asked me why I didn't eat and tried to get me to put some in my mouth. But they didn't know how carefully I drove for them. While driving, I am tense. I was tense. Though I was busy, those times seemed good to me. When my grandchildren are impolite to me, I don't know why they were harsh with me, especially when they hit [me].

The grandmothers sacrificed their lives for their children and grandchildren. They took care of their grandchildren and did household chores while losing themselves. They did not invest their time in themselves. They hoped to be with her grandchildren when they were grown, but the grandchildren became busy with their friends and did not give time to their grandmothers. Even worse, a few of grandchildren actually mistreated their grandmothers. Will these grandchildren recognize their grandmothers' sacrifices when they become adults? Do grandmothers become angry when they realize their dreams about being with their grandchildren long term are empty?

Let's contemplate the grandmothers' reminiscences of their past relationships with their grandchildren. As mentioned above, they often recall their past experiences with their grandchildren—experiences which are still a part of their present relationships with them. What does their emphasis on how they sacrificed for their grandchildren mean? Do they want their grandchildren's politeness and kindness as a reward? Do they want two-way, interactional affections? When their grandchildren were young, they poured their energy on their grandchildren in a unilateral way but now they might expect

two-way love when their grandchildren become adolescents. Instead, they realize their relationships with their grandchildren are still lopsided and, even worse, have the potential to contain abuse. The shift in their grandchildren's behavior leads grandmothers to re-interpret their pasts. Their past relationships with their grandchildren become the object of regret and hankering as they face their grandchildren's change in behavior and attitude towards them.

Korean immigrant grandmothers' reminiscences of the past and realization of the present leave some grandmothers feeling that their sacrifices were in vain and their efforts were useless:

**Interviewee:** I took care of two of them when they were young. I raised the two of them. However, now they are grown, and we don't live together. Each life is separated. I live alone now. In the past, I held them all the time....They spent their entire time with me. We lay together and slept together. I took care of them with all my strength. But what is the use? It is useless. Everything is in vain. Nothing. What can I do now? They don't remember well. They seem not to remember it. Since I raised them when they were young, they don't remember it.

**Interviewer:** What do you mean "everything is in vain?"

**Interviewee:** When they were young, they did well in every aspect and were kind to me. Also they were very cute when I took care of them....But my grandchildren don't know how I took care of them. How do they know? Why do I expect [love] from them? They really don't know how I raised them. How do my grandchildren know? Even my children also don't know how I raised them....I don't know how to explain it to you. My children also don't know my love toward them. After their marriage, they didn't remember what I did for them and they don't care for me. I raised my grandchildren and carried them on my back. Do you really think they remember what I did for them? No. I can't expect it. Grandchildren and children never think of it. They don't know what I did for them. They don't know.

After taking care of them, there is nothing left. My grandchildren don't remember how I took care of them. They really don't remember it.

I did everything for him, but it was in vain. I should not have done all of that.

The literal meaning of *in vain* is “[d]evoid of real value, worth, or significance; unprofitable, useless, worthless; of no effect, force, or power; fruitless, futile, unavailing” (OED, 1989). The time and energy Korean immigrant grandmothers have devoted and sacrificed for their grandchildren is worthless, useless, and fruitless. What makes them think their efforts are useless? According to the Oxford dictionary (1989) definition, *useless* is defined as “[d]estitute of useful qualities; serving no good end or profitable purpose; not answering or promoting the proposed or desired end.” Korean immigrant grandmothers do not achieve their desired goals. What were their desired goals? Do Korean immigrant grandmothers desire that their grandchildren know their devotion and sacrifice and in return give more of their time to their grandmothers and treat them nicely?

In the past there was a connection between grandmother and grandchild, but there is no connection in the present. Korean immigrant grandmothers used to be needed, but they are not needed in the present. Their labor was valued by their children, but their hard work is not valued. Their past relationship with their grandchildren is irrevocable and irreversible, regardless of their wish to go “back to the past.” Korean immigrant grandmothers can journey to the past in their minds but cannot call back the past to their present.

In summary, Korean immigrant grandmothers reveal the discontinuation of their past relationships with their grandchildren as it relates to their present relationship with their grandchildren. They believe that the relationship dissolves as time passes. Korean immigrant grandmothers are struggling with their grandchildren’s half-heartedness as it

compares to their grandchildren's previous warmth. Korean immigrant grandmothers presently are reminded of the past by the change in their grandchildren's attitudes in the present.

The zenith of this phenomenon is the agony grandmothers identified when their past sacrifices are seen as nothing when confronted by their current grandchildren's behaviors. Korean immigrant grandmothers are currently in turmoil caused by a huge break between their past relationship and their present relationship with their grandchildren.

### ***Grappling Currently as Lesser Grandmothers***

Because of the change in their grandchildren's attitudes, Korean immigrant grandmothers suffer from the differences between their past and present experiences. What grandmothers can do now for their grandchildren is different from what they did for them when they were younger. For example, Korean immigrant grandmothers held their grandchildren day and night, but they cannot hold them now. What are Korean grandmothers' wishes and roles for their grandchildren now? I will write about the current wishes and roles of Korean immigrant grandmothers and their meaning as it relates to time.

The flow of time necessitates a lesser role for Korean immigrant grandmothers in their grandchildren's lives. Some grandmothers reduce their wish for love to a wish for an occasional phone call:

If [my family] called me, I wouldn't forget it. If they called to me kindly, I couldn't be happier. There is no other wish....Though I just moved out from my child's place....When I was with them, I wanted every family member to love me. I

wanted the family who lived with me to love me. But I just want one phone call even though we live apart. I don't need a long conversation.

Other grandmothers look for a kind word.

The more important thing is a kind word. Kindness. Because the kindness is from the heart. Even though they mistreated me, I could forget and forgive them if there were kind words.

If the grandmother in the last excerpt above receives a kind word from her grandchildren, she can forgive them when they hurt her. Has she not received a kind word from them before? She adds further detail about her experience:

What the grandmother wants the most are warm words from her grandchildren. If our grandchildren take care of us, we are happy. We just want warm words, even one word. Even though we can't meet each other, one warm phone [call] is okay with us, asking if we are doing well. Even though they make an appointment with us and can't make it, it's okay with us, because they had good intentions and a good heart. That's what we want. No grandparents can talk to their grandchildren for a long time. We don't expect that. Nobody can do it. If our grandchildren are elementary school students, they just chat and talk to us, "Grandma, grandma." That is just a cute behavior. At the adolescent age, our grandchildren don't say thoughtful and meaningful words to us that can remain in our hearts....they become colder and colder. The first wish from my grandchildren is to give me a phone call. Second is a kind greeting, "Hi," when they get up. While I was working, I was happy if my grandchildren gave a kind greeting to me. When we see each other for the first time, I want to get a warm and sweet "Hi" from them. I couldn't feel better. But they hardly saw me or said hi to me even when we passed by. My grandchildren just left home without any warm greeting. So I said to myself, "Since I am here, they can't see me. Can't they see me because I am too small? Or is this house too big to see me?" Ha ha ha. They go directly from the entrance door upstairs without a greeting. So I told them, "Be careful of something in front of you (In Korean, this can be a greeting though it is not in general usage) and good day." It means, "Don't you see me because I am so small?" But they left home without a greeting. Reluctantly, they said to me, "Hi." Their behavior hurts me...My heart is deeply hurt....The grandmothers who have just lived here for a few years don't understand me at all.

Korean immigrant grandmothers' wishes for a phone call, a kind word, or a greeting go barely unfulfilled. Their simple wishes reflect their unhappy life, and the collapse of their wishes reveals their current bitter life.

So how do Korean immigrant grandmothers endeavor to connect with their grandchildren when the grandmothers are being treated poorly? Is there anything Korean grandmothers can do now to make connections with their grandchildren? The key is found in grandmothers' blind love and struggle to connect with their grandchildren.

Grandmothers express their love toward their grandchildren unchangingly even though the grandchildren treat them harshly. They love their grandchildren unilaterally and unrequitedly but still cannot forget the olden days with their grandchildren.

Regardless of her behavior, I have a strong affection toward her. Sue is the daughter of my daughter. Also, I took care of her more than any other grandchildren, so I have a lot of affection towards her. I feel attachment to her (she was crying). But she doesn't have any affection toward me. She forgot how much we liked each other. When she was young, she was affectionate toward me a lot. She has forgotten that now that she has grown up.

Sometimes grandmothers try to win their grandchildren's favor by giving gifts, especially money.

The time we can get together has decreased. Sue has slowly been losing her affection toward me. I don't feel warmth from her. She seems not to be glad to meet me when I visit her. But I try to think she is still young when she is unkind to me. We don't meet each other frequently, and she acts this way. Sue just said hello to me absentmindedly. In my inmost heart, I felt disappointed. But I couldn't express it even to her mother. I try to accept her the way she is. She is still young. In the past, I gave \$100 to her occasionally and then she was happy. But lately, I have been in a poor situation economically, so I can't give her money as often. Last November, I gave her \$40, holding her hands and she seemed to smile. I sensed this. Children are children. Despite the small amount of money, \$40 is very small, Sue seemed to be glad to receive it. Though it is small, \$40, it is difficult to share it with her. For a while, I couldn't give the money to her, and I felt uncomfortable. Although I gave \$40 to Sue, she seemed to be happier when

she played with her friend. So I thought a child showed her inmost heart without pretense. Then I thought I would try to give her a present whenever I go there.

What kinds of relationships are kept by giving presents at every encounter? Are presents usually the expression of gratitude or love? Might grandmothers want to buy their grandchildren's affections with money? Can this be called love? What makes grandmothers this desperate? Is this how much they thirst for their grandchildren's love?

Even though other grandmothers do not give money at every meeting and even though their grandchildren have not treated them badly, giving money (or other gifts) is at least a temporary way to be connected with their grandchildren. Korean immigrant grandmothers might experience a limited bidirectional way of interaction between them and their grandchildren.

I was so happy because I gave [money] to him. Grandchildren were happy because they received the money. Kids burst seams with the money. Give the money. What child doesn't like that? Nobody hates it. In proverbs, the baby comes out early from the womb if we offer him money. Ha ha ha. So the money is dirty and shameful. They say it's the money. So kids like money very much. When I gave the money, Hwan liked it very much.

**Interviewee:** I told him, "I want to give an allowance to you. Take it." There was no one except us. There was not his mother. Nobody's there except the two of us. He told me, "I don't want it." His younger brother was not there. Nobody was there....But he told me, "I will not receive it, Halmoni. I know you have little money, so you don't need to [do] this." Then I said to him, "You can give me money later when you have a job after a college." After that, he said to me, "Thank you," and accepted it and went upstairs.

**Interviewer:** How did you feel when you gave him money?

**Interviewee:** Go~~~~~od. So I gave him money. I really want to give it to him because he is precious.

Then she told me, "Grandma, I have money. You don't need to do that," refusing to receive the money. So I insisted, "No. Take this. This is what grandma wants." Then she accepted it.

Thanksgiving. On that day, I gave her the money. I told her, "When you go to a movie with your friends spend this." Then she told me, "Yes, grandma, I will use it well." I gave it because it made me happy. Though I have many grandchildren, she is the one closest to me since I raised her. Though there are many other grandchildren, I don't contact them often. So she is the one closest to me. I raised her, and we lived together in the same house. So I feel closer to her. Because of this, I want to give something to her. Just a bit.

The most common way Korean grandmothers strive to stay connected to their grandchildren is by doing household chores and cooking for them.

When Sue prepared for her school, I made her bed and cleaned her room. I wipe every corner of her room, desk, and dressing table with a dustcloth.

I cleaned thoroughly every corner of the house. I would shine the floor.

I just cooked for them. "What do you want to eat?" Then they said what they wanted. I cooked what they wanted. There was nothing. I just cooked for them. We didn't talk to each other.

The last example of how grandmothers seek connection with their grandchildren is by waving goodbye to them even though the grandchildren do not wave back to their grandmothers. There is no reciprocation between them.

Then I just stood there and waved my hands at them until I couldn't see them. Then I prayed to God, "Heavenly Father, I am praying for Dohee's family now. Please let them drive safely to their house." I just stood there and waved my hands though I couldn't see them, while praying for their safety.

When I thought they had left the house, I followed and ran to them to see Sue off. When I went downstairs, Sue hadn't left home yet. So I waited for her there. I waited for her to leave. Right after she closed her door, I followed her. And I waved to her, whether she saw me or not.

The image of grandmothers waving to the backs of their grandchildren reminds me of lyrics in "Sitting in the Window of My Rooms" by Alison Krauss (Burnett & Mansfield, 2002).

I sat in the window of my room  
Watched you go away  
It was all I could do  
It was all I could do

Your going away  
To leave me alone  
In all of this sorrow  
In this misery

So look now, my darling  
I'll have to abandon  
All thought of you  
As your going away

To summarize, Korean immigrant grandmothers are distressed with the gap between their past relationships and their present relationships. They reduce their expectations toward their grandchildren to a simple greeting or a phone call, but these lowered expectations often go unfulfilled.

Korean immigrant grandmothers keep showing love towards their grandchildren though the love is unidirectional. Korean immigrant grandmothers long for bidirectional interactions between them and their grandchildren, but their striving is thwarted.

### ***Theme Summary***

The past of Korean immigrant grandmothers exists in their present. Their past experiences with their grandchildren are intertwined with their current disappointing relationships. Their past is what they miss and where they want to escape from the present. Reviving their past in their memories over and over gives meaning to their present.

However, some Korean immigrant grandmothers struggle to adapt in the present by reducing their expectations but are still unfulfilled. They do not stop loving their

grandchildren though it is unidirectional as they attempt to gain and wish for reciprocity of their love.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented and discussed Korean immigrant grandchildren's experiences with their adolescent U.S. born grandchildren in terms of three lifeworld existentials: relationality, spatiality, and temporality. Other lifeworld themes will be discussed in the following chapter.

## CHPATER 4 OTHER LIFEWORLD THEMES

In addition to their existential experiences with their grandchildren, Korean immigrant grandmothers struggle to understand and adapt to their loss of connection with their grandchildren, but they do not give up on their strong wishes for their grandchildren to maintain their Korean-ness, especially in terms of their academic achievements. These lifeworld themes are examined in this chapter.

### **Theme 5: Tiding over Difficulties**

Because of the rain, I was driving slowly near where my participants lived. On a pedestrian path, some fallen petals were being barbarously trampled under foot here and there. Fallen petals brought to mind the image of Korean immigrant grandmothers. The fallen flowers looked dreary and dismal in the rain. The fallen flowers might have lived had they been able to resist the afflicting wind and pounding rain. In my mind, Korean immigrant grandmothers are like the fallen flowers in the wind and rain. While thinking this, Do's (1993) poem "Flowers Seemed Blooming, Then Falling Now" came to mind:

The flowers bloomed but fall suddenly.  
 Luxuriously and splendidly were embroidered in the sky.  
 Last night falling by rain silently  
 Covered the ground with white

People enjoyed in shadows of flowers,  
 Gone and no their trace here.  
 Those who swarmed to colorful petals  
 Just buried in colorful memories when back to their place.

At riverbank where beautiful petals fell after rain  
 The wind that has no mind is just cold  
 Charming days were short  
 The days left were long

Behold, dear, if you love flowers,  
Love even the silence after flowers fell  
Flowers seemed blooming, then soon falling this year too.

This year it rained more than usual where my participants lived and fallen petals often floated away in the rainwater. Korean immigrant grandmothers have spent busy but brilliant lives with their grandchildren, and at first their families welcomed and recognized them for sacrificing themselves for them. But now these grandmothers feel as useless as fallen petals. They are not needed anymore by their grandchildren and fall into what must feel like a bottomless pit where they cannot connect with their grandchildren. These grandmothers must find ways to fill the gaps between once kind grandchildren and the coldness they feel from them now as they struggle with the loss of connection with their grandchildren.

Korean immigrant grandmothers strive in various ways to overcome the difficulties of being disconnected with their grandchildren. They endeavor to adapt to their disconnected situations. The following excerpt conveys the struggle of a grandmother who is trying to adapt to her loss of connection with her grandchildren:

Though I am used to that situation, it was not easy. But also it was not difficult. Rather, I could live according to the situation. I needed to adapt to the environment.

This text reveals the ambivalence of grandmothers who see their situation as difficult but, simultaneously and contradictorily, also easy. Can their situation be both difficult and easy concurrently? Is their disconnected situation not confusing for them? Or are they still frustrated with their grandchildren's half-heartedness even as they try to understand their grandchildren as they grow and change?

Korean grandmothers feel the necessity of adaptation. However, their practical acceptance of their loss of connection is not easy.

I am okay now. First time [I felt this loss], I felt it was difficult....It was very difficult. I thought why [was] I here. So I tried to think I had to come here because I couldn't live in Korea any longer.

This particular grandmother's adaptation mechanism was to think that she was also unhappy in Korea and that she had nowhere else to go. She rationalizes her loss of connection with her grandchildren by remembering her misfortune.

In this manner, my participants rationalize their loss of connection with their grandchildren as they struggle with their depressing circumstances. Their endeavor for adaptation is categorized largely into two types of reasoning: one, Korean immigrant grandmothers infer why the loss is caused; and two, Korean immigrant grandmothers justify their grandchildren's present cold heartedness.

### ***Rationalizing in Order to Forget My Loss Feelings***

My participants rationalize the suffering they experience as a result of their loss of connection with their grandchildren. Based upon my interview text, I identified three reasons Korean immigrant grandmothers give for why there is a loss of connection with their grandchildren. The first reason is that their present difficulty with their grandchildren is a type of hardship they have experienced before and must endure like all other hardships in their lives. The second is that their suffering is generated by the American culture, and the third rationale is a belief that the changing of the times, or current trends in society, have caused an alienated relationship with their grandchildren. As grandmothers search for ways to explain why their relationships with their

grandchildren have lost closeness, warmth, and intimacy, they also describe the ways in which they try to adapt to a reality they did not expect or want.

First, Korean immigrant grandmothers regard their disconnectedness as just one of their many adversities in life. They see themselves as victims—their lot in life is to suffer hardships. They compare their current disconnection with their grandchildren with previously experienced hardships, such as being rejected by a loved one.

[M]y husband left me in order to live with another woman when I was 29. My husband didn't [come] home. So I have lived alone for 45 years. I am used to that feeling. It is a similar situation.

The meaning of *similar* is “Having a marked resemblance or likeness; of a like nature or kind” (OED, 1989). Being abandoned or rejected by grandchildren resembles other experiences of abandonment or rejection. And since they survived many previous hardships, grandmothers feel that they can survive the hardship of not being emotionally close to their grandchildren.

My life is different from others. I have been through difficult times different from others. I was alone when I was 29. I fought all sorts of hardship. My way has been winding and crooked. As I lived my life, I think Sue dislikes me as Sue has gotten older. Accordingly, the trouble with Sue is one of my hardships. Since I went through various hardships, I understand it...I went through difficult moments. I had a lot of hardships.

The literal meaning of *hardship* is “A condition which presses unusually hard upon one who has to endure it; hardness of fate or circumstance; severe toil or suffering; extreme want or privation” (OED, 1989). Severance of the relationship with a granddaughter is a severe toil and hardness of fate like any other hardships.

Second, Korean immigrant grandmothers view their problems with their grandchildren as being a product of their grandchildren's immersion into American culture:

They [grandchildren and U.S. children] hate to talk to others. They just get to the point at once. They like simplicity. Simple and fast conversation! For example, I just told him, "What do you need?" "Take care of your health," [and] "Take care." He just responded to me, "I see." That's all. He is different from Korean children.

You need to understand this. The lives of grandchildren are different from those of grandchildren in Korea. Theirs is American style, but mine is Korean. They are American, too.

I don't say any other things except this, U.S children hate to talk to adults.

I had no time to talk to Hyun. That's life in the U.S. It's the nature of the U.S. life.

In this contemporary U.S. world, the relationship between parent and children is also very estranged and alienated.

Korean immigrant grandmothers assume that the reason their grandchildren do not talk to them is because it is a common characteristic of children in the United States. They believe that American children dislike talking to adults, especially their grandmothers, which is different from the Korean way. Grandmothers who are soaked in Korean culture, which asks for children's compliance, have difficulty accepting the perceived American way of their grandchildren.

Since little conversation between grandmothers and grandchildren is a trait of what they believe to be the nature of life in the United States, Korean immigrant grandmothers appear to have no other choice but to accept their situation. The word *nature* means "the power or force which is fundamental to the physical and mental

functioning of a human being; the inherent dominating power or impulse in a person by which character or action is determined, directed, or controlled” (OED, 1989). For Korean immigrant grandmothers, the fact that they cannot make contact with their Americanized grandchildren, they believe, is inherently determined, directed, or controlled as a function of their grandchildren being immersed in the culture of the United States. Their interpretation of this disconnected condition with their grandchildren is beyond their control because it is caused by an inherent dominating power. Do Korean grandmothers have this belief about American culture because they are trying to adapt to their loss of connection with their grandchildren? Does their generalization of American culture comfort them?

The reason we become estranged with each other is the U.S. lifestyle. Hwan doesn't have “legs and feet” to see me. I mean he can't drive. His parents should give him a ride here so I can see him. Also his parents should give me a ride to his place to see Hwan. But his parents are too tired....My daughter-in-law works on Saturdays. Then my son and my daughter-in-law have no time. On Sundays, Hwan's family stays in church all day long. After church, they need to cook and have dinner. This way Sunday is gone. That's the U.S. life. Everybody is the same. Then do you really think they can come to see me? If you live in the U.S., you will have no time. It's a very busy life here. We have no time....U.S. life is more difficult. Here everybody is busy. Can you imagine?...As I told you before, U.S. life is very difficult. To make a living, my son and my daughter-in-law have to work. They work late, so they don't feel like going out. It is hard for Hwan to come here. Frankly, they don't have the energy to come here. They lack energy and strength. Everybody is like this. The same!

Kids eat bread and eat separately from adults [in the United States]. Kids like to go out, so they eat their favorite food. They like to hang around with their friends to eat their favorite food. We adults need to eat rice, so we cook rice at home. We eat our meals at home. So adults and kids eat separately. That's the U.S. style. It is very difficult for family members to have dinner together. It's very difficult. You don't know American style because you haven't lived here long. That's the U.S. life. The family can't all have dinner together because kids come home late. Even when kids don't come home late, usually we eat separately.

Not only do grandmothers blame the hectic American lifestyle for the lack of connection to their grandchildren, but also they believe that their grandchildren have absorbed an adolescent unfriendliness toward grandparents from the American culture.

When I called her mother, Sue answered the phone. I said to her on the phone, "I love you," but she just said, "Me, too." That's the U.S style. She didn't say to me, "Grandma, I love you," but she said, "Me, too." She finished the conversation in the American style, "Me, too," though I told her, "I love you. I miss you."...But she treats me coldly.

If I think it is not good [then] I feel bad. For example, Roh didn't say hello to me, though he saw me. He pretended not to see me. When I asked him [a question], he didn't respond to me. At those times, I felt bad. That's his life and his principles. So I am trying to disregard it. Kids live and think this way.... You don't know the situation well because you haven't lived in the U.S. for a long time. Everybody lives this way. That is U.S. life.

Is this perceived cold-heartedness of adolescents really the "American-style"? Or is it just what Korean grandmothers want to believe in order to rationalize their feelings and their grandchildren's behavior?

Another observation I made in the interview materials above is that the second grandmother appears to have ambivalent feelings about her grandchild's ignorance. At first, she says her grandchild's ignorance is based upon his principles, but then she defines it as the American way of life. Does she think her grandchild is being intentionally ignorant? Does she use her perception of the American lifestyle as an excuse for rationalizing their loss of connection and to escape from harsh reality? In the following interview excerpt, a hint of rationalization can be seen:

But I regard it as the American way. After thinking this way, I am not...sad or sorry [anymore]. If I feel sorry, I call my friends and talk to them. I [call] all my friends. So I feel better after coming home to my apartment.

This grandmother regards her grandchild's behavior as the American way. She tries to attribute her grandchild's behavior as a part of his or her adopted U.S. lifestyle. After rationalizing the behaviors, she is comforted. Does she sense her grandchild's behavior is not from living in the United States but instead is solely her grandchild's way of acting? By rationalizing, she can hide from her loss of connection with her grandchild. Then does this rationale about American life provide an exit for her from her harsh reality?

Third, Korean immigrant grandmothers view their loss of connection with their grandchildren as the byproduct of the changing of the times in society. Although this is similar to the second point that attributed the loss of connection between grandmothers to their grandchildren's immersion in American culture, some grandmothers believe their grandchildren's behaviors are a result of current trends in the changing times. In other words, the modern times are to blame.

One more thing is that times [have] changed. If I pry into their lives, they hate it. Grandchildren will regard me as a nagger if I ask them a lot. So I don't ask them much.

But most grandchildren don't talk to their grandparents. Frankly, I heard that those grandmothers who live with their grandchildren also don't talk to their grandchildren. All the grandchildren go to their own rooms. There is no exception. Nobody talks to grandmothers. They don't talk even to their mothers. Can you expect that grandchildren talk to their grandmother? The times have changed. Now is different from the past.

Kids these days are like this. If their parents don't ask, they don't do something with their grandparents....Times are like this.

I think my grandchildren don't abuse me, but we [have] become estranged from each other. As it is these days, the world goes around this way more and more, so I should not feel sorry about it. This time is this way. We need to follow current times. Kids these days are the same. Every kid does things this way. Now, if

grandchildren say hello to us, we can be thankful. It is the best thing. Kids these days don't see their grandparents. Some do not let grandparents open their door. How do those grandparents feel? So if my grandchildren say hello to me, I am thankful to them for this. If grandchildren invite grandparents, it is also something we can be thankful for. Ha ha ha.

**Interviewee:** This is the character of these times....I heard that Korea is also changing. In the U.S., kids move out from their parents' home when they are 18. They are independent. They prefer dormitory life. Even kids from Korea change after they live in the U.S. I am told Korea is changing....Kids don't like to listen, so I don't nag my grandsons.

**Interviewer:** If Roh didn't respond to you, how did you feel?

**Interviewee:** I felt very bad. On the way or in the church, I said to Roh, "Roh!!" but he pretended not to listen. I thought he didn't hear me, but I was very disappointed and sad. I was very disappointed, but I was trying to say to myself, "Kids these days are the same as Roh. Every kid is like this." I was trying to think this way. Then, I think he will know my heart in the future. If he will have a grandchild, he will know everything. He will say, 'All that my grandma said was right.'" If I prophesize, the following generation will be more severe than this generation. Now it is like this. How will the future be? More severe.

Korean immigrant grandmothers are in a deep despair caused by the loss of connection with their grandchildren. They search for causes and ways to adapt to their situation. When they do not find a way to reconnect, they must mollify their feelings and justify their situation to themselves.

Interspersed throughout the immigrant grandmothers' discussions of why they experience disconnectedness with their grandchildren are descriptions of the ways they cope with this or their adaptation mechanisms. Specifically, they talk about denial of love, determination, and resignation.

Excerpts from the interviews reveal how painful it is for the grandmothers to deny or withdraw the deep love they once had for their grandchildren. We see that this denial of love can even lead to a denial of the grandchildren's past image, even to a denial of the

grandchildren themselves. With so much pain, the grandmothers turn to their religious beliefs for comfort and support.

I am trying to think that my grandchildren are not mine. They are others'. They are my son and daughter-in-law's. So I am trying not to feel sorry. So I just wish that my grandchildren are healthy, beautiful, and study hard. These are my prayers. I also pray that they are good, exemplary citizens.

I should not open my mouth too wide about what I feel. I should live in the given situation. God says we should love our neighbors as we love ourselves. Though I had cherished and hugged Sue a lot, I can't confine her in my arms. So I am trying to find my place. I am trying not to have an attachment. If I have an attachment toward her, it tortures me. The more I think of her, the more I miss her. That's nothing. So I need to be free from this. Also I don't force my place in God's providence. As Sue lives her way, I should live my way. Now I should not cherish her as I cherished the young Sue before....I try to think, "She can't love me as she loved me before. She can't love me now as she did before."

I feel sorry for it, but I am trying to overcome these feelings and yield to the present situation.

A second way in which the grandmothers try to adapt to the changed relationship with their grandchildren is to become determined to accept their current situations without anger.

**Interviewee:** I go to the [church shuttle] bus stop. Other grandmothers and I gathered there and come home. At the bus stop, we talked to each other about how we live. We talked to each other that we should be determined for living.

**Interviewer:** What does that mean, "you should be determined to?"

**Interviewee:** We should not think that we should be treated differently or get warm hospitality as elders. We should not want to be treated as special elders and accept that they don't treat us correctly. We pledged ourselves to this way. Rather, our position is to serve the younger generation. Since children work hard and suffer hard times here, we should do something for them such as cooking. We are behind them. Now young generation is above our heads. Ha ha. They say that Koreans live like this now, too.

**Interviewer:** What does that mean, "young generation is above your head?"

**Interviewee:** What I am saying is now I am okay because I have [become] determined and pledged to accept this. Now it is okay. If I think I feel sorry for myself, that's the way it is, but we need to follow these times. After [becoming determined], I am okay now. If I was not determined to accept this, I would

become angry. I would become very angry. But now it is okay. At first, I went through a difficult period but now I have adjusted to it. Now I am thinking this is the American style. Ha ha. Though I am a Korean grandmother, I have to live in U.S. Do I have to live according [to] the ways of the country in which I live? Don't you?

The meaning of *determination* is “The mental action of coming to a decision; the fixing or settling of a purpose; the result of this; a fixed purpose or intention; The quality of being determined or resolute; determinedness, resoluteness” (OED, 1989).

Grandmothers resolve to forget the hurt they have experienced and the expectations they once had. They settle on accepting their grandchildren as they are now. Their intention is to understand the contemporary American lifestyle and see their grandchildren as a part of it.

The third adaptation mechanism the grandmothers mentioned is that of resignation—a mechanism that seems closely related to or overlapping with the mechanism of determination. Some grandmothers resign themselves to expect nothing from their grandchildren because one must accept the changing times.

Why would it be less for the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren? What can I expect from my grandchildren? I just took care of my grandchildren because they were so cute and lovable. Do I now feel sorry for this? I just should follow the logic of this world. Now that's the way of living in the world. That's life....Everybody wants to live separately. Do you know that? In this modern world, who wants to live with parents and grandparents? So that's the way this world has always been in these times. Take the world as it is. Living alone is good and comfortable. But it is true I am lonely and I am worried if I will get dementia. If the older elders get dementia, the more they need to live with others. So elders need neighbors. I am really worried about dementia....Take the times as they are. Now I can't be given preferential treatment at all even from my own children....Times have changed. In the past...I just listened to parents and parents-in-law when they talked to me. If I answered back to them, I was rebuked again. So I couldn't answer them and just listened to them....That was when I was young. But now it is different. Now the times have changed....Grandchildren never come out of their rooms.

I am trying not to have a headache. In other words, I don't try to think about when [Sue] followed me when [she] was young. I just want to live in a given situation. I don't hurt now.

Just let it be. *Que sera sera*. I just try to accept that fact.

The grandmothers think they cannot change their given situation. They accept their situation as “resigned and fatalistic” as shown in the meaning of the expression of *que sera sera* (OED, 1989), or whatever will be, will be. Some grandmothers try to cope with their loss by accepting it as their destiny.

Because my legs hurt, I can't go outside on my own. For [the] first four or five years, I had difficult times here. Now, I have lived this way so long that I accept this life as my destiny.

The definition of *destiny* is “That which is destined or fated to happen; predetermined events; that which is destined to happen to a particular person, country, institution” (OED, 1989). Some grandmothers consider their loss of connection with their grandchildren as predetermined, destined, and fated to be. They cannot do anything but accept the loss.

The final excerpt in this section illustrates how profound the sense of resignation can be for some grandmothers.

What can I say? It's resignation. Resignation. Give up. Now I don't think I miss Hwan much. For example, I missed my daughter in Korean very much for a long time. The time passed. “Suit yourself,” I think. Let her live her way. But I live my way. I changed thinking this way. For 10 years, it was very difficult. Now I passed that stage. A long time ago, I was over that stage....My only wish is that I don't want to be a burden to my children and grandchildren. That's my only wish now. I don't want to be trouble to them....My wish is that I die silently while sleeping. That's my wish. I don't want to make trouble for them. I want to pass away silently. I have no other wish. Including Hwan, they are grown up and have their own lives. So there is nothing that I can do to help them. So I hope I will not

be a burden to them. So I pray to God, but I don't know [if my prayers] will be realized.

The meaning of *resignation* is “A giving up of oneself” (OED, 1989). For grandmothers who experience resignation, what is their present life like? Is there any way they can overcome their loss other than by giving up and dying silently?

In sum, Korean immigrant grandmothers strive to reflect rationally on why the loss of connection happens. Mainly their rationalizations are means for overcoming their distressed feelings about their losses. Grandmothers deem their present disconnection with their grandchildren is due to the hardships they are meant to endure because of the American lifestyles and the trend of modern times.

As they try to rationalize their grandchildren's actions, Korean immigrant grandmothers use psychological coping mechanisms. They claim to deny love for and to their grandchildren. They adopt a resolute mindset in order not to be disappointed with their unreceptive grandchildren and give up the expectations they have for their relationships with their grandchildren in order to not face the darkest night of their soul amidst loss of connection with their grandchildren.

### ***Finding Excuses for my Grandchildren***

At the same time that Korean immigrant grandmothers search for reasons why they do not have close relationships with their grandchildren and struggle to adapt to their distressed situations, they try to justify the misbehaviors and cold-heartedness of their grandchildren in three ways. They tend to equalize every child to their grandchild, to think their grandchildren's behavior is natural for their stage of development, and to use their grandchildren's busyness as an excuse.

One way grandmothers excuse their grandchildren's behaviors is to say that all children act like their grandchildren. Their grandchildren are not any less affectionate or less considerate than any other adolescents. All grandmothers are in the same boat:

It is not only my grandson's story. Every grandchild is like this. They don't talk to their grandparents happily, even to anybody. Though I raised him when he was young, the younger generation [doesn't] talk to their grandparents if they are grown up. Though I took care of him, we have become estranged from each other. They seem to be reluctant to talk to elders.

I feel sorry for it, but I am trying to overcome these feelings and yield to the present situation. I think my affection toward Sue is not much like previously.... However, I observe that kids become estranged from their parents and grandparents although they live together with them. Everybody is the same.

Second, Korean immigrant grandmothers think the demeanor of their adolescent grandchildren is natural for their level of growth. They seem to believe that the negative attitude of their grandchildren toward elders is a normal phase of development.

It is natural that she doesn't like me as much as she grows up.

Since she is grown up, we do things separately. I do what I do. She does what she does.

But now Jae has changed. It is no wonder because Jae has grown up. Since my grandchildren grew older, they have their own lives now. How can I change this? Though I feel sad or disappointed, I should accept it as natural. They have their own lives. I don't know what other grandmothers think.

Now she is rarely in my arms. I can't hold her in my arms emotionally because she is grown up. She rarely is in my arms, meaning we have become estranged because I don't take care of her now. Naturally we have become estranged.

Her affection toward me has changed. It is natural.

But I can't blame her that she doesn't follow me anymore. When she was young, she liked me more than her mother because I took care of her. Now she is very unkind, harsh, and cold toward me, not because she hates me but because losing affection is natural. I think it is natural. I feel a bit disappointed, but I need to understand it. It is natural....I can't blame her for this.

Korean immigrant grandmothers are disappointed and troubled with the half-heartedness of their grandchildren, but they do not want to *blame* their grandchildren. In other words, grandmothers do not want “to find fault with; to address with rebuke; to reprove, chide, scold” their grandchildren (OED, 1989). If grandmothers can find a way to excuse their grandchildren’s estrangement by pointing to adolescent development, do they experience less inner conflict?

The grandmothers’ desire not to blame their grandchildren for being estranged seems similar to the sentiments expressed by a lover in the song “Title and Registration” by Death Cab for Cutie (Gibbard & Walla, 2003):

There's no blame for how our love did slowly fade  
 And now that it's gone it's like it wasn't there at all  
 And here i rest where disappointment and regret collide  
 Lying awake at night.

Third, Korean immigrant grandmothers excuse their grandchildren’s disconnection by saying that their grandchildren are busy. The grandmothers see busyness in two areas of their grandchildren’s lives: academic activities and leisure pursuits, including friendships.

He needs to study subjects that he can’t do well in and review them. He is always busy with schoolwork. Every family member is busy. Everybody is the same.

So I don’t talk to him. Another reason, he is very busy so I have no time to talk to him. He is so busy. He should study hard. Also, he goes to a private academic institution, computer-learning center, Taekwondo School, etc. He goes to several schools a day so he is busy. He should go to school and do other things. Here (it seems to Korean immigrant families), parents make their children study hard. So he has no time to talk to me. Actually, we don’t have much time to see each other. I don’t have much time even with my son. Still, why can’t my grandson give his time to me? I rarely see his face.

When she was four, she had nothing to do, so she talked to me. Now she is a middle schooler, so she has a lot of work. If I try to talk to her, she says to me, “It is meddling. Don’t do that way.” So I don’t.

Also, she has no time because she comes home late from...school. She has a late dinner. After having dinner, she should study hard. Then she takes a shower. So I have no time to talk to her. I just watch TV. When I went to her room, she was asleep. I slept.

Anyhow, kids these days are very busy. After school, Tae would go to Taekwondo school, Korean school, and to the swimming pool and get piano lessons from a private tutor. Sik also does this too. Modern kids are busier than kids in the past.

Roh was busy after...school, so [he] came home late. If I went to Roh’s home, I had no chance to meet him. If I met Roh, he took a shower and then went to his room, so we couldn’t talk to each other. There was no conversation between us. While the high schooler went to his room to work on his computer and to sleep, I did my own things and lay down. Even when I had lived with them, I couldn’t talk to adolescents. We don’t talk much to each other. What can we talk about?

Yes. He is very busy. He goes to school and gets sports training.

Also, now she doesn’t rely on me as she did before....[N]ow it’s more fun to play with her friends. I think this way. To her, her friends are more important than I am. Her friend is American, not Korean. Sue plays with American girls. Whenever I visited her, Sue brought that girl home. I couldn’t say, “Don’t play with that girl. Instead, play with me.” How could I say that?

There is a TV set in his room. He watched what he wanted to, played games, and worked at the computer. He has everything he can play upstairs. What did we have in the past? But kids these days have everything. Don’t they have a computer? A game pack? Television set? If they go upstairs, they have everything that they want, so they play by themselves. Adults and I are downstairs. So we can’t mix with each other. They don’t come and sit with us. Since they have a lot of fun things, they don’t come to us.

**Interviewee:** Kids play together with kids because they have a lot of fun things to do. Do you know how much kids love a computer? If they play on computer all day long, they are never tired of it. Tae keeps playing on the computer. Sik also is playing with his computer and never gets up from the desk after he got his own computer. Then, how could they want to play with a boring grandma? They love computers more than me. They dislike grandma but like computers. Ha ha.

**Interviewer:** How did you feel?

**Interviewee:** Ah, well. So be it. That's the way the world goes. So what can I do? Now is different from the past.

While things such as computers and games are interesting to grandchildren, they consider their grandmothers to be boring. The meaning of *boring* is “That annoys, wearies, or causes ennui; simply by the failure to be interesting” (OED, 1989).

In summary, Korean immigrant grandmothers rationalize why their grandchildren are estranged from them while simultaneously being distressed about the estrangement. Korean immigrant grandmothers believe that their grandchildren's cold demeanors are pan-national phenomena and that their grandchildren are in the middle of a natural developmental phase. These rationalizations render grandmothers relieved. Lastly, Korean immigrant grandmothers excuse their grandchildren's lack of involvement with them by saying the grandchildren are busy with academic and leisure pursuits.

### ***Theme Summary***

Korean immigrant grandmothers endeavor to rationalize the loss of connection with their grandchildren largely by inferring the causes of loss and by finding excuses for their grandchildren.

First, Korean grandmothers' arduous endeavor for rationalizing is the means for overcoming their distressful relationship with their grandchildren. They regard the disconnected relationship as one of the hardships they must experience, as a problem of living an American lifestyle, and as the trend of the times. Meanwhile, Korean immigrant grandmothers also use psychological coping mechanisms such as denial of love toward their grandchildren, a resolute mindset, and resignation of their expectations.

Second, the grandmothers defend their grandchildren's cold heartedness as being a pan-national phenomena, part of natural development, and their busyness with academic and leisure pursuits. This justification is also convenient for forgetting their loss of connection.

### **Theme 6 Koreans in American**

My participants cannot speak English or cannot speak it well and do not assimilate themselves into an American way of life, so they live a Korean lifestyle in the United States. They live as if they are on a Korean island surrounded by Americans and American culture, missing Korea and their fellow Koreans.

One grandmother told me she wanted to go to the airport more than anything, which seemed ridiculous to me at first. I did not think the airport could be a tourist attraction. However, I soon realized that she wished to see other Koreans, so she wanted to go to the airport. Her seemingly ridiculous idea sadly touched my heart. I was even sadder to know that she could not even dream of visiting Korea because of her situation, poor health, and financial hardship. How many Koreans could she meet at the airport? What would she think when she was at the airport? Does she imagine Korean scenery and people as she watches airplanes take off and land?

The woman's grandchildren seemed to sense her desire to go to the airport. She explained her situation to me like this:

They [one grandson is a college student and the other grandson is a high school student] asked me if I wanted to go to the airport to meet Koreans there. So I responded, "Yes." Then they wanted to go by the subway, so they come here and parked here. We took the subway....However, sometime later, they told me, it took a *long time* [she speaks in English] Ha ha.

When she talked to me about the time she went to the airport with her grandchildren, the grandmother's eyes were moist. Also, she did not look at me but seemed to see afterimages scattered in her memory while she was talking to me. One popular nursery song in Korea comes to my mind:

Hometown where I lived is a mountainous village full of blossoming flowers.  
 Peach blossom, apricot blossom and little azalea,  
 My hometown is ablaze with glaring colors in full blossoms.  
 I miss when I play in blossoming world.

I can imagine the minor key of this song spread gently as background music while the woman was with her grandchildren at the airport, as if her story is a scene of a movie. What is it like to live in the United States as a Korean with your grandchildren?

In this section, I will pursue how Korean immigrant grandmothers spend time with their grandchildren in the United States. First, I will examine how Korean grandmothers ask their grandchildren to be Koreans in the United States. Second, I will highlight Korean immigrant grandmothers' educational expectations for their grandchildren.

### ***Living as Koreans***

Korean immigrant grandmothers want their grandchildren to live as Koreans in the United States. Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences with food, language, and marriage as it relates to their grandchildren reveal how much being Korean matters to them. Also, Korean grandmothers' experiences show that the family and bloodline are highly valued. I will examine these topics in this section.

***The importance of food.*** By cooking Korean dishes, Korean immigrant grandmothers help their grandchildren stay connected to their culture. At the same time,

these grandmothers retain some connection to their grandchildren. One of the few topics they can talk with one another is food. Providing food for their grandchildren is a way to gain their grandchildren's appreciation.

We just had a meal together. If she wanted to eat eggs, I cooked it for her. But she likes to eat Kimchi. I asked her, "Is it delicious what I cooked for you?" Then she said to me, "Yes, it is. Your cooking is wonderful." Then she kept eating. There was nothing we could talk about.

**Interviewee:** When they are not at home, they just eat something at McDonalds. When they are at home, they eat Korean food that I cook for them. I cook all Korean dishes for them and their mothers and fathers. I provide their Korean dishes for them....I am a major Korean food provider. Their parents do not cook Korean foods for them.

**Interviewer:** How did you feel when they eat what you cooked?

**Interviewee:** I am so happy. I cook them all the time until I am very tired. Until feeling almost [dead]. If they hated what I cooked for them I would feel like dying and not be happy. If they eat well what I cook for them, I am happy. If they say it is not tasty, I am unhappy. However, after eating, they told me, "I like what you cooked for us. Thank you Grandma. Please do it for us next time."

In particular, it is important to the Korean grandmothers that their grandchildren eat steamed rice. They enjoy teaching their grandchildren how to cook steamed rice:

I cook some side dishes and let them bring those dishes to their home. They can cook rice now. One day they asked me how to cook rice, so I told them one cup of rice and one and half cups of water. If there is one cup of rice and one and half cups of water, you can cook the rice. I was told my baby could cook rice very well. Heechang told me, "Grandma, I am a "champion" [she speaks it in English] in cooking rice because I learned from you." Ha ha...."Grandma, I am so hungry because my mom comes home at 8:00 or at 9:00 p.m." He eats a hamburger or so during the day, and he wants to eat rice at home. He told me, "I want to eat rice. You cook many side dishes and give them to us. But how can I eat them without rice? I want to eat rice, but I can't eat raw rice." So I taught him how to cook rice. One cup of rice and one and half cups of water. Now he is a "champion" [she speaks it in English] in cooking rice.

To Korean immigrant grandmothers, food is more than merely something to eat.

Korean foods, if cooked at home and eaten as a family, contain the Korean spirit.

I cooked Songpyun for Chusuk. I don't buy them. Because...while I live, I will emphasize that Koreans cook them and eat them together and worship together. Because...[i]f I buy it, it is not delicious. But more importantly, there is no spirit in it. There is no worth. I cooked SikHae and SujungKwa, too.

The grandmothers think that their Korean food inspires the Korean spirit within their grandchildren. The spirit is called Earl (얼) in Korean, and its meaning is the backbone of the spirit. In other words, grandmothers plant the backbone of spirit into their grandchildren by cooking Korean dishes. Korean grandmothers place a great deal of emphasis on the importance of cooking Korean food in order to keep the Korean soul in their family members.

Of course, I should...cook constantly. I did it for 20 years. I cooked hot sauce paste, bean paste, Ssamjang, fried anchovy, Wooung, Kimchi...etc. But I stopped cooking Kimchi this year because I [felt] a lack of energy because of my age.

*The importance of language.* Korean immigrant grandmothers place a high value on the Korean language skills of their grandchildren. To Korean immigrant grandmothers, the Korean language is the essence of being a Korean. Language is a barometer to judge a person's nationality. The level of Korean language knowledge defines their grandchildren as being Korean or not. To Korean immigrant grandmothers the Korean language is deeply related to their grandchildren's Korean identity. Also, there is a perception that Korean grandmothers have an obligation to teach their grandchildren their language.

I say to them, "If a Korean can't speak in Korean, [they] are American. As Koreans, you should speak in Korean. Why did you come here into a foreign land? Speak in Korean."

I told them, "You are Koreans, so you should speak and write in Korean....You should not speak in English only. I taught Korean and Chinese to my grandsons and granddaughters.

They speak in Korean like missionaries in Korea. Ha ha...So I said to them, "Aren't you Koreans?" Then they responded to me, "Yes, we are." Then, I told them, "So you should speak in Korean like Koreans. You should not speak "Hamoni Hamoni" [Grandmother in Korean. But the original sound sounds like Halmoni] like missionaries. You should not. Your parents didn't teach you well. You should speak in Korean in your homes."

Not only do Korean immigrant grandmothers want their grandchildren to learn the Korean language, but they also want their descendants in the future to learn the language of their ancestors. They may want to maintain a permanent Korean identity within their family by teaching their grandchildren the language of their ancestors.

I emphasized it before I should die. Because...I, as a Korean, should teach my descendants Korean well. Of course they should speak in English. If they don't, they are fools.

I told them, "You should teach Korean and Chinese to your children after you are married. So don't let them get behind. English is not everything. If you speak in English only, you can't be the best. Of course, you should do well in English. However, first, you should not forget your mother tongue, Korean." I taught them basic Korean, so they could speak it well. But the first and second [of my grandchildren] speak in Korean awkwardly because they lived in a dormitory.

*The importance of marriage.* To Korean grandmothers marriage is deeply related to the Korean identity and its continuation in future generations. Korean immigrant grandmothers want their grandchildren to have Korean friends of the opposite sex because such friendships increase the likelihood that their grandchildren will marry Koreans. For people of the grandmothers' generation, Koreans should marry Koreans even in the United States.

And he said to me, "I will marry a Korean girl as you asked me to. You don't like white big nose girl." One day, he said to me, "Grandma, everyone is okay with you except blacks?" I told him, "Of course not, but more importantly you need to consider a well-educated girl, though she is a Korean."

My grandchild talked about his girlfriend. “She can speak in Korean well. She can write Korean, also.” I was happy that he got along with Koreans....He promised me that he would make Korean friends.

Grandmothers want their grandchildren’s future spouses to be Koreans because, they believe, the families can “get along together” and retain a Korean bloodline.

Anyway, a Korean should marry a Korean so their family members will get along together. Another granddaughter was married to a Chinese. He got along with us like oil and water. He is Chinese. We can’t get along with him. A Korean should marry a Korean. Then the mother-in-law would love her son-in-law. If not, we can’t love the son-in-law because they just say “Hi.” That’s it. Every Korean elder hates if her grandchild would marry someone from another country. Probably some grandparents may be okay with a Chinese son-in-law, but most Korean elders absolutely want...their grandchildren [to] marry Koreans. Definitely Korean elders want that. We should marry someone with the same blood. Though we live here in a foreign land, we are not Americans.

**Interviewee:** She has strong opinions. For example, she told me, “I will marry a Korean guy.” She has a strong identity, though she is still young, just a 9<sup>th</sup> grader. I asked her why she wants to marry a Korean. Then she told me, “I will feel embarrassed if my baby is not like me. I will feel very awkward and uncomfortable. So I will marry a Korean man.” I asked her again, “When will you marry?” She told me, “I will marry at 27.” I responded to her, “But how old will I be when you are 27? How much longer will I live? Now I am 73. I won’t see your wedding ceremony”

**Interviewer:** How did you feel at that moment?

**Interviewee:** It was great. She has an obvious and clear identity. How could I not feel good? It was wonderful. Who likes that their grandchild will marry a foreigner? Nobody likes that children marry a foreigner. There is no one like that. Who wants that their children marry Americans? Every Korean wants that their children marry Koreans. If grandchildren do like an American, there is nothing we can do.

To understand why Korean grandmothers cling to this idea of “same blood” marriages for their descendants, I will uncover the importance placed on bloodlines in Korean culture. To begin with, Korean immigrant grandmothers may disregard the fact that their grandchildren are not living in Korea. Korean immigrant grandmothers are

likely to zoom in on their Korean immigrant grandchildren's "Korean-ness" and "bloodline" regardless of where they reside and where they were born.

Hwan watched Korean cable TV and liked it very much. So I thought that bloodline tells a lot. Though he was born in the U.S., his blood is the same as mine. Blood doesn't deceive. He's grown up but his blood is from us. Since his blood is from Koreans, he likes Korean things a lot though he can't understand everything on the TV. Hwan just listens to Korean a little and he can't speak in Korean well. He can speak only elementary Korean. He liked Korean shows while watching Korean cable programs. But American kids don't like Korean programs. My daughter's other four children are American [Her daughter is married to a Caucasian American]. They don't like Korean programs but like American programs a lot. Again I realized how bloodline is important. In Hwan's heart, Korean blood flows. I think Hwan's homeland is Korea, though he doesn't recognize it. How can we escape from our origins? I thought this way myself. Blood is thicker than water. We can't escape from it.

Though Hwan was born in the United States, his grandmother considered him to be a Korean because his bloodline is Korean. Furthermore, because he has a Korean bloodline, Hwan behaves as a Korean regardless of the country where he lives. The bloodline is not related to the area one lives in but the way in which they act.

Since bloodline is mentioned a couple of times in this section, I will illuminate the meaning of bloodline more closely as it relates to ones ancestors and descendents. In Korea and China, the bloodline of a family is more significant than in the United States. Since the aristocracy and social strata were established and influenced people's lives over thousands of years which is different from the relatively short history of America, the notion of bloodline has been deeply rooted in Korean people's consciousness.

As for Korean immigrant grandmothers bloodline is more critical than where they live. The tendency of Korean immigrant grandmothers to cling to bloodline is found in Confucian tradition. Confucianism is based upon monism, and it elucidates that the

finitude of human life can be overcome by connecting a finite human life to another finite human life. In other words, one human's life comes from his or her ancestors, and his or her life transfers onto his or her descendants. One family exists permanently this way (Suh, 1998; Yoo & Lee, 2005).

The word *bloodline* is Pit-Jul (핏줄) and Hyul-Tong (혈통) in Korean. Pit-Jul (핏줄) is directly translated into *the line of blood* and Hyul-Tong (혈통, 血統) is *the succession of same blood*. Pit-Jul (핏줄) and Hyul-Tong (혈통, 血統) mean the blood of a family succeeds or is inherited over a number of generations, like reeling a long silk thread from a cocoon. Korean immigrant grandmothers see their grandchildren through this concept of bloodline and hope their bloodline continues in their grandchildren's lives. To grandmothers, their grandchildren are Korean bridges to the next generation. Korean immigrant grandmothers might worry that the Korean spirit in their families will end if their grandchildren do not know Korean or their culture.

Another meaning of the blood in bloodline is as the medium to convey and provide oxygen and nutrition throughout the body. Blood means the essence of life. As noted above, the bloodline connotes the idea of inheritance or succession. Korean grandmothers may regard eating traditional foods, speaking Korean, and marrying other Koreans as being the essence of a Korean identity and needed for their bloodline to succeed.

In summary, Korean immigrant grandmothers want their grandchildren to live a Korean way of life. Grandmothers imbue the Korean spirit into their grandchildren by providing Korean foods, teaching Korean language, and highlighting the importance of

marriage with other Koreans. Meanwhile Korean grandmothers, above all, desire their grandchildren to maintain their Korean identity in the United States and to preserve family relationships and family permanency by marrying within their own race and culture.

### ***Wishing our Grandchildren to Succeed Academically***

As noted above, Korean immigrant grandmothers stress the Korean way of life to their grandchildren. A peculiar feature of grandmothers' experiences exists: *educational zeal*. Educational zeal, a dominant feature of Korean culture, pertains to parents' or grandparents' educational expectations for their children (Kim, 2006). The experiences of Korean immigrant grandmothers in the United States cause them to promote this educational zeal in their grandchildren. I will shed light on how Korean immigrant grandmothers show their educational zeal to their grandchildren in the United States.

In earlier parts of this dissertation, we learned that Korean immigrant grandmothers have difficulty communicating with their grandchildren because they do not share a common language and/or interests. However, when it comes to the grandchildren's academic pursuits, the grandmothers speak emphatically and passionately to their grandchildren. There are two aspects of the grandmothers' experience related to this. One is that they emphasize the importance of academic achievements as a habitual manner, and the other is that they give them long-winded explanations regarding the importance of education.

I just told him, "Study hard and get good grades." Then he responded to me, "I will do that" That's it. What else can I talk to him about?

I don't have anything to say. I just tell him, "Study hard and be careful who you pick for friends." What else can I say to him? That's all.

I just told him, "Study hard." Is there any reason I am interested in him or her activities?

"Study hard. Get good grades." "Watch out for cars." "Don't make bad friends." "You should study hard. You shouldn't come home late at night." That's what I talked about. Then they told me, "Yes, grandma"....But they just responded to me, "Yes." " Yes." "Yes." They said to me only "Yes." I didn't talk about any other things to them.

I said to him, "Study hard. Take exercise hard. Serve others. You need to be considerate to others. You need to do something for others." But I don't think he understands what I mean. He always answers me, "I see. I see." He just answers. There is nothing else....That's it.

It is noticed that "study hard" is a habitual command. In the excerpt below, we learn more about why Korean immigrant grandmothers express educational zeal towards their grandchildren's academic achievements. Gaining God's favor, having a bright future, and helping one's family's economic situation are among reasons.

I talked to him, "Hey, boy, just study hard." Then he told me, "I am doing well." But he seemed to be stressed when I talked about studying hard. I observed that point yesterday. I [said] to him, "Study hard. That's the only way you can survive here." Then, he told me, "God doesn't say that. God doesn't ask me just to study hard. Studying hard is not the only way." So I told him, "You are right. But your effort is first. If you make an effort to do something, God will listen to you. But if you only believe in God and do nothing, your future will not be bright." He said, "Grandma, that's what I already know." So I told him again, "If you do your best, God will have mercy on you. If you don't, God will not." Then, he said, "I know that"....My daughter-in-law works at [a] bank, and my son lives in another city for his work. It is difficult for us to meet each other. So the other day I told Hwan, "You must study hard. Why? Can't you see how your dad and mom live these days? If you want to survive here, the first thing is you should learn, don't you think?" Lately, my son's family is having difficult times, so I tell him that he needs to study hard. Also I tell him, "Of course, health is also important. But you need to study hard. This society is going through very difficult times. As you know, there is an economic crisis in the U.S. It's very difficult. God gives talent to each of us, but if you don't develop your talent, it is nothing. So you should

study hard and do well at least in one area. If you have a special interest, it will be very good for you.”

As part of their educational zeal, grandmothers seek to impart additional messages to their grandchildren. Two such messages are “be the best that you can be” and “set some life goals for yourself and work hard to achieve them.”

As I told you, she is learning to play the piano, but she doesn't like to play the piano in front of the public. So I told her one day, “You'd better...be braver in school. She is in the orchestra at school. Since she has lessons from a private tutor, she keeps the first chair but sometimes she loses it. So I told her, “Because you didn't make enough effort, you lost it... It is normal when you keep the first chair in violin because you have had private lessons, different from others. You didn't make an effort. It is like mid-term or final exam. She makes the test if she can keep the first chair, which I told her when she got the second chair....Also, when she practices the piano, I said to her, “You should be good at playing the piano though you will not major in it.” We don't want her to become a piano major. Then she responded to me, “If so, why should I do this because I feel it is difficult.” Then I said to her, “Mastering the piano is yours. It is something to enjoy when you will be an adult. It is not for your grandma's. It's for yours. If you learn to play the piano, you can enjoy it throughout your life. For example, let's suppose that you have a lovely house later and buy a piano and you can't play the piano. If the owner can't play the piano, that piano is just for the decoration. Though it is the same piano, there is difference between who can play the piano and who can't. It is like the difference between heaven and earth. When your friends will come to your house, how good it will be that you can play the piano and sing with your friends! Then, Kyu told me, “You are right. I think you are right” Her wish is that she makes a lot of money and buys a good house. So I told her, “After buying a good house, wouldn't you like...to have a piano? If you have a piano and also play the piano, it is different. The owner of [the] house and piano should play the piano. In that way you will enjoy your life.” That's one...topic we talked about to each other.

We talked about her future. She has a dream. She wants to make a lot of money, so she studies hard. If she goes to a prestigious college, then she can get a good job .... I told her, “If you don't study hard, you won't have a good job and good salary later”....Then she agreed with me. So she is smart and intelligent. To obtain her dream, she tries to study hard. She has a goal in her life....So I believe that we help children to have an objective from an early age. We should talk to her about going to a good university from an early age according to her ability. We need to set her objective perhaps at a higher standard than her ability. Though she may give up later, there should be some objectives. I should help her get to her

objective and help her strive toward it. So Kyu talked to her teachers and got counsel from them about her major. She asked her teachers what subjects she should study hard to be a pharmacist. She knows what subjects are important to attain her objective. Then she told me, "I should be good at this and this." I am a big influence to help her set up her life goal. I told her that she should go to a certain university. Around us, there are many good college graduates, so I told her about them. After attending a graduation ceremony, I said to her, "Kyu, that college was so wonderful." I talked a lot about good colleges.

Educational zeal is not only a social phenomenon, but it is also a psychological trait. Over thousands of years, Koreans have had educational zeal (Kim, 2006). Korean immigrant grandmothers may reflect their Korean-ness by exuding this educational zeal in the United States towards their grandchildren. In other words, this manifestation of Korean immigrant grandmothers' educational zeal in the United States indirectly suggests that they live a Korean way of life in the United States, and they want their grandchildren to also live a Korean way of life.

In summary, Korean immigrant grandmothers show their zeal for their grandchildren's academic achievements. Even though grandmothers do not talk much about their grandchildren's personal business, they habitually and adamantly talk with their grandchildren about the importance of academic achievements. Also, some Korean immigrant grandmothers ardently encourage their grandchildren's academic achievements by talking to them about difficult family economic situations, the importance of setting concrete educational objectives, and prestigious colleges they might like to attend one day. Korean grandmothers' educational zeal is deeply associated with their desire for a Korean lifestyle for their grandchildren.

***Theme Summary***

Korean immigrant grandmothers live as Koreans in the United States and want their grandchildren to live as Koreans, too. Korean grandmothers want their grandchildren to live Korean in terms of food, language, and marriage, which they believe maintains Korean identity and family permanency.

Further, Korean immigrant grandmothers ardently show their educational zeal for their grandchildren's academic success, perhaps the most important aspect of the Korean lifestyle they wish for their grandchildren.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter has discussed how Korean immigrant grandmothers accept their new reality and how they try to imbue their Korean values, including the importance of academic success, to their grandchildren.

## CHAPTER 5 POSTLUDE

In this chapter, I will briefly summarize my themes first, reflecting on existential and cultural aspects of Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences with their grandchildren. Then, I will contemplate the perspectives of Korean American grandchildren and the role of parents in the grandmother-grandchild relationship. Lastly, I will present educational implications for developing grandparenting education programs and suggestions for future studies.

I began my study using hermeneutic phenomenological methodology by framing the question, "What is the experience of Korean immigrant grandmothers' relationships with their adolescent, U.S. born grandchildren?" While plunging into Korean immigrant grandmother's lives via their interview materials, I was carving out some aspects of their experiences. Because I sensed that there were existential problems related to the relationships the grandmothers had with their grandchildren, I formulated existential themes and then created other lifeworld themes to describe the grandmothers' experiences.

Six themes were created from the textual analysis. First, the Korean immigrant grandmothers experience estrangement from their grandchildren which is highly associated with their lack of English skills: They lose their connection with their grandchildren, they depreciate themselves resulting in negative emotions, and they attempt to communicate with their grandchildren. Second, the grandmothers experience a longing for social interactions which they have lost with their grandchildren. This longing

leads them to form friendships with other adults, to replace their grandchildren with anthropomorphic friends, and to appeal to their own children to act as mediators with their grandchildren. Third, the grandmothers experience a spatial isolation from their grandchildren, regardless of whether or not they are in the same place. Fourth, the grandmothers pine for the past when they had relationships with the younger versions of their now-adolescent grandchildren. They struggle to recover the past in the present. Fifth, the grandmothers strive to accept the changed relationships they have with their grandchildren by rationalizing their loss of connections and finding excuses for their grandchildren. And, sixth, the grandmothers persist in their Korean-ness—in the way they live and in the way they work to instill Korean values and identity in their grandchildren.

### **Reflections on Korean Immigrant Grandmothers' Existential Lives**

Basically humans cannot be detached from other beings or their own space, and time; we as humans are constantly in relationships with others, in space and time (Merleau Ponty, 1995). Being-with-others, spatiality, and temporality are ontological characterizations of human beings (Heidegger, 2008).

#### ***Relationality***

The focal point of my research is the relationship between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their adolescent, U.S born grandchildren.

According to Heidegger (2008), humans are with others in the world, and the isolated self is not a given. Every being coexists with others. The world is communal because others share the world. “Our investigation takes its orientation from Being-in-

the-world— that basic state of Dasein by which every mode of its Being gets co-determined” (p. 153). Accordingly, human beings commit themselves to others and lean their shoulders against others. However, the relationship between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren reflects limited commitment to each other. Grandchildren’s non-association with grandmothers swims against the tide of human-beingness. Get-alongness in the concrete and actual life means connecting with each other, but the loss of it leads to the loss of togetherness. Heidegger (2008) states:

Even if the particular factual Dasein does *not* turn to Others, and supposes that it has no need of them or manages to get along without them, it *is* in the way of Being-with. In Being-with, as the existential “for-the-sake-of” of Others, these have already been disclosed in their Dasein....And, significance, as worldhood, is tied up with the existential “for-the-sake-of-which.” Since the worldhood of that world in which every Dasein essentially is already, is thus constituted.... it does so in such a way that together with it we encounter the Dasein-with of Others.” (p. 160)

Living and doing together connotes that humans understand others, and humans are inherently able to understand others who are close to them (Heidegger, 2008). But Korean immigrant grandchildren are not with their grandmothers, according to the grandmothers, and do not understand their grandmothers. The grandmothers perceive themselves like sunflowers that lean toward the sun, but their grandchildren like to escape from the sunflowers.

Further, being-with others includes being inherently considerate of others, but every human relationship does not include consideration. Human relationships can also be depraved, turning into broken or manipulated ones (Kang, 2006). In this sense, some Korean immigrant grandmothers may lose themselves when they have little contact with their grandchildren, their flesh and blood whom they raised with their sweat and toil. The

grandmothers' care for others appears to be a hope of discovering themselves and ultimately of recovering humanness. Heidegger (2008) states:

[T]he kind of knowing-oneself which is essential and closest, demands that one become acquainted with oneself. And when, indeed, one's knowing-oneself gets lost in such ways as aloofness, hiding oneself away, or putting on a disguise, Being-with-one-another must follow special routes of its own in order to come close to Others....But just as opening oneself up [Sichoffenbaren] or closing oneself off is grounded in one's having Being-with-one-another as one's kind of Being at the time, and indeed is nothing else but this, even the explicit disclosure of the Other in solicitude grows only out of one's primarily Being with him in each case. (p. 161)

Caring relationships with others render human growth and the finding of oneself, but problems are created amongst the empty selves of some Korean immigrant grandmothers by the loss of connection with their grandchildren. This feeling of emptiness leads to a troublesome situation, causing Korean grandmothers to seek substitutes. Korean immigrant grandmothers seek other anthropomorphic relationships, not relationships with humans, as a substitute for their grandchildren's attention and affection. Heidegger (2008) addresses this problem:

The special hermeneutic of empathy will have to show how Being-with-one-another and Dasein's knowing of itself are led astray and obstructed by the various possibilities of Being which Dasein itself possesses, so that a genuine 'understanding' gets suppressed, and Dasein takes refuge in substitutes. (p. 163)

Because Korean immigrant grandmothers lack a large pool of social relationships in their lives, they fill their empty selves with inanimate replacements which are abnormal though not serious. The deprivation of relationships brings about morbid behaviors since being with others is in their nature. The disconnection of Korean immigrant grandmothers from the world shows dehumanizing fragments of lives, which is an anthropomorphic replacement for their relationships.

Korean immigrant grandmothers' relationships with their grandchildren reflect this existential problem. Distrustful relationships develop and cause existential problems in the experiences of Korean immigrant grandmothers with their grandchildren. Some grandmothers' obsessions and resignations are revealed in terms of relationships with their grandchildren and correlate with their other existential problems. My emphasis of existential problems rather than specific morbid behaviors is because this existential issue is more pressing and the root of their problems. Korean immigrant grandmothers lose this juncture to get connected to the world and then face existential problems, though human beings are intrinsically interrelated with others (Heidegger, 2008).

### ***Spatiality***

I will use the terms *space* and *place* in general though Heidegger uses the terms *space*, *place*, *site*, and *region* differently. According to Gruenewald (2003), space is divided into the following stratum as related to human experience: perceptive, sociological, ideological, political, and ecological space. I will further uncover the meaning of perceptive space for Korean immigrant grandmothers.

“No one lives in the world in general” (Geertz, 1996, p. 259). Every human being lives subjectively in his or her own world and in this sense geographical place means different things according to the way each person lives. Though humans create their place to live, the place also shapes humans' lives. Place is powerful in a human's life (Gruenewald, 2003).

Space is the place that is at the core of a human's experience and is the venue in which these experiences happen to a human. Space is woven with culture; it carves out

the lifeworld and becomes the center of the lifeworld. Humans experience specific incidents in their lives in their space, and this space is the hotbed for a human's experiences. It is difficult though to independently define the concept of space as it is related to human experience; the concept of space is deeply entangled with time and with other beings (Gruenewald, 2003).

The meaning of space is adjusted and modified in the context of human relationships. In this vein, if existential space for Dasein is separated and disconnected from others, Dasein that is spatial is in existential danger. This endangered condition is found in the lived space of Korean immigrant grandmothers with their grandchildren. As shown in Theme 3 Spatiality, Korean immigrant grandmothers suffer from separation from their grandchildren by space. The lack of driving skills or having no car limits grandmothers' contact with their grandchildren, and it makes them totally dependent on their children and grandchildren in terms of mobility. This unbalanced relationship becomes a dependent relationship; it is neither desirable nor healthy (Kang, 2006). Separation between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren creates dependent relationships with others in order to have contact if there is to be any contact at all.

Separation in one location, however, is more perplexing than separation in two locations. Even when Korean immigrant grandmothers share the same physical space with their grandchildren, the space is void of meaningful relationships. Korean immigrant grandmothers live with their grandchildren in existential space, that is, lived space, not physical or mathematical space.

This dimensionality of space is still veiled in the spatiality of the ready-to-hand. The 'above' is what is 'on the ceiling'; the 'below' is what is 'on the floor'; the 'behind' is what is 'at the door'; all "wheres" are discovered and circumspectively interpreted as we go our ways in everyday dealings; they are not ascertained and catalogued by the observational measurement of space. (Heidegger, 2008, pp. 136-137)

The loss of shared perceived space between Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren leads to a loss of meaning of human existence. Vivid and lively interactions with their grandchildren are rare and difficult within the world of Korean immigrant grandmothers. Korean immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren belong to different spatial worlds.

The recovery of space is needed because it is the path to the recovery of human essence (Cheong, 2001). The room where a Korean immigrant grandmother and her grandchildren spend time together is not seen just as the place of some square feet. Grandmothers want to recover shared perceived space with their grandchildren. Concrete contacts between humans, such as a touch, a smile, or a conversation, can lead to the restoration of humanness.

***Vignette: AnBang.*** Korean immigrant grandmothers are familiar with the Korean way of spatial arrangement. The culture of *AnBang* where all generations of Koreans gathered and enjoyed being together is totally different from the use of residential space in the United States. I will briefly discuss the culture of *AnBang* to show the experience of Korean grandmothers as it relates to their space.

The concept of a living room in Korea between the 1960s and 1980s is different from the concept of a living room in the United States. *AnBang* is a unique space where

all the family members gather and spend their time together. AnBang culture may exist as far as the remote areas in Korea to the big cities.

Unlike the United States, AnBang has functioned as a living room or family room (Kim, 1962). Originally AnBang was an area closed off to men except for family members and was the only place women could do their activities according to the rule of distinction between men and women (Chun, 1996).

However, AnBang changed and became a multipurpose space for families due to industrialization whereby the traditional furniture and appliances changed and were modernized. In this sense, AnBang has been recognized as a place for the entire family to do activities. After the introduction of television in the 60s, AnBang had firmly created an all-purpose family room where family members also had meals and talked. It was also where the elder of a household slept. It was a conspicuous sociological phenomenon (Ko & Yoon, 1993).

AnBang was an auspicious space for family members in Korea. Under the powerful family-centered ideology, Korean family members from young children to elders could get together in an AnBang. In AnBang the hierarchy existed according to age and family order. This AnBang culture had an influential effect on Korean families (Seo, 1969).

Korean grandmothers can meet their children and grandchildren in an AnBang and spend time with family members. The living room in the United States is similar to the AnBang, but grandmothers may sense that there is a difference between the U.S. living room and the Korean AnBang. One grandmother stated that the living room in the

United States is similar to AnBang. “As usual, I told him about it in the living room.

It is like a room in Korea.” She said “like a room in Korea” referring to AnBang.

Korean immigrant grandmothers who were acculturated with AnBang may feel more separation from their grandchildren in an American-style room. The difference between their perceived space in Korea and in the United States might cause them to miss AnBang where every family member has meals, watches TV, and talks together, and where life centers on the mother and grandmother.

### *Temporality*

The meaning of time differs according to the span of a human being’s thoughts. In other words, “temporality reveals itself as the meaning of authentic care” (Heidegger, 2008, p. 374). But it is also true that Dasein lives and experiences conventional time.

Nevertheless, Dasein must also be called ‘temporal’ in the sense of Being ‘in time’. Even without a developed historiology, factual Dasein needs and uses a calendar and a clock. Whatever may happen ‘to Dasein’, it experiences it as happening ‘in time’. In the same way, the processes of Nature, whether living or lifeless, are encountered ‘in time’. They are within-time. (Heidegger, 2008, p. 429)

As shown in Theme 4 Temporality, Korean immigrant grandmothers do not appear to live in conventional time because their past and future are relived in the “now.” Their time cannot be explained in terms of the conventional concept of time, that is, the succession of time. According to Merleau-Ponty (1995), “past and future exist only too unmistakably in the world, they exist in the present” (p. 412). In other words, time cannot be explained only in terms of the physical property of time. The concept of time is not a unilinear flow, but it is ecstatically integrated with the past, present, and future (Lee, 1997).

The past of Korean immigrant grandmothers with their grandchildren is part of their “now” as is their future. In this sense, the past and future of Korean immigrant grandmothers are in the present, and their time cannot be broken down into the time of a clock. Physical and conventional thought of time does not catch the essence of Korean immigrant grandmothers.

The integration of their past, present, and future abides in the lives of Korean immigrant grandmothers regarding their relationships with their grandchildren. When grandmothers bring their past memories of their grandchildren to the present, some Korean immigrant grandmothers mention the future with a tone of resignation or resoluteness. Resignation is not only displayed in a morbid way in their lives but also is regarded as a gesture of the recovery of themselves that will direct their future with determination. Some Korean immigrant grandmothers mention their expected death and preparations for death; they measure their current life in front of the mirror for their future. Korean immigrant grandmothers think about their death and draw their death into the present, where a care of Dasein passes the present being of oneself. Actually every human being heads towards his or her death, no matter whether or not he or she recognizes death. Anticipation of death comes up to the totality of a care of Dasein, which is the maximum amount of care that Dasein can do. Death blocks and cuts every connection of Dasein, but the reverse thinking of death upon the present life restores the authentic way of time and guides its own real being. If a human being is fallen and thrown into an inauthentic state in which Dasein lacks anticipated resoluteness, the anxiety of a negative way of care seizes the human’s mind (Heidegger, 2008 ). In this

vein, some Korean immigrant grandmothers overcome the anxiety of their present struggles by linking it to their anticipated death with resoluteness. Put another way, some Korean immigrant grandmothers confront their death and settle their problems with anticipatory resoluteness, which directs totality and originality of Dasein and opens the possibility of recovering authentic time. Regarding this anticipatory resoluteness,

Heidegger states:

That which was projected in the primordial existential projection of existence has itself as anticipatory resoluteness. What makes this authentic Being-a-whole of Dasein possible with regard to the unity of its articulated structural whole? Anticipatory resoluteness, when taken formally and existentially, without our constantly designating its full structural content, is Being towards one's ownmost, distinctive potentiality for-Being....If either authentic or inauthentic Being-towards-death belongs to Dasein's being, then such Being-towards-death is possible only as something futural....By the term 'futural', we do not here have in view a "now" which has not yet become 'actual' and which sometime will be for the first time. We have in view the coming in which Dasein, in its ownmost potentiality for-Being, comes towards itself. (pp. 372-373)

Paradoxically, some Korean immigrant grandmothers' adverse situations with their grandchildren may deliver the opportunity for reflection on their death and recover the authentic meaning of their time and being in the world.

### **Reflections on Grandmothers' Lives: Stuck in Two Cultures**

Confucianism's values still remain central to Koreans' lives (Sung, 1998), and Korean immigrant grandmothers are soaked in Korean Confucian culture as noticed in the interview texts. Values such as filial piety and hierarchal order are significant elements of Confucian ethics. Filial piety refers to children and younger generations showing respect, honor, obligation, and responsibility to their parents and elders (Kamo, 1998). It is assumed that Asian immigrant grandchildren will treat grandparents

deferentially by communicating with them very respectfully and politely, and their interactions with their grandparents should be courteous and compliant (Uba, 1994).

Because of the Confucian culture, Asian immigrant grandchildren are immersed in filial obligation more than U.S. mainstream grandchildren (Kamo, 1998; Sung & Kim, 2003).

Korean immigrant grandchildren in my study may not think that they should adhere to Confucian ethics. Korean immigrant grandmothers who were born and raised with Confucian ethics probably feel difficulty in adapting to their grandchildren's behaviors against Confucianism. Korean immigrant grandmothers who were nurtured in and taught to behave according to Confucian ethics are now confronted by the U.S. culture. As one grandmother said, "In the past, children and daughters-in-law listened to their parents when parents spoke to them. I did this. I just listened to parents and parents-in-law when they talked to me. If I answered back to them, I was rebuked again. So I couldn't answer them and just listened to them. That was when I was young. But now it is different." She respected and obeyed her parents and elders, but her grandchildren do not respect and obey her to the same degree. This cultural difference between when she was young and now with her grandchildren makes her feel that her situation is challenging.

Filial responsibility is related to Confucian collectivistic culture in which grandchildren belong not only to their parents but also to the extended family, including their grandparents (Kamo, 1998). The success of one family member means success for all family members. This is because family members are interrelated with one other, and family identity directs an individual's identity. Family members are dependent upon each

other according to the hierarchal order with care and respect towards elders (Kim 2002). According to Yoo (1980), Korean grandparents have positive and satisfying experiences with their grandchildren in the collectivistic structure of the extended family, but the disintegration of the family and isolation of grandparents is of significant concern. Western culture is more individualistic than Eastern Confucian familial culture and produces a different familial culture which puts priority on independence and autonomy. My interview materials reveal that Korean immigrant grandmothers who have this collectivistic ideology have a big gap in their relationships with their grandchildren who may believe in individualism.

Additionally, Confucian family culture places emphasis on the maintenance of family. Family is an institution that is to be inherited and then carried on for generations. To sustain the family, it is crucial that grandchildren maintain their family lineage. In Confucianism, it is assumed that the permanency of a family is feasible by continuation of one's descendants. It is believed that the concept of family permanency is different from the practical viewpoint many Americans hold because pragmatism governs American society. In the frame of pragmatism, concrete experiences are valued more and knowledge can be modified and changed by the environment and situations (Ryoo, 2003). The idea of a pragmatic family relies more on conjugal relations and disregards lineage (Yoo & Lee, 2005). This idea is different from the beliefs of Korean immigrant grandmothers who see their grandchildren as critical to the continuation of family's lineage.

Asian immigrant grandparents function as family historians. They transmit the history, traditions, and values of their mother country to their grandchildren (Tinsley & Parke, 1984; Treas & Mazumdar, 2004). Particularly in immigrant families, the role of a grandparent as historian is essential because grandparents know their traditional culture whereas their grandchildren may only know the American culture. Asian immigrant grandparents directly transmit traditional culture to their grandchildren without the mediation of their adult children. Asian immigrant grandparents play a role in their grandchildren's socialization in terms of transmitting traditions while American socialization of their grandchildren occurs outside the home (Kamo, 1998). My participants talked about the effort they make to transmit Korean culture to their grandchildren by teaching Korean, cooking Korean food, and encouraging them to date other Koreans. Unfortunately for the grandmothers, this transmission of culture is limited primarily to when the grandchildren were young.

Though Korean immigrant grandmothers live in the United States, they may still live like they would in Korea. When Korean grandmothers come to the United States, they do not bring only their bodies but also their souls and culture. When they move from one country to another, their culture comes with them, and they try to transmit their culture to their grandchildren. However, Korean immigrant grandmothers appear to be stuck between American culture and Korean culture in terms of their relationships with their grandchildren.

### **Reflection on Korean American Grandchildren's Lives**

In my study, I concentrated on Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences with their grandchildren. However, from the time I began to think about this research, I have wondered about the grandchildren's experiences with their grandmothers. Now as I reflect on my study, I would like to give some thoughts to the grandchildren's perspectives. Although grandchildren come to know Korean culture via their grandparents, the grandchildren are born and raised in the American culture. To the Korean-American grandchildren, their country is the United States. It is where they live and learn; their language is English.

I wonder how grandchildren of Korean immigrant grandmothers feel about filial piety and hierarchal order under Confucianism and whether it influences them in any way. Are they like fish that live in fresh water and are placed into saltwater? What do Confucian ethics mean to them? Might Confucianism exist only in Asia but not in the United States?

A second margin of grandchildren's lives is language. To their grandmothers, the weaving together of Korean and English is a hurdle to be overcome in the United States. But what does this two- language situation mean to grandchildren as they relate to their grandmothers?

Generally, children start to speak their mother tongue explosively from the age of two (Hoff, 2005). But if children who are born in the United States have parents and grandparents who speak Korean, what language do these children learn, English or Korean? Children tend to lose their mother tongue faster if there is no continual use of

their first language in the children's primary environment (Gindis, 1999). Thus, it may be natural for grandchildren to speak English rather than Korean in the United States because they spend most of their time in U.S. schools. The slow loss of Korean language skills may be inescapable. But if it is, I wonder if Korean grandmothers' wish for their grandchildren to achieve Korean proficiency is ambitious or not. Is it an unrealistic wish?

In addition, the use of language is entangled with the span and structure of thoughts. Interestingly, in the psychological perspective, language intermediates a human's cognitive abilities, and it is deeply connected to the social and cultural environment. Language is a principal psychological function that acts as an intermediary in a human's cognition, perception, and memory, and it directly affects communication, self-regulation, and thinking processes (Vygotsky, 1986). In this sense, grandchildren's primary language intertwined with American culture probably affects their lifestyle and their way of thinking. Does this possibly alienate them from their grandmothers?

Grandchildren's proximity to their grandmothers also plays a key role in the type of relationship that exists between them and their grandmothers. The perception of their grandparents is related to the number of visits and interactions; frequent visits bring more positive perceptions for the grandchildren (Han & Kim, 2003; Suh, 1989). As shown in the interview materials, grandmothers have limited mobility to see their grandchildren, and grandchildren are busy with schoolwork and other social relationships, so some grandchildren do not have many opportunities to see their grandmothers. Also, Korean college students regard emotional support and financial support from their grandparents as an important factor in their relationships with their grandparents (E. G. Kim, 2003;

Jang, 2002; Lee, 2001; Y.S. Kim, 2002), but Korean immigrant grandmothers can offer little emotional or financial support them due to their lack of language skills and finances. This lack of support may encourage Korean immigrant grandchildren's indifference toward their grandmothers.

There is not always a positive effect from intergenerational influence.

Adolescents want and need to learn autonomy and independence developmentally, but grandmothers seek interdependence: Different developmental tasks according to ages may bring difficult situations to both of them (Kwak, 2003). Some intergenerational interference may cause antisocial behaviors in grandchildren and cause some problems with social relationships (Creasey & Javis, 1989; Stein, Newcomb, & Bentler, 1993). Though my study does not reveal these negative outcomes, it is expected that research might eventually show adverse intergenerational interference between immigrant grandmothers and their grandchildren.

### **Reflections on the Role of Parents in the Grandmother-Grandchild Relationship**

Slightly seen in my theme, "Sociality," parents take on the roles as mediators with more authority than grandmothers. However, because this study focused on the grandmothers' experiences with their grandchildren, it is not surprising that the interview data contained only occasional reference to the grandchildren's parents (the children of the grandmothers). For example, the grandmothers sometimes would say that they relied on the parents to bring the grandchildren for visits. One grandmother states, "Now my daughter has been through difficult moments. When my daughter didn't have difficulty, we could meet each other frequently. She frequently visited me with Sue. But she has a

difficulty a lot, so I can't ask her to meet me and bring Sue. So in these days, we can't meet each other frequently."

Why would the grandmothers not appeal more to their children to mediate the grandmother-grandchild relationships? Although I cannot answer that question from my data, my reflection on the situation is that the grandmothers, who strongly hold to Confucian beliefs about the respect due to elders, find it difficult to think that they would need to ask their children to intervene. Perhaps the grandmothers are disappointed that their children have not instilled in their children the traditional Confucian ethics, and/or perhaps the grandmothers did not want to disclose their disappointment to me. I did find in the interview text the following two exceptions from grandmothers who blamed the grandchildren's mothers for, in one case, not reinforcing the speaking of Korean in the home, and in another case, not handling her children's impertinence in an appropriate and effective manner.

My daughter-in-law is the same. Everybody speaks in English if I am not there. So I told her, after going out together, "You taught your children wrong. If you only teach to speak in English well, it is not right. Koreans are Koreans. You should boost Korean spirit at your home. As you know, they can listen to Korean. But their problem is their speaking. So just speak in Korean at your home. At any rate, they should speak English at their school, shouldn't they? By the way, you are the mother, but you don't speak in Korean at your home. You are speaking only in English at your home. So your children don't speak Korean at your home."

Their mother didn't know how impolite they were because she went to work in the early morning and returned at late night. So she just felt pity on her children. She didn't know how impertinent they were. If I told her that her children were impertinent, she didn't accept that point. Moreover if I told her that kind of story, she immediately brought her children and shouted to them, "Son of bitch and bla bla" in front of me. I hated that. If she wanted to rebuke her children, she should have rebuked when I was not there. My daughter intentionally behaved rambunctiously to shut my mouth. I thought this way. Though I had troubles with my grandchildren, I didn't talk to my daughter. It made me uncomfortable and

difficult. Since I didn't talk to my daughter, unfinished bad feelings stored up in my heart unconsciously.

### **Possibilities for Educational Program Development**

According to Hultgren (1989), the ultimate goal of research is to change ways of thinking and then to take action. Seen from the macro viewpoint, the efforts in my research to understand the hidden meanings of Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences can allow grandparents, grandchildren, families, and society to make more considered and caring decisions about the lives we create with one another. This research can offer us new possibilities to take actions. In this regard, I will discuss the possibilities for developing educational programs for Korean immigrant grandparents.

As previously mentioned, parenting education programs for mainstream American family life are not appropriate for immigrants. Also, most immigrant parent education programs, like P.E.T and STEP, are translated versions, so they are not culturally compatible to immigrants (Xiong et al., 2006). Thus, the development of culturally sensitive immigrant educational programs for parents and grandparents are needed.

A grandparenting education program needs to be tailored to the range and diversity of grandparents' characteristics (Szinovacz, & Roberts, 1998). In my study, Korean immigrant grandmothers are foreign-born and came to the United States in their 40s and 50s which is different from other Korean grandparents who are highly educated and came to the United States at younger ages (Zhou & Kim, 2006). For educationally and economically disadvantaged immigrant grandparents, a specific grandparenting

program needs to be developed. I believe my study will provide the groundwork to develop this type of program.

Besides the immigrant issue, several aspects of grandparenting need to be considered in the development of programs for Korean immigrant grandparents. The lifestyle of grandparents has changed because of longer life expectancy and changing social contexts. Grandparenthood can exist for about 25 years on average, and the number of grandparents participating in the caretaking of their grandchildren is increasing. These lifestyle changes mean that grandparents have increased their physical burdens and that the gap between generations had widened (Smith & Drew, 2002).

Based on my research, I recommend that the content of educational programs intended to serve Korean immigrant grandparents include five components: acculturative stress and cultural differences, bidirectionality and interdependent relationships, traits of adolescents, educational expectations, and mental and physical health issues. After briefly describing these five content areas, I will comment on my expectations regarding grandparents' interest in participating in an educational program, and the possibility of creating generalized Asian immigrant grandparenting education programs.

First, acculturative stress and cultural differences should be included in an immigrant grandparenting education program. As noted earlier, Asian Confucian culture is a contrast to the American individualistic culture, and these cultural contradictions complicate life for grandparents when they are with adolescent grandchildren. It is also necessary that a Korean immigrant grandparenting program incorporate information about specific cultural differences such as values, religion, language, and gender roles.

Grandparents would benefit from not only an awareness of these cultural differences but also an understanding of healthy ways to adapt to such differences.

Second, an immigrant grandparenting education program needs to include content on directionality and mutuality of relationships. Relationships are accumulations of interactions between two individuals in which each person affects and is affected by the other over time and in multiple settings (Carlivati, 2006). Key concepts related to relationships are bi-directionality and interdependency (Berscheid & Regan, 2005). Because Korean immigrant grandparents' relationships with their adolescent grandchildren are likely to be uni-directional, and, therefore, usually unsatisfactory, grandparents might be able to develop strategies for creating relationships with their grandchildren that have more features of bi-directionality and interdependence through a Korean immigrant grandparenting education program.

Third, I found that Korean immigrant grandmothers have a difficult time with their grandchildren's transition from childhood to adolescence. Even if specific family situations, such as two cultures and two languages, accelerate the loss of connection between Korean immigrant grandparents and their grandchildren, Korean immigrant grandparents need to understand basic information about child and adolescent development. In adolescence, children enter into a formal thinking stage when they begin to think abstractly, and they tend to be more independent from their families and seek more peer relationships (Berscheid & Regan, 2005). According to Laursen and Bukowsky (1997), children seek more autonomy from parents and grandparents over time and desire to regulate their own behaviors. The different ages of children involve

different tasks, different behaviors, and different emotional expectations. As my participants stated, there is a wide difference between their past relationships with their grandchildren and their present ones. I expect that an understanding of child and adolescent development will, to some extent, help immigrant grandparents understand their difficult relationships with their grandchildren. Thus, I believe the inclusion of content about child and adolescent development, particularly about the transitional period between childhood and puberty, is needed in an immigrant grandparenting education program.

Fourth, the topic of educational expectations would be important to include in educational programs for Korean immigrant grandparents. As we saw in this study, the grandmothers displayed educational zeal by asking their grandchildren to study hard and telling them about the importance of academic success. Korean grandparents see their grandchildren's academic successes as part of their family identity or as the means for family salvation. However, educational zeal has the face of a Janus, and the positive and negative aspects of educational zeal need to be dealt with in a grandparenting education program.

Fifth, since the relationship between grandparent and grandchild is strongly related to the health of grandparents, health issues should be part of the content of a grandparenting education program. Because my study showed that my participants faced emotional struggles regarding their relationships with their grandchildren, the management of stress and the maintenance of mental health need to be components of an immigrant grandparenting educational program. Additionally, because grandparents are

aging and are likely to encounter physical ailments and diseases, content about physical health needs to be embraced in the program. The age and health of grandparents are crucial factors which determine whether or not grandparenting is perceived as negative or positive (Choi, 2003; Dowdell, 1995; Dowdell & Sherwen, 1998; Kwon, 2000; Kelly, 1993; Kelly et al., 1997; Ok, 2005).

The immigrant health issue has been raised recently because of findings that show that immigrants' health is poorer than non-immigrants'. The lack of language skills is one stumbling block to gaining better healthcare (Mui, S. Kang, D. Kang, & Domanski, 2007). I think it would be desirable if grandparenting education programs could be a mixture of grandparenting knowledge, grandparenting skills, and health education.

I expect that the participation of grandparents in an educational grandparenting program would be high because most grandparents are retired and seek a social activity (Bjorklund & Bee, 2008). Also, if other Korean immigrant grandparents are at all like those in this study, they will have a strong desire to improve their grandparenting situation. And lastly, because immigrant grandparents prefer to gather with friends of the same ethnicity, the venue of a grandparenting program should also meet their social needs.

My research results show that some immigrant grandmothers are isolated, not only from their grandchildren but also from their families and society. Therefore, meeting with others in and of itself may have meaning for their mental health. The social contact provided by grandparenting education programs will be helpful for grandparents who cannot have meaningful interactions even in their own families. In my study, the hub

of grandmothers' lives oftentimes, in addition to their families, is the Korean church. The Korean ethnic church plays a critical role as the center for ethnic community and provides various social services and political interest groups for Korean immigrants (Chong, 1998; Kim & Kim, 2001). Holding the grandparenting education classes in Korean churches might make good sense.

In some ways, this study of Korean immigrant grandmothers' experiences lays the groundwork for East Asian immigrant grandparenting education programs because East Asian cultures share the same cultural characteristics, such as Confucian filial piety, interdependency between family members, and parental control (Sung, 1995; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Although, ideally, the content of educational programs should differ according to each person's needs and characteristics, the process of program development must be cost-effective (Xiong et al., 2006). Thus, generalized East Asian immigrant grandparenting programs are reasonable.

### **Suggestions for the Future Study**

In this final section of my paper, I would like to present some suggestions for future research.

First, while analyzing my interview texts, I wondered if the grandparents' socioeconomic status might play a part in grandparent-grandchild relationships. The grandmothers in my study had relatively low socioeconomic status. Research on Korean immigrant grandmothers of higher SES would be valuable.

Second, I chose Georgia as my research location because it has a high density of Korean immigrants. But there are other areas with large Korean communities in the

United States. It would be worthwhile to study the experience of Korean immigrant grandmothers in other cities with high concentrations of Korean immigrants, cities such as Los Angeles and New York. Conversely, immigrant grandmothers who live in smaller towns are likely to have different experiences especially if those localities have limited public transportation, no Korean ethnic church, no translating services, and limited employment opportunities. Thus, studying Korean immigrant grandparents and their relationships with their grandchildren in different sized locations would expand this area of research.

Third, grandfathers were excluded from my study, but I think their experience with their grandchildren should be examined because they might have their own unique grandparenting experiences that are different from grandmothers.

Fourth, I recruited Korean immigrant grandmothers, but other Asian immigrant grandparents need to be examined. Such studies individually would add to our understanding, as would comparisons of studies across ethnicities.

Fifth, this study raises questions about the experiences of the grandchildren and of the parents of the grandchildren. How do the adolescent grandchildren experience their relationship with their grandparents? Do they long for a closer relationship with them? Do they remember how they used to love to be with their grandparents? And how do the parents experience these dynamics between their parents and their children? Do they feel caught between the generations? Are they, too, struggling with the conflicts between cultures? Questions like this are worth investigating as we try to understand how immigrant families find their footing in the U.S. culture.

Sixth, I recruited my participants mainly in Korean churches because they play a significant role in Korean society in the United States (Chong, 1998). But it is assumed that some other forms of Korean elder communities exist in a bigger Korean ethnic society which may affect the experience of Korean immigrant grandparents with their grandchildren.

Seventh, using methodologies other than phenomenology would allow researchers to answer different kind of questions about immigrant grandparents and their U.S. born grandchildren. For example, an ethnographic study of immigrant grandparents and their other family members would provide a broad and comprehensive picture of how the grandparents actually live their daily lives.

### **Chapter Summary**

Korean immigrant grandmothers have several existential problems which are caused mainly by being isolated and not connecting with others, particularly with their grandchildren. They discolor the meaning of their lives and cannot discover themselves because the meaning of human life is found when humans are with others.

Grandmothers' disconnected relationships are also made difficult existentially in space and time. Their perceived space implies disconnection with their grandchildren. Also, the time of grandmothers is incongruent with their clock time, but the needles of their clocks stop at their past. A conventional meaning of time does not give them any meaningful moments, but their past and their directionality towards their death have meanings in their present. The exploration of their existential problems enables us to see their fundamental problems.

Along with existential problems, the grandmothers struggle between cultures. Though they are soaked in the Confucian culture and family ethics, such as filial piety, which they expect from their grandchildren, their dreams are unfulfilled.

However, from the perspectives of grandchildren, the values and ethics of their Korean-born grandmothers are not natural to them and speaking English is more comfortable to them than Korean. As Korean Americans born in the United States, the grandchildren may not have an easy relationship with their grandmothers. Also the role of parents in the grandmother-grandchild does not stand out in my research, but it is sensed that it is significant in three generational relationships and thus needs further research.

Lastly in this chapter, the implications for educational program development for immigrant grandparents and the suggestions for the future study were provided based upon my study.

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## **Appendix A: IRB Protocol Requirements**

### ***Required Forms***

This research meets IRB requirements which include social and behavioral sciences application form, Appendices I and J.

Social and Behavioral Sciences Application Form Version 4.5 (IRB, 2007) fulfills the ethical considerations which the research implemented. Since the potential participants are non-English speakers and some may be over sixty- five years old, this research includes Appendix I: “Targeting/Inclusion of Vulnerable Populations.” Also, I am a student at the University of Minnesota, so Appendix J: “Student as Principal Investigator Worksheets” has been included.

### ***The Consent Process***

The purpose and procedures of this study were reviewed and explained to the participants, while emphasizing the risks and benefits and the voluntary nature of participating, stating that participants can quit the interview process at any time. The participants signed the consent form.

However, since unpredictable and unplanned situations might occur during the qualitative interview, it may be impossible for the researcher to completely inform potential participants of the entire procedure. Phenomenological research needs processual consent (Rosenblatt, 2001). In my research, I gave my potential participants the opportunity to give processual consent.

### ***Identifying Benefits and Risks***

Potential participants can receive certain benefits while participating in my research, since phenomenological research seeks for understanding individuals who subjectively experience their world (van Manen, 2003). Also, interpretive science makes humans aware of the hidden meaning of their everyday life experiences and enables them to understand their cultural behavior and experiences (Hultgren, 1989). While they are describing their experience, participants may have an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and be made aware of their cultural behaviors; this process is related to the nature of interpretive research. This methodical research makes participants feel that the researcher accepts them as human and not as a “mechanical being” or “fragmented being” operated only by their cognitive processes. Our potential participants can be the co-researchers who are human beings with feelings. They can research their own lives and become aware of the problems in their lives. Our participants can have the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and their world.

Also, since this interrelationship between the researcher, participants, and what is being investigated is not separated, researchers may try to understand the participants’ feelings. The researcher tried to structure deeper rapport with participants which made them feel satisfied, accepted, and relieved.

Korean immigrant grandparents often may not be understood since they may not always express their feelings fully because of the lack of English language skills; this may make it difficult for them to be understood by their grandchildren. Talking with a culturally sensitive interviewer provides an opportunity for grandparents to express themselves in a way that may be emotionally beneficial.

During the research, there might be some risks to participants. The research does not intend to put the participants in danger, but the researcher must know the possibility that risks do exist. Ignoring and overlooking the risks are more than risky (Sieber, 2001). Through the effort to examine the possibility of research risks, the researcher can offer potential participants a safe environment. The responsibility of the researcher is to protect participants from harm (Keller & Lee, 2003) and to discuss any potential harm in the informed consent before the research begins.

During the interview, potential participants may experience negative feelings. Our methodology is open-ended; there is a high possibility for unexpected situations to occur, which stimulates the participants to remember unpleasant moments and feel shame, guilt, anxiety, embarrassment, and physical pain (Eyde, 2001).

On the other hand, in a close-knit ethnic group, confidentiality and privacy would be more focused on than in an open society. Since an individual can be vulnerable in a narrow social setting, the researcher should be particularly careful about keeping confidentiality and not infringing on privacy. Unlike an anonymous group, the same ethnic community, especially immigrant Korean society, appears to be a “clan society” and members of the group can be controlled under the community norms. If their privacy and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, the participants feel they are in danger. Even after the interview, the researcher should not identify any personal information and give any clues in the published paper in order that participants not be recognized by readers of the same ethnicity. The researcher must be careful about their confidentiality. Even

though one's identity is disguised, it can be apparent to others (Hadjistavropoulos & Smythe, 2001).

### *Other Culturally Sensitive Issues*

In a research setting, culturally sensitive research instruments are developing (Frohman, 2005; Vissandjes & Dupere, 2000). In Asian culture, people do not like to talk about family matters to those outside the family. They may be less inclined to talk about their problems if there are negative family problems. This is regarded as shameful or seen as a stigma in Asian culture (Shelton & Rianon, 2004).

However, this tendency may prevent obtaining a good interview because Korean immigrant grandparents, when considering family reputation, may not talk truthfully about their experiences or may pretend there is no problem with their lives. Thus, researchers need to be sensitive and understand the culture of their participants.

Since Koreans put value on collectivism and elders' authority, the researcher whose participants are elders needs to be very careful. The interrelationship between the researcher and participants is important and the researcher should try to structure deeper rapport with participants. However, it may not be easy when the interviewers are younger than the participants. Researchers should respect elders' authority while still paying attention to their research purpose. The researcher's scholarly attitude may be regarded as impolite to the elders, if the interviewer does not show a submissive and obedient attitude. If possible, it is desirable that interviewers be Korean or someone who understands Korean culture well, such as Korean etiquette and gestures during the conversation. For

example, Koreans do not look other people in the eyes during a conversation if the partner is an elder. The interviewers should slightly lower their heads in front of elders.

**Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Notice (English Version)**

Dear Grandparents,

I am a doctoral candidate in curriculum and instruction at the University of Minnesota in the United States. I am conducting research on the experiences of Korean immigrant grandparents with their grandchildren.

I remember sitting on my grandfather's lap, listening to the story of his life in Korea. I remember his eyes were often bedewed with tears when he held me on his lap. This memory is so strong that it has remained with me for many years. If he were with me right now, I'd like to ask him whether he was as happy as I was.

This thought of my grandfather made me interested in Korean immigrant grandparents. How does your experience differ from my grandparents in Korea? I am wondering what it is like for Korean immigrant grandparents to be with their grandchildren here in the United States. However, I found there is relatively little research on Korean immigrant grandparents, while the research on grandchildren is much greater. Also, I recognize the voice of Korean immigrant grandparents is sometimes unheard and marginalized in our society.

I anticipate that understanding the nature of the meaning of being grandparents will help not only Korean immigrant grandparents enhance quality time with their grandchildren, but it will provide the groundwork for development of a Korean immigrant family program. For this reason, I am inviting you to take part in this project.

I am seeking grandparents who have lived in the United States for more than five years, or who live with their grandchildren or live within 20 miles of them. Of course you,

the grandparents, have to be willing to share your experiences. If you are interested in this project, I will interview you for about one hour. If you feel uncomfortable with the interview, you can quit at any time. I will give a \$10 Target gift card to anyone who participates. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed. Please be assured that all information will be confidential. If you request, I will gladly share my project findings with you.

If you would like to participate in this project, please contact me by phone at 1-\*\*\*-\*\*\*-\*\*\* (US) or email me at [soocharis@gmail.com](mailto:soocharis@gmail.com). You may also contact me if you are interested in the project but have some questions you would like to have answered.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Soohong Kim

### Participant Recruitment Notice (Korean Version)

재미 조부모님들께

저는 미국 미네소타 대학의 박사과정에 있는 김수홍입니다. 저는 미국에 사시는 조부모님들의 손자녀와의 경험에 관심이 많습니다.

저는 한국에서 할아버지 무릎에 앉아서 할아버지의 이야기를 듣던 기억이 지금도 생각납니다. 가끔씩 할아버지가 저를 안고 계실 때, 눈가에 이슬이 맺히시는 것을 종종 보았습니다. 이 기억은 강해서 오랜 시간이 지난 지금도 기억이 납니다. 할아버지가 살아계신다면, 할아버지께 제가 행복했던 것 만큼 할아버지도 행복하셨었는지 여쭙고만 싶습니다.

할아버지와의 기억 때문에 재미 할아버지, 할머니에 경험에 대하여 배우고 싶다는 생각이 들었습니다. 저는 재미 할아버지, 할머니께서 손자녀와 함께하는 경험에 대하여 듣고 싶습니다. 그러나, 재미교포 조부모님들 경험에 대한 연구는 없어서 이에 많은 한계가 있습니다. 손자녀 연구에 비해 턱도 없이 모자라는 조부모님들의 연구 실태는, 재미 조부모님들의 목소리가 현 우리 교포, 미국 사회에서 잊혀지는 것을 반영하는 것 같아 가슴이 아픕니다.

저의 연구 결과가 재미 조부모님들의 삶의 질의 향상에 도움이 되길 기대하고, 또한 사회와 가족에서 더욱 조부모님들을 중시하는 풍토에 기여되길 기대합니다. 재미 조부모님들에 대한 이해는 가족과 사회에서 정말 중요시되어야하는 문제라고 믿습니다. 미국에서 5년 이상 거주하시고, 손자녀와 가까운 거리에 사시는 조부모님들 또는

손자녀와 함께 거주하시는 조부모님의 이야기를 듣고 싶습니다. 관심이 있으신 분은 연락주시길 바랍니다. 1 시간 정도 손자녀와 어떻게 지내시는 제게 이야기해주십시오. 인터뷰에 응해주실 경우는 약소하지만 10 달러 (예;타겟) 상품권 드리려고 합니다. 인터뷰 자료는 안전하게 보관되고, 모든 이름과 상황은 익명 처리될 것입니다. 여러분의 요청이 있을 경우 기꺼이 제 연구 결과를 함께 나눌 것입니다.

만약에 참여 의사가 있으시면, 제게 \*\*\*-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\* 또는 [soocharis@gmail.com](mailto:soocharis@gmail.com) 연락주시시오. 궁금하신 사항이 있으시면, 언제든지 답변하여 드리고자 하니, 위 연락처로 연락을 주십시오.

감사합니다.

김수홍 드림

## **Appendix C: CONSENT FORM (English Version)**

You are invited to participate in a research study on Korean grandparents' relationships with their grandchildren. You were selected as a possible participant because you have the experience of having grandchildren. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in this study. This study is being conducted by Soohong Kim, a doctoral student in education at the University of Minnesota. This study is primarily for my Ph.D degree and will also be used only for publications.

### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to examine the nature of Korean immigrant grandparents' relationships with their grandchildren and to understand the meaning of being grandparents as an immigrant.

### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will talk about your experience with grandchildren in Korean. Each interview is expected to last about 40 to 60 minutes. These interviews will be audio-recorded, translated from Korean to English, and transcribed. There might be up to two additional contacts to follow up with the initial interview if more information is needed.

### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

The minimal risks to participation are:

You might remember some unpleasant memories that might make you feel bad.

The benefits to participation are:

There are no direct benefits to participating in this research, but you might like to talk about these experiences and have an opportunity to understand your relationship with your grandchildren more deeply.

### **Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In the report I write for my dissertation and for publications, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. I and my advisor will have access to the interview materials. Data will be saved in digital form protected by password for the research period and then erased.

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this research is Soohong Kim. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at \*\*\*-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\* or [soocharis@gmail.com](mailto:soocharis@gmail.com). Or you may contact my advisor, Dr. Plihal, 159 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455, 612-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\* or [pliha001@umn.edu](mailto:pliha001@umn.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher or advisor, contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware Street Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; telephone (612) 625-1650. If you request, I will provide a translator for you in order to contact someone other than the researcher or advisor.

**Signing the Form**

Signing this document means that the research study, including the above information, has been described to you orally and that you voluntarily agree to participate.

**Signature of Participant** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of person explaining study** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

CONSENT FORM (Korean Version)

**동의서**

재미 조부모의 손자녀와의 경험에 관한 연구

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귀하는 질문이 있으실 때 언제든지 전화번호 1-\*\*\*-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\* 또는 이메일 [soocharis@gmail.com](mailto:soocharis@gmail.com)로 연락 주십시오. 또는 제 지도 교수 Plihal 박사에게 연락하실 수도 있으며, 연락처는 다음과 같습니다. 159 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455, 612-624-\*\*\*\* 또는 [pliha001@umn.edu](mailto:pliha001@umn.edu)입니다. 만약 본 연구자와 지도 교수 외의 사람과 연락하고 싶으시다면 다음으로 연락하십시오. 주소는 Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware Street Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; 전화번호는 (612) 625-1650입니다. 만약 위 연락처에 질의하실 때 통역자가 필요하시면, 통역자를 연결해 드리겠습니다.

### 서명

연구자가 상기 내용을 포함한 연구의 내용을 설명한 것을 들으셨고, 본 연구에 참여하시고자 하시면 서명을 부탁드립니다.

연구 참여자 \_\_\_\_\_

연구자 \_\_\_\_\_

날짜 \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX D: IRB Continuing Review Approval Letter**

The IRB: Human Subjects Committee renewed its approval of the referenced study listed below:

Study Number: 0806P38\*\*\*

Principal Investigator: Soo H Kim

Expiration Date: 06/11/2010

Approval Date: 06/12/2009

Title(s):

Korean Immigrant Grandparents' Experience with Their Grandchildren

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This e-mail confirmation is your official University of Minnesota RSPP notification of continuing review approval. You will not receive a hard copy or letter. This secure electronic notification between password protected authentications has been deemed by the University of Minnesota to constitute a legal signature.

You may go to the View Completed section of <http://eresearch.umn.edu/> to view or print your continuing review submission.

For grant certification purposes you will need this date and the Assurance of Compliance number, which is FWA00000312 (Fairview Health Systems Research FWA00000325, Gillette Childrens Specialty Healthcare FWA00004003). Approval will expire one year from that date. You will receive a report form two months before the expiration date.

In the event that you submitted a consent document with the continuing review form, it has also been reviewed and approved. If you provided a summary of subjects' experience to include non-UPIRTSO events, these are hereby acknowledged.

As Principal Investigator of this project, you are required by federal regulations to inform the IRB of any proposed changes in your research that will affect human subjects. Changes should not be initiated until written IRB approval is received. Unanticipated problems and adverse events should be reported to the IRB as they occur. Research projects are subject to continuing review.

If you have any questions, please call the IRB office at (612) 626-5654.

The IRB wishes you continuing success with your research.