KOREAN AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS’ COPING PATTERNS IN RELATION TO
ACADEMIC STRESS, PARENTING STYLE, AND ACCULTURATION

A Doctoral Dissertation

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Submitted to
The Department of Counseling and Applied Educational Psychology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ..................................................................................................................5

CHAPTER 1: Literature Review

Abstract ..................................................................................................................................7
Introduction ...............................................................................................................................8
Stress .......................................................................................................................................10
Academic Stress ......................................................................................................................12
Parenting Style ........................................................................................................................14
Acculturation Stress ................................................................................................................17
Coping Styles ...........................................................................................................................19
Implications ...............................................................................................................................22
Parents .....................................................................................................................................22
University Personnel ..............................................................................................................24
Counselors ..................................................................................................................................25
Researchers ...............................................................................................................................26
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................26
References .................................................................................................................................29
Table 1 ....................................................................................................................................40
Figure 1 ....................................................................................................................................41

CHAPTER 2: Korean American College Students’ Coping Patterns in Relation To
Academic Stress, Parenting Style, and Acculturation

Abstract ..................................................................................................................................42
Introduction ...............................................................................................................................43
Coping Style and KACS ............................................................................................................45
Table 7 .........................................................................................................................66
Table 8 .........................................................................................................................67
Appendix A: Consent Form of Study .................................................................84
Appendix B: Participant Demographic Questionnaire .........................85
Appendix C: Notification of IRB Action (IRB) ........................................86
Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been accomplished without the guidance and support of many mentors & professors. They not only shared my happy moments with me, but also supported me in my low times. I am extremely grateful to my chair, Dr. Chieh Li. This dissertation would not have been completed without her inspiration, guidance, and support. I have been favored with her extensive knowledge and experience in multicultural competence and social justice issues related to Asian American students learning process.

I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my academic advisor and previous chair, Dr. Barry Chung, whose tremendous support and heartfelt encouragement helped me through out this long journey. I am well aware of the many hours he worked behind the scenes. He has not only guided me through this dissertation, but has also been an admirable mentor and model on a number of levels. I would also like to acknowledge my gratitude and appreciation to my committee, Dr. Emanuel Mason, who has provided his mentorship and comprehensive guidance for my journey in this program. With his assistance, I gained many valuable life experiences and insights, both inside and outside the classroom.

I would like to honor my mother who, with much prayer and encouragement, has made me what I am now. I am also thankful to my sister, Eunsook (and her son, Hosoo) who supported our mother while I studied in the United States. My thanks go to all my family in Maine who has believed in me with unlimited patience. My daughters, Samara and Mei-Ana, have graciously allowed me the time to do this work. And my wife, Erika, is the person who has enabled me to complete this dissertation. Serving as my encourager and counselor, she has undoubtedly earned her Ph.T. (Put Hubby Through) degree! Without her, I would not be here.
Ultimately, I thank God for calling subtly but passionately and delivering me to go to the world with psychological, emotional, and spiritual maturity.
CHAPTER 1
Literature Review

Abstract
The purpose of this article is to gain an understanding from the available literature of the relationship between Korean American college students’ (KACS) coping style (both adaptive and maladaptive) academic stress, parenting style, and acculturation stress. In order to examine KACS’ coping patterns, this literature review briefly surveys KACS’ multilayered levels of risk factors, including academic level (excessive external and internal academic pressure), family level (authoritarian parenting style and family dynamic), and social/cultural level (acculturation stress and racial stereotypes from dominant groups). This article addresses the definition, origin, psychological, and social impact of coping style, academic stress, parenting style, and acculturation stress on KACS. It identifies interrelationships between coping style and academic stress, parenting style, and acculturation, and discusses implications for parents, university personnel, counselors, and researchers.

Keywords: Korean American College Student, coping patterns, academic stress, parenting style, acculturation
The Asian American student population continues to increase within all 2,500 U.S. institutions of higher education. In 1974, Asian students in U.S. institutions of higher education amounted to 1.8% of all students enrolled. This figure increased to over 6.5% in 2009 (U.S. Department of Education, NCES 2011-015). According to Yeh (2002), because of the increase in Asian student populations, college counselors are encountering greater numbers of Asian students without being trained in sensitive cultural knowledge or appropriate intervention skills. Nevertheless, due to social stereotyping of Asian students as a model minority (Suzuki, 1989), it is hard to portray Asian students as an at-risk population. Some research supports Asian students’ superior levels of achievement and motivation (Eaton & Dembo, 1997). Eaton and Dembo (1997) found that Asian American students have stronger self-motivational skill sets and academic skill sets to achieve their goals than non-Asian minority student groups. However, it is important to recognize the adjustment problems of Asian students. Min (1995) states that, Asian parents predominantly immigrate to the U.S. in hopes of gaining educational and financial opportunities for their children. Asian communities heavily emphasize the importance of academic success (Kim & Chung, 2003), and Asian American parents stress academic achievement in their child-rearing practices, which they believe enable their children to climb the social ladder (Kim & Chung, 2003). Korean American immigrant families are no exception. According to the US Bureau (2012), Korean Americans constitute the fifth largest Asian subgroup, about 1.7 million people that came to the US for financial security, children’s educational success, or political reasons. For the purposes of this research, Korean Americans are defined as either Korean immigrants that are green card holders or naturalized citizens, or children of Korean American immigrants. By this definition, Korean Americans constitute about 0.4% of the US population. Korean American college students (KACS) are primarily, but not
exclusively, second or third generation Korean Americans, born in the US, with a bicultural background, and using English as their preferred language. KACS deal not only with academic pressure, but also with a rapid rate of psychological and social adjustment. KACS are known to attend well-known universities as a guarantee of financial and social success (Lee & Larson, 2000). For Korean parents, their children’s academic achievement elevates their family’s social status and helps fulfill their collective American Dream (Min, 1995).

Most KACS feel great pressure from their parents to achieve highly in academia and to succeed in their respective careers (Kim & Chun, 1994). This creates extraordinary academic pressure for KACS (Kim & Chung, 2003). This academic pressure is directly related to the state of their mental health and affects their psychological well-being (Kim, 1993). When dealing with academic stress, students experience psychological symptoms such as excessive anxiety, loss of concentration, depression, and even suicidal behaviors (Lee & Larson, 2000).

Although many KACS perceive depression as a severe issue, it is rare for KACS to admit to being depressed, or to receive appropriate treatment because of the stigma surrounding mental illness (Kim, 2004). According to Kim (2004), the emotional, psychological, and physical stress among KACS is enormous; however, it is difficult for them to seek out professional help or resources for coping. Coping is a complex system of behaviors set to deal with stressors which involve personality, attitudinal, cognitive, and environmental factors (Dyson & Renk, 2006). Dyson and Renk’s (2006) research found that Asian American students’ individual stress and coping patterns are closely related to personal, familial, and social factors. Consequently, these complex factors play a significant role in KACS’ coping (Liu, 2003). For example, KACS’ attitude toward counseling, the cultural stigma of mental illness, and KACS’ lack of coping may
lead to more stressful situations, which in turn begins an increasingly stressful cycle that may have emotional, academic, and psychosomatic consequences.

In addition to their external pressures, KACS’ are often emotionally and behaviorally self-restrictive, due to their cultural value systems (Lee & Larson, 2000). KACS’ combined internal and external stress and restriction can negatively impact their psychological and physical well-being, causing them to adopt maladaptive coping behaviors (Helms & Gable, 1989). In this article, I discuss stress, academic stress, parenting style, and acculturation stress as significant factors which impact KACS’ coping patterns and behaviors.

Stress

For the last five decades, use of the term “stress” has been increasing in popularity in the health sciences and psychology (Benson, 1975). The first concept of stress was defined by Grinker and Spiegel (1945) as a product of soldiers’ combat fatigue and other war-related symptoms. The causes of stress are described as being conditions, or demands of life, created by social obligation.

Aldwin (1994) pointed out that defining stress is not an easy task, as stress could refer to several domains of human experience. However, researchers have attempted to assess how stress impacts individuals’ well-being. For example, Bruess and Tevis’ (1985) research shows a direct relationship between stress and individuals’ declining health, including cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal problems, severe headaches, and loss of productivity.

Benson (1975) believed that anticipatory emotions such as anxiety, anger, and fear produce the same nerve impulses and chemical reactions that are produced when one is faced with a concrete challenge. He viewed stress as a major factor in causing hypertension and
coronary heart disease. Individuals’ personalities could change under long-term stress and interfere with productivity, learning, and interpersonal relationships. As a result, Benson (1975) was interested in exploring meditation, yoga, and the mind-body connection. He coined the term “relaxation response” to describe these as a method to be used for intervention, which results in decreasing blood pressure, improving cognitive functioning, boosting the immune system, and boosting students’ academic performance.

Cox (1978) argued that intensive study of stress was necessary because of the great impact that stress has on individuals’ functioning, not just in the domain of psychology, but also in physiology, psychiatry, and pharmacology. He explored the nature of stress and its relationship with emotion, stress response, and individuals’ health conditions. Cox (1978) explained that stress has effects in six domains: (1) subjective, (2) behavioral, (3) cognitive, (4) physiological, (5) organizational, and (6) health effects. Cox’s (1978) research on stress contributed to our understanding of conceptualization, coping, interrelationships with other health fields, and the impact of stress on individuals’ working environments.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) explained that stresses result from a relationship between personal resources and environmental demand. If a balance exists between the individual’s resources and his or her environment, he or she is able to control the situation without being overwhelmed. However, if the environmental demands either exceed the individual’s resources or endanger his or her well-being, the individual may be unable to effectively cope with the situation, resulting in stress (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). In Stress, Appraisal, and Coping, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) focus not only on stress and coping mechanisms, but also on individuals’ cognitive, emotional, and perceptual functions as reciprocal interactions between individual and environment.
Kiecolt-Glaser and Glaser (1991) investigated the association of stress with immune system functioning. They found that medical students’ academic stress lowered students’ immune system functioning during the final examination period, as compared to the pre-examination period. Valdez and Rodriguez’s (2003) study reported that 83% of students, regardless of gender or racial background, experience extreme stress during school. Korean American students’ pressure is directly associated with high rates of depressive symptoms, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Lee & Larson, 2000). Lee and Larson (2000) conducted a study on Korean students’ somatic symptoms resulting from stress and found the resulting physical symptoms ranged from minor headache to serious medical problems such as ulcers, insomnia, and severe anxiety (Kim, 2004; Lee & Larson, 2000). However, physical symptoms are more easily accepted than psychological symptoms, such as depression and anxiety. Due to the cultural stigma attached to help-seeking behaviors, these are acknowledged with reluctance (Gloria, Castellanos, Park, & Kim, 2008).

In sum, previous studies indicate that Asian students’ fear of failure, academic pressure, and frustration can cause tremendous stress. Asian students who identify with Asian culture have the tendency to feel entrapped by parental, social, and cultural demands (Juon, Nam, & Ensminger, 1994). According to Ang and Huan (2006a), the pressures KACS experience around academic and career achievement are major causes of stress as well as other mental health issues.

**Academic Stress**

Asian American students’ academic stress and performance have been important issues for students’ mental health as well as academic progress (Cambell & Stevenson, 1992; Olpin, 1997). However, Asian students’ academic stress may be particularly excessive during their
college years (Kim, 2004). Academic success, as a central cultural value, has positive as well as negative effects on KACS. The high value placed on academic success tends to make KACS work hard at educational activities; on the other hand, it often results in excessive pressure, especially from parents’ expectations (Mau, 1997). As a result, KACS face pressure from their own internal academic expectations as well as external expectations from parents, teachers, and family members (Blimling & Miltenberger, 1981).

According to Ang and Huan (2006a), KACS’ pressures for academic achievement are major causes of mental health issues. The most common emotional reactions to academic stress include fear, anxiety, anger, worry, and concern about academic ability (D’Zurilla & Sheedy, 1991; Misra & McKean, 2000). Olpin (1997) found that the combined stressors of college life, such as struggling with academic requirements, time management, grades, and emotional independence, could be an overwhelming experience for many college students.

Lee and Larson (2000) found that 36% of Korean American high school students were clinically depressed compared to 16% of American high school students. Korean American students experience greater negative effects on a daily basis than their American high school student counterparts. For example, Korean American high school students' study time per day was 44% while their American high school counterparts’ study time was 19%. Among adolescent Korean American students, the college entrance examination process for prestigious universities has created intense competition and “examination hell” (Lee & Larson, 2000).

Liu (2003) pointed out that many Asian students’ patterns for coping with academic pressure are related to the generation gap between students and parents, academic social pressures, and lack of resources (see Figure 1; This diagram explores Korean American college students’ coping style in relation to academic stress, parenting style, and level of acculturation). Due to KACS’
internal/external academic achievement pressures, they experience high levels of stress. These academic stresses and pressures along with authoritarian parenting style and the acculturation process can lead to maladaptive coping, such as passive, emotional-oriented, and avoidance behaviors (isolation to suicide) rather than adaptive coping as an active, problem-oriented approach (exercise to help-seeking behavior).

Parents are known to influence the academic performance outcomes of their children (Baumrind, 1966, 1967, 1971, 1989, 1991; Mau, 1997). Pettit, Bates, and Dodge (1997) pointed out a strong relationship between perceived parental discipline styles and academic performance of children later in their lives. Children of immigrant families often feel academic pressure for the sake of their family’s name, or try to assist their family financially by doing well academically (Pettit et al., 1997). Asian American parents often have higher expectations. For example, Lee and Larson’s (2000) study pointed out the difference in parental academic expectations.

In sum, the literature shows three major themes of significant finding for KACS: (1) academic pressure is related to cultural values of academic achievement, (2) there are psychological difficulties/physical symptoms associated with academic stress, and (3) KACS’ are reluctant to seek help, and display a lack of coping resources. The resulting stress is compounded for KACS by difficulties in Korean family dynamics and parenting style.

**Parenting Style**

For Asian immigrants, family bonding and relationship with parents are the center of the individual’s life (Kim, 2004). The family bonding, a Confucian ethic, is the most important factor influencing the value system of Korean immigrant parents (Min, 1995). Min (1995) also
pointed out that Korean immigrant parents are strongly attached to their families and deeply concerned with family members’ welfare, success, and reputation.

Parenting styles are types of attitudes and practices parents employ toward their children in the process of child rearing (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). After researching parent and child relationships, Baumrind (1966) suggested three distinct prototypes of parenting: permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting styles. Since then, the definition of these terms has changed multiple times. Accordingly, Baumrind (1991) redefined these terms and these definitions will be used in this research. Authoritarian parents are more demanding but less responsive. Authoritarian parents expect children to obey their orders without asking explanation. The relationship between these parents and their children lacks warmth. However, authoritative parents are responsive to their children’s demands. They set clear rules for their children to follow and there is a lot of verbal give-and-take between parents and children.

According to Baumrind (1991), authoritative parents have high parental demands and are responsive to their children (Baumrind, 1971; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). They present a warm and loving manner and expect children to be responsive to parental demands (Baumrind, 1966). Authoritative parents are assertive, but use supportive strategies as disciplinary methods rather than punitive ways. They are responsive to their children’s individuality and demands, and children are taught the rationale behind why rules are made (Baumrind, 1966).

Authoritarian parents are high in parental demand but low in responsiveness (Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Baumrind, 1971). An authoritarian parent has strict standards and uses rigid control (Baumrind, 1966). The parents are always in control and offer little expression of affection. They expect children to obey their orders without asking for explanation. The parents
highlight rules and respect and do not encourage communication between parent and child (Baumrind, 1971).

Permissive parents are both less responsive and less demanding (Baumrind, 1971; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Permissive parents are warm and loving, and avoid rules and regulations for control of their children. They also do not have many requirements and place little value in punishment (Baumrind, 1966). Permissive parents are not necessarily role models, and their children often display issues with self-control, rebelliousness, and aggressive behaviors due to a lack of parental guidance, discipline, and structure (Baumrind, 1971).

Asian parents more commonly identify with the authoritarian style (Chao, 1994; Lamborn, Dornbusch & Steinberg, 1996). In Korean American families, the parents’ authority is important, as it is in other Asian subgroups (Chao, 1994; Lamborn & Steinberg, 1996). The majority of Korean American immigrant parents practice an authoritarian parenting style, rather than authoritative or permissive style, placing a heavy emphasis on their children’s education (Min, 1995). Authoritarian parents have more rules, regulations, and demands, but tend to have a significant lack of response to children’s psychological needs (Min, 1995).

According to Chao (1994), as well as Lamborn and Steinberg (1996), Asian immigrants’ cultural values, such as obedience and respect toward elders, may explain these authoritarian parenting and hierarchical family systems. Roles are clearly defined within the family. For example, the father is the head of the family and the mother is the caregiver (Chao, 1994). Korean interpersonal relations tend to be vertical, requiring younger people to respect others who are older, whereas interpersonal relationships in Western culture tend to be more horizontal (Kim, 2004). According to Baumrind (1991), parenting style may have different impacts and results on developmental outcomes of children for nonwhite races and ethnic groups. However,
Kim and Rohner (2002) pointed out that Baumrind’s cross-cultural applicability is weak due to the insignificant size of Asian sample (25%). As a result, parents of Korean American students do not fit into any of Baumrind’s parenting types (Kim & Rohner, 2002).

In sum, parenting style is the pattern and behavior of parents when interacting with their child (Baumrind, 1966). Parenting style can be a risk factor for how KACS cope with academic stress (Min, 1995). In the literature, three elements were identified as significant factors which could impact KACS’ developing coping pattern and behaviors: (1) parental influence on child psychological development, (2) Asian family dynamics, and (3) parenting style. Parents of KACS need to be aware of the importance of balancing demand and response to their children’s psychological needs (Min, 1995), because a lack of balance could cause maladaptive coping patterns and behaviors in their children (Kim, 1993; Kim & Chun, 1994). For example, for Korean immigrants, family is the center of each individual’s life. Family bonding is the most important factor influencing their value system, world view, and even how to deal with stresses. However, at the same time, family bonding may limit control and negatively impact members’ coping patterns.

**Acculturation Stress**

It is natural for individuals to relate to the world using their cultural frames of reference and to be uncomfortable changing or adjusting to a new culture (Dyal & Dyal, 1981). One of the earliest definitions of acculturation is “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, p. 149). Redfield et al. (1936) claimed that the acculturation process occurs when two different groups interact with one another, leading to changes in one or both groups. Acculturation can result in
significant changes in attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and values, and the degree of these changes may vary on an individual basis (Cuéllar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995).

The term “acculturation stress” was introduced by Berry and Annis (1974). They viewed acculturation as a process of adaptation which could create conflict between the native culture and the dominant culture. Klein (1977) studied students’ stress and patterns of adaptation, highlighting withdrawal as an adaptive pattern that created negative and stressful consequences. Kim (1978) suggested that in order to reduce the level of acculturation stress, individuals need to be flexible cognitively and behaviorally for adapting daily interaction to the new environment.

Dyal and Dyal (1981) distinguished acculturation stress at the cultural/ethnic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal levels, wherein each domain could create unique challenges. Torbion (1982) suggested that acculturation stress is related to (1) loss of control, (2) helplessness, and (3) lack of confidence. Padilla, Alvarez, and Lindholm (1986) found that an individual’s level of acculturation is as significant a predictor of acculturation stress as generational status and self-esteem.

Yeh’s (2002) study suggested that Asian students who identify themselves as American have fewer psychological problems than those who view themselves as Asian. Korean immigrant families can experience significant conflict between family cultural values and mainstream society’s social attitudes and values (Padilla, Wagatsuma, & Lindholm, 1985; Kim, 2004). For example, open communication is not common in traditional Korean families, and Korean parents have limited resources and knowledge for their own acculturation stress (Kim, 2004). Kim and Duckson (2007) pointed out that struggling between two different cultures and value systems could create extreme levels of emotional scarring and depression, to the point of changing one’s personality. Even though KACS struggle, Korean immigrant parents often may
not be able to provide support due to unfamiliarity and their own struggles with cultural identity language barriers, finances, and social instability (Kim & Duckson, 2007).

Padilla et al. (1985) discovered that the most intensive stress was experienced by first-generation Asian students who have a lower acculturation level. They found higher self-esteem among third/later generations compared to first/second generations. Tata and Leong (1994) also found that more acculturated Asian students are open to help-seeking behaviors, whereas students who hold traditional cultural values have negative attitudes toward mental health services.

In sum, Asian immigrant acculturation stresses increase significantly when environmental demands, such as adjustment, language, and cultural differences, increase (Padilla et al., 1985). In addition to the conflict between cultural value systems, three elements were identified in the literature as significant factors which could impact KACS’ coping patterns and behaviors: (1) level of acculturation and stress, (2) family dynamics related to parent/child generational gap, and (3) acculturation and coping patterns.

**Coping Styles**

KACS’ emotional, cognitive, and physiological stresses are enormous (Kim, 2004). In Asian cultures, concepts such as filial piety, obedience, and meeting academic expectations are crucial to individual, family, and even community levels of context. Failure to meet an external expectation could create tremendous shame and stress (Yeh & Huang, 1996).

According to Juon et al. (1994), Asian students’ fears of failure, academic pressure, and frustration can trigger suicidal behaviors, and students who identify with Asian culture have a tendency to be entrapped by parental and cultural demands of academic achievement. However,
many students are ill-equipped to cope with this stress (Kim & Chun, 1994). KACS struggle with severe psychological and mental health issues. It is not easy for them to find resources for developing healthy coping skills (Kim, 2004).

There are several aspects to coping (Herman, 1992). Many researchers agree that coping involves both personal and social factors in an individual’s response to stress. For example, Lazarus and Folkman view coping as the cognitive and behavioral effort to process or manage one’s personal environment (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) examined individuals’ coping types as they relate to environment and stress management. They believed that there is no single coping style, but there are three categories under which one might understand coping mechanisms: (1) active/avoidance, (2) problem oriented, and (3) emotion oriented coping strategies (Endler & Parker, 1990; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Smith & Renk, 2007). Moos and Schaefer (1993) explored two major approaches: cognitive and behavioral. Depending on whether individuals are approach-oriented or avoidance-oriented, the cognitive and behavioral approaches include the following four coping patterns: (1) approach-cognitive, (2) approach-behavioral, (3) avoidance-cognitive, and (4) avoidance-behavioral. See Table 1.

Adaptive coping is often related to individuals’ optimistic perspective (Carver et al., 1989). Carver et al. (1989) found that individuals with high optimism are likely to rely more on active coping approaches to deal with stress than to rely on avoidance coping. They believed that a highly developed ego provides mental flexibility and psychological adaptability. Moos and Schaefer (1993) found that individuals with high levels of ego development have a better tendency to develop adaptive coping. Problem-focused coping is adaptable, whereas emotional-focused coping is considered a maladaptive approach (Smith & Renk, 2007). For example,
problem-focused coping uses planning, time management, and exercise to improve stressful situations, often with desirable results (Dyson & Renk, 2006; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

According to Moos and Schaefer (1993), social support is crucial as a primary support which promotes not only emotional well-being, but also enhances self-esteem and confidence. Many individuals who use social supports as their major coping strategy tend to adapt better to life stresses and experience fewer psychological symptoms. As a result, those who utilize social resources, especially family and friends, possess adaptive, rather than maladaptive, coping skills (Moos & Schaefer, 1993).

Maladaptive coping negatively impacts individuals’ functioning (Frazier & Burnett, 1994). For example, emotional-oriented coping focuses on emotional aspects such as avoidance, denial, wishful thinking, anxiety, depression, and excessive sadness. These are considered maladaptive coping strategies, which could lead to isolation and self-harming (Aldwin & Revenson, 1987; Smith & Renk, 2007). Wagner’s (1997) study pointed out that the majority of suicide victims are affected by psychological issues such as excessive stress, depression, or substance abuse. Studies also found a strong relationship between suicidal behavior and maladaptive coping strategies (Ang & Huan, 2006b; Lee & Larson, 2000).

Maladaptive coping styles could be harmful or endanger KACS whereas adaptive coping promotes safety and is beneficial for one’s well-being (Dyson & Renk, 2006; Frazier & Burnett, 1994). Juon et al. (1994) pointed out that KACS’ suicide as maladaptive coping has become one of the major issues within the Korean community. KACS’ excessive pressure regarding academic and career achievement makes it difficult to develop adaptive coping skills, which could be a great resource for meeting academic demands (Ang & Huan, 2006a). In addition to pointing out the importance of primary family and social supports, three major factors were
identified from a review of literature: (1) interrelation between academic stress and coping, (2) various coping patterns and strategies, and (3) issues of maladaptive coping.

In sum, the great emphasis that many KACS’ parents place on academic achievement results in severe stress, anxiety, and even maladaptive behaviors when KACS are exposed to their new college environment. However, there are few studies about the relationship between coping and academic stress, parenting, and acculturation. Based on a review of literature, it is difficult to specify definite coping strategies of KACS. However, a pattern of adaptive versus maladaptive coping is evident.

**Implications**

I discuss below implications for parents of KACS, university personnel, counselors, and researchers based on the above literature review. The potential benefit of this article is in providing awareness to individual KACS, KACS’ families, and Korean immigrant communities. To begin with, KACS have the potential to learn to be more self-aware of their coping behaviors. KACS live under extreme academic pressure which could directly impact their psychological well-being. Despite great emotional stresses, resources for coping are limited. This lack of resources needs to be reported and proper resources promoted among Korean immigrants, on both parental and community levels. This promotion will intervene or break down the cycle which may have emotional, academic, and psychosomatic consequences for KACS. This article also challenges counselors not only to develop better awareness but also to promote culturally appropriate interventions. In addition, this article will assist counseling centers in their psycho-education programs for Asian immigrant students.

**Parents**
First of all, Korean immigrant parents need awareness of their parenting style. According to Brooks (1991), parenting has psychological, behavioral, and learning influences on the child. It is important to understand parenting style as it relates to children’s psychological behaviors and coping patterns. In order to provide psychological well-being for their children, Korean immigrant parents can invest time and effort to know their own parenting. For example, attending a parenting group class sponsored by a local community center or religious organization could help to increase self-awareness as Korean immigrant parents. Secondly, Korean immigrant parents need to be aware of their own coping patterns and strategies. Korean parents’ self-awareness of their own coping patterns is often limited, although it is crucial in order to maximize KACS’ adaptive coping behaviors and patterns (Kim, 1993; Kim & Chun, 1994).

Thirdly, Korean immigrant parents need to reduce their children’s external academic pressure. Asian communities, including Korean communities, place a heavy emphasis on educational achievement (Mau, 1997). Chen, Dong, and Zhou (1997) suggested that parental educational involvement and communication with a child’s school is crucial for children’s academic accomplishment. Parental educational expectation has a direct relationship with academic achievement. Kim (1993) also found that for Korean American college students, parenting styles and expectation does impact academic achievement consistent with other Asian subgroups. KACS are dealing with not only internal academic pressure from themselves, but also with teachers/parents’ expectations, which are often perceived as heavy external academic pressure. Coping patterns most commonly associated with KACS are depressive symptoms, anxiety, suicidal behaviors, and low self-esteem (Lee & Larson, 2000). Therefore, parents’ reduction of academic expectations will promote students’ psychological well-being.
Finally, authoritarian parents not only expect their children to obey the rules, but are also demanding and controlling (Baumrind, 1971). However, Korean immigrant parents need to achieve a balance between demand and response. For example, Korean immigrant parents need to promote frequent communication, explanation, and expressions of affection. This affective communication, in collaboration with improved communication strategies of the Korean immigrant community and academic counselors at large, would have a greater impact on parenting, and would strengthen KACS’ coping skills.

**University Personnel**

First of all, university personnel need awareness of the myth of model minority. Model minority refers to ethnic members’ achievement of high success, compared to other ethnic groups. This success includes family stability, education, income, and low crime rate (Sakamoto, 1997). According to Sakamoto (1997) this myth needs to be recognized as producing unfair expectations, pressure, and burden, simply because of their race and ethnicity. The model minority myth creates a distorted portrait of Asian students as academically hard working, resilient individuals (Kim, 2004).

Secondly, university personnel need to be active agents in referring potentially at-risk students to counseling centers or other resources. Researchers show that Asians are significantly less willing to seek professional psychological help than other minority groups (Gloria et al., 2008; Kuo, Kwantes, Towson, & Nanson, 2006). Therefore, faculty, staff, and school administrators need to be proactive in facilitating student referral.

Finally, university personnel need to become part of a support system for the Korean student community. Many KACS feel a lack of social supports and resources in dealing with stress. Due to lack of supports and resources, KACS are often left alone and end up developing
maladaptive coping rather than adaptive coping (Kim & Duckson, 2007). In order to reduce KACS’ maladaptive coping patterns and self-harming behaviors, faculty, staff, and school administrative officials need to not only possess cultural sensitivity, but also need to become a resource for Asian educational communities. In order to create a safe environment for Asian students, school communities need to be proactive, working to create cultural sensitivity training programs to combat this cultural serotype of Asian students.

**Counselors**

Counselors and other helping professionals need to first establish a supportive rapport with KACS. Because KACS are less likely to seek counseling, it is crucial to reach out to KACS and build supportive therapeutic rapport in the beginning of counseling. It is also important for the counselor to assess the student’s view of counseling and to determine what they expect from the counseling and the counselor. Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1998) suggested that Asian-American college students would typically be ashamed of sharing their true feelings. Therefore, it is suggested that college counselors take a gentler, supportive, yet active approach with KACS.

Secondly, counselors and helping professionals need to assess safety carefully in accordance with students’ level of stress. Mental health professionals need to carefully assess clients’ attitudes toward maladaptive behavior, include self-harming and suicide behaviors. It is crucial to be aware of KACS’ coping patterns during counseling in order to develop effective treatment strategies. Also, identifying the parenting style and family dynamic in students’ homes will provide insight to provide support and a culturally appropriate treatment plan.

Thirdly, counselors and helping professionals need to possess multicultural sensitivity and skills. In order to maximize counselors’ effectiveness with KACS, counselors must actively seek to sensitize, familiarize, and educate themselves on the concerns and problems of KACS.
Counselors need to recognize KACS’ ecological and cultural environment, as well as the student’s level of acculturation. Finally, counselors and helping professionals need to practice culturally appropriate interventions. KACS’ coping styles for academic stress have implications that suggest specific approaches for counselor’s intervention programs. The intervention strategies should empower KACS with supportive therapeutic approaches, and provide culturally appropriate interventions and recommendations.

**Researchers**

In the past two decades, researchers have studied the relationship between parenting styles and children’s developmental issues (Dyson & Renk, 2006; Spera, 2005). Although researchers have focused on parenting and its psychological impact on children (Baumrind, 1966), only a few studies have focused on how individual children’s coping could be related to parenting style (Hurh & Kim, 1990; Kim, 2004). Therefore, it will be valuable to study how coping could relate to parents’ parenting and coping styles. For example, an inter-generational study of Korean immigrant families could focus on how parents’ coping patterns impact their children’s coping patterns, either toward adaptive or maladaptive coping. This inter-generational coping study would contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex impact of parents’ involvement in children’s psychological development process. Another meaningful study on coping behavior differences could examine how financial discrepancies relate to coping among KACS. For example, the wide discrepancies between individual KACS’ financial statuses might significantly influence student coping behaviors in relation to stress.

**Conclusion**
Over the past two decades, a wealth of studies has been done on the relationship between parenting styles and children’s developmental issues (Spera, 2005; Dyson & Renk, 2006). Some of these studies focused on KACS’ academic stress and pressure (Kim & Rohner, 2002; Kim Sun S, 2003, 2007). Other studies focused on parenting style and children’s academic stress (Hurh & Kim, 1990; Sun S Kim, 2007). Some of this literature review was able to explore KACS’ parenting styles and its relationship with children’s coping patterns under academic pressure and acculturation stresses. In particular, this literature review explores how KACS develop either adaptive coping or maladaptive coping in order to deal with their stress.

However, current research has not provided a clear relationship between coping and academic stress, parenting style, and acculturation stress. Therefore, Chapter II of this research explores unanswered questions, such as how KACS’ coping patterns might relate to internal/external academic stresses, parenting style, and level of acculturation.

For KACS, there are several risk factors on the academic, family, and social levels. On the academic level, attending college can be a stressful time as student’s transition from adolescence to young adulthood (Dyson & Renk, 2006). KACS’ emotional, cognitive, and physiological stresses are enormous, yet KACS are ill-equipped to cope with the stress (Kim & Chun, 1994). On the family level, the majority of Korean-American immigrant parents practice an authoritarian parenting style (Min, 1995), and place heavy emphasis on their children’s academic success (Min, 1995; Kim & Duckson, 2007). They present more rules, regulations, and demands, yet have a significant lack of response to their children’s psychological needs (Min, 1995). This imbalance could cause major stress for their children.
On the social level, the acculturation process can produce stress as a risk factor. Acculturation requires adapting to a new culture, which creates conflict with one’s native culture system (Sodowsky, Lai, & Plake, 1991). Unfortunately, acculturation creates stress in the process of trying to reconcile two traditions (Kim & Duckson, 2007). In addition, Asian students, as well as other minorities, are facing racial stereotypes from dominant groups (Chun, 1995). Korean-American immigrants and family members have to negotiate daily interactions and try to minimize social and generational conflict as well as acculturation stress (Kim, 2004; Padilla et al., 1985). In sum, this research was intended to offer a better understanding of coping strategies, as the relationship between coping and academic stress, parenting style, and acculturation stress can be significant predictors of KACS’ coping style, adaptive or maladaptive.
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<td>Shame, Depression Self- Blame Excessive Sadness</td>
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Figure 1. *KACS’ Coping Style under Academic Stress*

Figure 1. This diagram explores Korean American college students’ coping style in relation to academic stress, parenting style, and level of acculturation. Due to KACS’ internal/external academic achievement pressures, they experience high levels of stress. These academic stresses and pressures, along with authoritarian parenting style and the acculturation process, are risk factors for maladaptive coping, such as passive, emotional-oriented, and avoidance behaviors (isolation to suicide) rather than adaptive coping as an active, problem-oriented approach (exercise to help-seeking behavior).
CHAPTER 2

Korean American College Students’ Coping Patterns in Relation to
Academic Stress, Parenting Style, and Acculturation

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how three factors are interrelated with Korean American college students’ coping style: (1) Stress/Academic stress, (2) parenting style, and (3) acculturation. Multiple regression analysis was used to examine the relationships between Korean American college students’ (KACS) coping styles and their parental parenting style academic stress, and acculturation. Participants were 126 KACS attending Korean American churches in New England. The KACS completed the Coping Strategy Scale (COPE; Carver, Scheier, & Weintrab, 1989), Academic Expectation Stress Inventory (AESI; Ang & Huan, 2006), Parenting Authority Questionnaire (PAQ; Buri, 1991), Asian Values Scale (AVS; Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999), and a demographic questionnaire. Study results reveal a significant relationship between KACS’ maladaptive COPE, PAQ authoritarian parenting, and AVS scores. Limitations of this study, implications for counseling practices, and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Keywords: Korean American College Student, coping patterns, academic stress, parenting
According to the 2010 US census, Asian Americans were 6% of the total US population. Of the Asian American group, Korean Americans constitute the fifth largest subgroup, about 1.7 million people, or 0.4% of the US population (US Census Bureau, 2012). In this study, Korean American college students (KACS) are defined as children of Korean American immigrants. During the academic year of 2004-2005, in US institutions of higher education, there was an overall increase in total enrollment of approximately 570,000 students. Of these 570,000, over 55% were Asian students (IIE, 2006). Many colleges have already experienced a significant increase in the Asian student population, and counselors are confronted with the unique challenge of counseling Asian immigrant students (Yeh, 2002).

Peng and Wright’s (1994) research showed that Asian students have higher academic achievement than other minority student groups. Eaton and Dembo (1997) found that Asian American students have stronger motivation, beliefs, and academic achievement toward academic and career goals than non-Asian minority student groups. However, the myth of model minority can create excessive academic pressure and create mental health issues for Asian students (Cheng, 1987). Although Asian student groups are often portrayed as highly successful in higher education, Cheng (1987) argued that Asian students can be considered at risk, academically and psychologically. Asian students not only deal with stressful social expectations, but also struggle with a lack of resources and skills to cope with these expectations.

According to Choi (2002), individuals who live in two different cultures often feel they do not belong to either culture. Korean American college students (KACS) struggle not only with negotiating two different cultural value systems, but also expectations of high academic achievement (Kim, 2004). The lack of resources available for developing coping strategies often leads to students’ inability to manage stress, which is closely related to emotional, academic, and
psychological destructive consequences (Kim, 2004). Heavy psychological stress and cultural struggles may result in tragic incidents. Elizabeth Shin, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), died from burns self-inflicted by a fire set in her dormitory room over failing an academic class. The Cornell Daily Sun (Arana, 2008) reported that between 1996 and 2006 at Cornell University, 21 students committed suicide, and 13 of these were Asian American students. The Elizabeth Shin case, as well as many other incidents, indicates that young KACS are experiencing difficulty in developing healthy psychological well-being through effective coping (Kim & Duckson, 2007). Along with KACS’ high levels of stress, appropriate coping is difficult due to complexity of stress and lack of skills and resources (Kim & Duckson, 2007).

This research focuses on KACS for three reasons. First, Koreans, between ages 18 to 25, have the highest rate of completed suicide. According to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development’s (OECD, 2006) health report, South Korea's rate of suicide in this age range was the highest among the members of the thirty OECD countries (same results in 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010). Second, Korean American students have one of the lowest rates of mental health seeking behavior. Among the Asian student groups, KACS are reported as the least likely to seek professional and social supports while dealing with tremendous academic stress (Gloria, Castellanos, Park, & Kim, 2008). In spite of KACS’ excessive academic and acculturation stresses, students experience a lack of resources for coping. This may be linked to cultural factors including saving face, tolerance, and upholding the reputation of the family (Gloria et al., 2008). Third, Korean family systems can be a risk factor. For Korean immigrants, family is the center of the individual’s life, consistent with the Confucian ethic of family bonding (Min, 1998). Koreans are strongly attached to their families and deeply concerned with family members’ welfare, success, and reputation. This strong commitment to family is perceived as
responsibility toward family, the value of hierarchical family system, and honoring the family name through social success (Kim 2007). For example, if an individual family member tried to find their identity through the differentiation process (Ackerman, 1958), this family member could be considered selfish and may bring shame on the entire family (Kim, 2001). Finally, among Asian immigrants, Koreans have greater financial difficulties. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2007), Korean immigrants' income levels are lower than those of other Asian groups. In 2005, the median income for Asian Americans was $56,161, whereas Koreans' median income was $43,195.

**Coping Style and KACS**

Coping is not an easy concept to define (Herman, 1992). However, many researchers agree that coping involves personal and social influences in one’s response to stress. Coping strategies are employed to solve a problem and to manage distress through action, cognition, or emotion (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). For example, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) view coping as the cognitive and behavioral effort or process to manage one’s personal environment. Therefore, coping is an attempt to find the most effective ways to handle stressful events or emotional distress (Aldwin & Revenson, 1987).

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), adaptive coping approaches are characterized by being active and problem focused, while maladaptive coping is related to avoidant behavior and an emotional focus. KACS tend to exhibit coping styles that correspond to Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) adaptive and maladaptive categories. KACS either exhibit extremely adaptive coping strategies or extremely maladaptive strategies (Kim, 2004; Kim & Rohner, 2002).
Maladaptive coping styles could be harmful or may endanger KACS’ mental health, whereas adaptive coping promotes beneficial practices for KACS’ well-being.

Active coping is a type of adaptive coping. Active coping is related to increasing one’s effort and being proactive in removing stressors (Carver et al., 1989). Adaptive coping includes staying optimistic, exercising, improving time management, and seeking professional help. Problem-focused coping is also adaptive (Smith & Renk, 2007). Problem-focused coping often makes use of bargaining, time management, and exercise to improve changeable, stressful situations. Therefore, problem-focused coping often works as the most desirable adaptive coping (Dyson & Renk, 2006; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Maladaptive coping is described as cognitive and emotional processes or behaviors which often result in negative impact to individuals. Maladaptive coping, which includes avoidance coping, often involves denial, withdrawal, drug abuse, self-harm, and even suicide (Frazier & Burnett, 1994). Often, maladaptive coping strategies are responses to higher stress levels in individuals’ lives (Frazier & Burnett, 1994). Emotional-oriented coping styles are often related to maladaptive coping strategies such as anxiety, depression, and excessive sadness, which could lead to isolation and self-harming (Aldwin & Revenson, 1987). Juon, Nam, and Ensminger (1994) pointed out that Korean young adult suicide has become one of the major issues facing the Korean community.

Several researchers have examined the relationship between stressors and coping patterns. Chan (1977) investigated the variety of stress reactions. The major question was what makes some individuals appear to have the ability to withstand extremely stressful situations, whereas others are overwhelmed by minor stressors. Amirkhan (1990) suggested that individuals who deal with serious stress follow three fundamental coping strategies: problem-
solving, support seeking, and avoidance. Moos and Schaefer (1993) found that individuals with high levels of ego development have a tendency to develop adaptive coping for their stresses. Those with highly developed egos bring mental flexibility and psychological adaptability to stressful circumstances (Moos & Schaefer, 1993). Heppner’s (1988) coping study reported that individuals who have self-confidence also possess better coping skills with stress than those without. Chan (1997) found that individuals who have low self-esteem and lack of confidence make use of maladaptive coping, while individuals with high self-esteem cope effectively.

D'Zurilla and Sheedy (1991) reported that college students’ academic stress could be closely related to the students’ levels of stress and ability to cope. According to several studies (Amirkhan, 1990; Chan, 1997; D'Zurilla & Sheedy, 1991; Moos & Schaefer, 1993), there are close interrelationships between students’ levels of academic stress and coping patterns. This research hypothesizes that lower academic stresses are related to adaptive coping strategies while higher academic stresses are related to maladaptive coping, because KACS’ excessive stress levels and lack of coping skills may lead to stressful situations, prompting maladaptive coping.

KACS who are able to develop adaptive coping skills will have smoother transitions, while others will act out or become increasingly withdrawn and isolated (Juon et al., 1994; Kim & Duckson, 2007). It is important to understand factors related to coping among KACS. Based on a review of literature, three key factors were identified: (a) academic stress, (b) parenting style, and (c) acculturation.

**Academic Stress and KACS**

Although attending college can be a rewarding experience, it is also a stressful time for those in transition from adolescence to young adulthood (Dyson & Renk, 2006). Due to the
transitional nature of college life, college students are a group particularly prone to stress (D’Zurilla & Sheedy, 1991; Towbes & Cohen, 1996). As Cox (1978) indicated, the consequences of stress can be manifested in one’s cognitive and behavioral responses. Some participants reported cognitive effects from stress ranging from inability to concentrate and mental blocks to hypersensitivity to criticism. Others had behavioral symptoms such as emotional outbursts, overeating, overdrinking, under eating, and even increased preventable accidents. Many KACS do not feel adequately equipped to cope with the stress (Kim & Chun, 1994). As a result, KACS’ lack of adaptive coping skills results in emotional, cognitive, and physiological problems. Defining stress is not an easy process, but college student stressors are typically related to academic achievement (Hashim, 2003). According to Akgun and Ciarrochi (2003), academic stresses are closely related to students’ experiences of learning and their evaluation or assessment. However, existing research has been limited by a lack of conceptualization over (1) whether the subject of research should be “academic” or “examination stress,” (2) the use of terms with different meanings, including the terms “academic,” “examination stress,” or “worry,” and (3) whether academic stress is referring to a cause or an effect (Akgun & Ciarrochi, 2003).

According to Misra, McKean, West, and Russo (2000), academic stress has common responses in (1) Emotion (worry, anxiety, depression, guilt), (2) Cognition (automatic negative thinking, denial, cognitive distortion), (3) Behavior (crying, addiction), and (4) Physiology (headache, back pain, weight loss or gain). KACS are no exception from students who experience academic stress (Kim, 2004). Korean students’ somatic symptoms range from minor headache to serious medical problems such as ulcers, insomnia, and severe anxiety (Kim, 2004; Lee & Larson, 2000).
KACS’ pressures for academic achievement are major causes of mental health issues (Ang & Huan, 2006). For example, some common academic stresses include earning good grades, excessive homework, time pressures, lack of resources, and pressure to earn degrees from prestigious schools (Hirsch & Ellis, 1996; Kohn & Frazer, 1986; Sgan-Cohen & Lowental, 1988). KACS are under the pressure of their own academic expectations as well as expectations from parents, teachers, and family members (Blimling & Miltenberger, 1981).

**Parenting Style and KACS**

Parenting style can also be an important factor for how KACS cope with stress (Min, 1995). Parenting is the process of nurturing the child, and includes psychological, behavioral, and social learning aspects (Brooks, 1991). In the parenting process, child development is influenced by psychodynamic approaches (such as psychosexual and personality development) and social aspects (including values, belief system, and coping; Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Therefore, parenting styles have been defined as specific process attitudes and practices through which parents relate to their own children (Darling & Steinberg, 1993).

According to Baumrind (1966), parenting styles are classified into three groups: (1) authoritarian, (2) authoritative, and (3) permissive parenting styles based on measures of their responsiveness and demand. Maccoby and Martin (1983) defined responsiveness as parental warmth, care, and support, whereas demand is parental control, rule, and supervision. Authoritarian parents are high in parental demand but low in responsiveness (Baumrind, 1971; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Authoritative parents are high in both parental demands and responsiveness (Baumrind, 1971; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Permissive parents are both less responsive and less demanding (Baumrind, 1971; Maccoby & Martin, 1983).
Asian parenting styles are often identified as authoritarian style (Chao, 1994; Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Steinberg, 1996). Spera (2005) found that the authoritarian parenting style is closely related to higher levels of academic motivation and achievement. The majority of Korean American immigrant parents practice an authoritarian parenting style, whereas few Korean parents practice permissive parenting style (Min, 1995). In Korean American immigrant families, the parents’ authority is as important as in other Asian subgroups (Chao, 1994; Lamborn et al., 1996). Asian immigrants’ cultural values of obedience and respect toward elders may explain these hierarchical systems. Roles are clearly defined within the family, such as the father as head and the mother as caregiver (Chao, 1994). Korean interpersonal relationships tend to be vertical, requiring younger people to respect those who are older. However, in western culture, human relations are more horizontal, placing less emphasis on biological age (Kim, 2004).

Authoritarian parents have more rules, regulations, and demands, but tend to have a significant lack of response to children’s psychological needs (Min, 1995). For Korean immigrant parents, their children’s educational achievement and success is a means to gaining higher social status and fulfillment (Min, 1995). In contrast, Caucasian parents are more likely to employ an authoritative parenting style, which balances parental demand and response (Chao, 1994; Lamborn et al., 1996). In Diener and Diener’s (1995) research, KACS reported life satisfaction coming from accomplishing family’s expectations, whereas American college student counterparts reported that their satisfaction resulted from fulfilling individual needs and choice. Dyson and Renk (2006) suggested that primary family support and social supports promote adaptive coping rather than maladaptive coping.
The permissive parenting style is excluded from this study as the majority of Korean American immigrant parents use either authoritarian or authoritative parenting style (Min, 1995). Therefore, this study hypothesizes that authoritative parenting style is positively related to adaptive coping, whereas authoritarian parenting is negatively related to adaptive coping.

Acculturation and KACS

Acculturation has a significant relationship to a number of psychological factors (Kim et al., 1999; Liu, Pope-Davis, Nevitt, & Toporek, 1999). Acculturation is one of the most crucial considerations in assessing Asian students’ stress, coping patterns, and psychological well-being (Kim, 2004). The acculturation process occurs when individuals of a specific cultural group come in contact with another cultural group and one, or both, of the groups undergo cultural changes as a result of their interactions (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). Studies indicate that immigrating from one culture to another is a challenging, even traumatic, experience (Choi, 2002; Kim, 2004). Acculturation requires individuals to adapt to a new culture and places demands on immigrants that may conflict with their native cultural system (Sodowsky, Lai, & Plake, 1991). Unfortunately, acculturation creates conflict in the process of trying to reconcile two traditions (Kim & Duckson, 2007).

Nguyen, Jin, and Gross (2010) highlighted Asian students’ social and cultural conflict in direct relationship to the development of emotional disorders among Asian college students in the United States. Yeh’s (2003) study used the Cultural Adjustment Difficulties Checklist (CADC) and had a sample size of 319 Asian junior high and high school students. It suggests that those youths who are more acculturated, identifying themselves as American, have fewer psychological problems than those who are less acculturated, viewing themselves as Asian. For
example, those who are more acculturated are able to let go of cultural conflict. Furthermore, among the Chinese, Japanese, and Korean student sample, Korean students had the most reported mental health issues correlated to academic and acculturation stress (Yeh, 2003).

KACS, though raised by their parents’ cultural values, live within the dominant western social system (Kim, 2004). Dealing with these two disparate value systems creates the need for flexibility and adaptation. According to Kim (2004), this frustration needs to be understood from both social (visible minority, bicultural world) and personal factors (time of immigration, personal differences, location of community, family situation). Furthermore, recognizing students’ stages of acculturation and cultural framework is essential for promoting a positive counseling experience (Choi, 2001).

Berry and Annis (1974) also point out that the greater the discrepancies between two cultural systems, the greater the acculturation stress will be. KACS and their family members are no exception; some experience anxiety, isolation, depression and low self-esteem. Korean American immigrants are negotiating daily interactions and trying to minimize social and generational conflict as well as acculturation stress (Kim, 2004; Padilla, Wagatsuma, & Lindholm, 1985).

According to Church (1982), individuals’ coping skills and life experiences greatly affect the acculturation process. For example, Church’s (1982) study explores how an individual’s nationality, gender, status, and previous cross cultural experience could create stress and require coping skills in order to adjust to the educational system, social customs, and norms within the new dominant culture. Kim (1978) suggested that in order to reduce the level of acculturation difficulties, individuals should possess coping strategies and be flexible in both cognition and behavior with daily interaction. Padilla et al. (1985) hypothesized that less acculturated
individuals experience greater acculturation conflicts. For example, the Korean cultural value system is based on strong attachment to the family, respect for elders, and harmonious personal interactions (Min, 1995). Conflict can occur in the beginning stages of acculturation, in trying to reconcile the familiar cultural values with mainstream social attitudes and values (Padilla et al., 1985; Kim, 2004). Therefore, this study hypothesizes that high acculturation is related to adaptive coping strategies.

In sum, for the last fifty years, the term “stressors” has been gaining popularity in psychology (Mason, J. W., 1975), and is often related to college students’ academic stress. Some studies focused on academic stress with heavy emphasis on academic achievement (Kim & Rohner, 2002; Kim Sun.S, 2003, 2007). There is also a wealth of literature on the relationship between parenting styles and children’s developmental issues (Spera, 2005; Dyson & Renk, 2006). However, it is difficult to find current literature that is focused on how KACS’ parenting styles could relate to KACS’ coping patterns under academic pressure as well as their acculturation process. Therefore, this study explored the role that academic stress, parenting style, and acculturation play in KACS’ coping styles and patterns.

**Purpose of Study**

This study explored KACS’ coping patterns related to academic stress, parenting style, and level of acculturation.

**Method**

**Research Design**

This research was designed to seek answers for three research questions: (1) Are low internal and external academic stresses related to adaptive coping strategies? (2) Is authoritative
parenting style positively related to adaptive coping, whereas authoritarian parenting is negatively related to adaptive coping? (3) Is high acculturation related positively or negatively to adaptive coping strategies? A regression analysis was conducted to determine the degree to which the three variables were predictive of KACS’ coping styles. First, the relationship between coping style and academic expectation was determined. Further analyses were completed to determine whether there were significant relationships between parenting style and the coping styles of KACS. Similarly, the acculturation levels of the students were calculated along with the mean, standard deviation, minimum, and maximum scores. The surveys were not translated into Korean as participants were more comfortable communicating in English. The participants completed the survey in traditional paper format.

**Data Analyses**

Regression analysis was performed in order to investigate the relationship between the stress variables and coping style. The preliminary analysis revealed that demographic characteristics were not significantly correlated with the dependent variable so demographic variables were excluded from the regression analyses.

The criterion variable was the COPE subscales (adaptive & maladaptive). The predictor variables were scores on the AESI subscales (external & internal), two of the PAQ subscales (authoritarian & authoritative), and the AVS total score. Inter-correlations among all variables were calculated. All variables were entered on the regression models use to explore the questions.

For the first research question, the dependent variable was KACS’ coping patterns and the predictor variable was academic stress, internal or external. For the second research question, the dependent variable was KACS’ coping patterns and the independent variable was
parenting style. For the third research question, the dependent variable was KACS’ coping patterns and the independent variable was level of acculturation. SPSS 19.0 Windows system was used for frequency, correlation, and regression analysis. The power level of .80 would be attained with a sample size of 129 to find a moderate (.3) effect size at the .05 level of alpha.

Participants

A total of 126 undergraduate and graduate Korean American college students (females \( n=94 \), Males \( n=26 \), & unidentified \( n=6 \)) attending two Korean American churches located in New England participated in the study. The individuals were between the ages of 18 and 34 years old, with a mean age of 24 years. There were 17 (13.5%) freshmen, 15 (11.9%) sophomores, 24 (19%) juniors, 15 (10.3%) seniors, and 52 (41.3%) graduate students. All of the participants in this study were Korean American undergraduate and graduate students with various majors. For KACS’ annual family income, 4 (3.2%) had an income of $30,000 or less, 41 (32.5%) had an income between $30,000 and $60,000, 44 (34.9%) had an income between $60,000 and $90,000, and 5 (4%) reported an income over $90,000. Furthermore, 26 (25%) were first generation immigrants, 64 (60%) were second generation, and 16 (15%) were third generation or above.

Measures

Scales that have cross cultural applicability and validity are not easy to find. Coping Strategies Scale (COPE), Academic Expectation Stress Inventory (AESI), Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ), and Asian Values Scale (AVS) all have limitations due to their lack of Korean sample, rationale of the scale, or lack of consideration of gender and social economic status. However, these were the scales selected for this study and results were used only for
research purposes. After the data was collected, the researcher conducted an evaluation of the
distribution of scores of KACS with that of each scales’ standardization sample. The results are
reported below for each measure.

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of Measures

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<td>4. AVS</td>
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**Coping Strategies Scale (COPE)**

The COPE was designed to assess college students’ stress response (Carver et al., 1989). It includes three subscales: (1) problem-focused coping, (2) emotion-focused coping, and (3) avoidance-coping. There are a total of 60 items that are responded to using a 4-point Likert-scale ranging from (1) *usually don’t do this at all* to (4) *I usually do this a lot*. Scores were obtained by calculating the sum of all items for COPE, with higher scores indicating more adaptive coping. The sample size was 126 college students but racial profile and social economic status were not reported. Cross-cultural applicability is weak due to a lack of Korean sample. Cronbach’s *α* for the COPE ranged from .72 to .92 (Carver et al., 1989). For this research, the COPE mean=3.01 and *SD*=.08; adaptive coping mean=3.10, *SD*=.32, and maladaptive coping mean=3.01, *SD*=.39. Carver et al. (1989) provided support for the construct,
convergent, and discriminant validity of COPE, using other coping scales and relevant personality measures (e.g., optimism, self-esteem, hardiness, trait anxiety, and social desirability).

**Academic Expectation Stress Inventory (AESI)**

The AESI (Ang & Huan, 2006) was designed to assess academic stress in students. It includes two subscales: expectations from parent/teacher and expectations of self. The AESI uses a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from (1) *never true* to (5) *almost always true*. The sum of these two subscales were used to indicate students’ overall academic pressure. The sample size was 721 Singapore students, with 388 males and 329 females, ages 12-18. No SES was reported for this study and cross-cultural applicability is weak due to use of Singapore student sample, rather than Korean student sample. According to Ang and Huan (2006), the total score can range from 9 to 45, with higher scores indicating greater academic stress. AESI’s Cronbach’s α was .89, for the total scale, and .84 and .85 for the two factors, respectively.

Ang and Huan (2006) reported convergent and discriminant validity of the AESI, using measures of evaluation anxiety and depressive symptoms. AESI validity is .89, the mean=3.28, SD=.63; internal academic stress validity was .84, the mean=3.25, SD=.71, and external academic stress validity was .86, the mean=3.31, SD=.65.

**Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)**

The PAQ (Buri, 1991) was selected to measure three parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. There are 10 questions for each subscale. The PAQ uses a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from (1) *strongly disagrees* to (5) *strongly agree*. Subscale scores can range from 10 to 50. The sample was 134 middle class families, and less than 20% were minorities. Kim and Roner (2002) argue that cross-cultural applicability is weak, due to a lack of Korean
sample and as a result, Korean American parents do not necessarily fit into Baumrind’s parenting styles. According to Buri (1991), PAQs’ test-retest reliability ranged from .77 to .92. Buri (1989) reported evidence of content validity, criterion validity, and discriminant validity for the PAQ, using expert judges and measures of self-concept and parental nurturance. PAQ validity was .88, the mean=3.24, SD=.23; authoritarian parenting style validity was .87, the mean=3.21, SD=.64, and authoritative parenting style validity was .89, the mean=3.18, SD=.68.

**Asian Values Scale (AVS)**

The AVS (Kim et al., 1999) was designed to measure six cultural values. It contains 36 items, each of which is rated on a 7-point scale. The respondents indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with the statement, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. Kim et al. (1999) and Yang et al. (2001) provide construct of validity as well as convergent validity of AVS. Following are the six factors: (1) family recognition (2) achievement, (3) emotional self-control, (4) collectivism, (5) humility, and (6) filial piety. The sum of the six subscales will be used for this study. The sample size was 303 Asian Americans and 63 European Americans. For this study, cross cultural applicability is moderate as the sample included Koreans. Higher total scores indicate greater acculturation. Kim et al. (1999) reported coefficient alphas of .81 to .86 in separate studies (Kim & Atkinson, 2002; Kim & Omizo, 2003). Kim et al. (1999) reported concurrent and discriminant validity of the AVS, using a confirmatory factor analysis, two measures of value acculturation, and generation since immigration. Kim et al. reported AVS validity was .85, the mean=4.81 and SD=.49.

Finding scales that include Korean college students in samples is difficult. Of the four scales, only the AVS includes Koreans in the sample. As a result, cross-cultural applicability is weak to moderate due to the sample selection. The COPE, AESI, PAQ, and AVS all have limited
cultural applicability due to their lack of Korean sample, rationale of the scale, or lack of
collection of gender, sexuality, and social economic status. For example, COPE and PAQ
did not include significant minority sample and AESI has only nine questions. Therefore,
researchers have questioned the reliability and validity of the COPE and AESI, as well as the
PAQ. Secondly, the survey was collected with a self-report format. The format of self-reported
data by KACS could have issues of reliability and validity. As a cultural sensitivity aspect,
KACS’ answers may be distorted from reality. For example, some KACS may answer questions
more favorably than is truly realistic, while others may answer more modestly. For example,
more than 10% of the KACS did not report their parental relational status, and 15% failed to
report their financial status; these tendencies could apply to all 105 questions for this study.

Procedure

Korean American students attending two Korean American churches, located in New
England, participated in the study. Between the Korean American Church’s main worship
service and afternoon service, a young adult’s meeting occurs. During this meeting, a research
assistant administered the survey with assistance from a member of the church’s young adult
leadership. This individual introduced the research assistant, who proceeded to introduce the
study and survey. The church leadership individual then distributed the survey. The research
assistant began with an introduction to the study and informed consent (Appendix A). The
consent page indicated eligibility requirements for the KACS, which included: (1) being Korean-
American, (2) being a legal resident or citizen of the US, and (3) attending a university.

Participants were asked to provide their demographic information (Appendix B).
Demographic items included age, birth place, generational status, gender, ethnic background,
academic major, and relationship status, parental nation of origin, parental relational status,
parental educational background, and family annual income background. Next, the following measures were used: “Coping Strategies Scale” (COPE; Carver, Scheier, & Weintrab, 1989), “Academic Expectation Stress Inventory” (AESI; Ang & Huan, 2006), “Parental Authority Questionnaire” (PAQ; Buri, 1991), and “Asian Values Scale” (AVS; Kim et al., 1999). All questionnaires were administered in English. No translation was needed, because the participants all had sufficient English proficiency. It took approximately 25 minutes to complete the survey.

Results

Preliminary Data Analysis

As the initial step, demographic information was entered for analysis, including age, birth place, generational status, gender, ethnic background, academic major, and relationship status, parental nation of origin, parental relational status, parental educational background, and family annual income background. Prior to conducting descriptive analyses, preliminary analyses were conducted to help ensure that the data was accurate and valid.

Preliminary analysis revealed that demographics/characteristics were not significantly correlated with the dependent variables. As a result, demographic variables were excluded from the regression analyses. The data were examined for any outliers and missing questionnaires to avoid distortion of the statistical analyses. Five outliers were found for the income variable and excluded to minimize skewing of data. Fourteen participants whose survey responses contained less than half the data were omitted from subsequent analysis. There were no extreme values found in the data after testing for outliers. The final sample size included 126 Korean American
college students. The general demographic characteristics include parents’ information, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. KACS & Parent Demographic Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>74 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Birth Place</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in US</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>54 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in Korea</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>41 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mother’s Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School or Less</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>21.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Degree</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>48.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Father’s Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School or Less</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Degree</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>51.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>61.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remarried</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $30,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000-$59,000</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000-$89,000</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$90,000-$149,000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$150,000-$above</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.8 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multiple regressions analyses were conducted to investigate the relationship between directions of KACS’ coping patterns and their academic stress, parenting, and acculturation. Therefore, the results came from regression analysis.

Among the correlations, KACS’ COPE score was significantly related with AESI score. Greater external academic stress was significantly positively related with greater maladaptive coping \((r = .461, p<0.01)\), while lower internal academic stress \((r = -.274, p<0.01)\) was related with adaptive coping. In addition, KACS’ PAQ authoritarian score was significantly related with COPE score. Higher authoritarian scores were positively related with maladaptive coping \((r = .551, p<0.01)\), while higher authoritative parenting scores \((r = .391, p<0.01)\) were related with adaptive coping.

The study hypothesized that KACS’ academic stress, parenting style, and acculturation level would be significant predictors of KACS’ coping patterns. The multiple regression analysis suggests that variables such as academic stress level, parenting style, and acculturation will be useful in predicting KACS’ tendencies toward either adaptive or maladaptive coping skills for academic stress. These results are presented below.

**Research Question I:** Among Korean American college students, high external/internal academic stresses negatively related with adaptive coping and low external/internal academic stress is negatively related with maladaptive coping.

Results support this hypothesis. A significant relationship between KACS’ COPE score and AESI score was suggested by the correlation. Greater external academic stress was related positively to greater maladaptive coping \((r = .461, p<0.01)\), while lower internal academic stress scores \((r = -.274, p<0.01)\) was related with adaptive coping. See Table 3.
Table 3. Correlation between COPE and AESI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>AESI(external)</th>
<th>AESI (internal)</th>
<th>Adaptive Coping</th>
<th>Maladaptive Coping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AESI(external)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AESI(internal)</td>
<td>.699**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive Coping</td>
<td>-.256**</td>
<td>-.274**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maladaptive Coping</td>
<td>.461**</td>
<td>-.464**</td>
<td>.315**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

On the AESI, participants reported their external academic stress as higher than the standardized sample’s midpoint \((M=3.49, SD=0.57)\) with 1 as “strongly disagree” and 5 as “strongly agree”). Among the AESI questions, “I feel stressed when I know my parents are disappointed in my exam grades” was the greatest external academic stress, with a mean of 3.64 \((SD=0.71)\), while the KACS mean was 3.20 \((SD=0.57)\).

Findings suggested that external academic expectations create greater academic pressure than internal academic stresses. KACS’ AESI scores showed external pressure from parents regarding academic achievement is one of the major predictors of KACS’ maladaptive coping.

**Research Question II:** Among Korean American college students, Authoritative Parenting style is positively related to adaptive coping and negatively related to maladaptive coping. However, Authoritarian Parenting is positively related to maladaptive coping.

Study results indicate a significant relationship between KACS’ PAQ authoritarian score and COPE. Higher authoritarian scores positively related with maladaptive coping \((r =.551, p<0.01)\), while higher authoritative parenting scores positively related \((r =.391, p<0.01)\) with adaptive coping. See Table 4.
Table 4. Correlation between COPE and PAQ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Authoritarian</th>
<th>Authoritative</th>
<th>Adaptive Coping</th>
<th>Maladaptive Coping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PAQ(authoritarian)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAQ(authoritative)</td>
<td>-.781**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive Coping</td>
<td>-.327**</td>
<td>.391**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maladaptive Coping</td>
<td>.551**</td>
<td>-.416**</td>
<td>.315**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Among the PAQ questions, “As I was growing up my parents would get very upset if I tried to disagree with them” was one of the highest scored authoritarian parenting style questions, with an average score of 3.64 ($SD=0.87$) for the question, and the KACS mean was 3.20 ($SD=0.57$).

The results suggested that authoritarian parenting is more related to maladaptive coping than adaptive coping. Children of authoritarian parenting tend to have maladaptive coping patterns ($r=.551, p<0.01$), while children of authoritative parenting tend to have adaptive coping patterns. KACS’ academic stress levels were found to be related with their parents’ parenting style ($r=.391, p<0.01$).

**Research Question III:** Among Korean American college students, high acculturation is positively related to adaptive coping and low acculturation is negatively related to adaptive coping.

Study results support Hypothesis III. Higher sums of the AVS’ six subscale were positively related with greater adaptive coping ($r=.615, p<0.01$), while lower sums of the AVS’ six subscales positively related with maladaptive coping.
Table 5. Correlation between COPE and AVS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>AVS</th>
<th>Adaptive Coping</th>
<th>Maladaptive Coping</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian Value (AVS)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive Coping</td>
<td>.615**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maladaptive Coping</td>
<td>.406**</td>
<td>.313**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This result shows that a high AVS score is positively related with adaptive coping. The majority of AVS participants reported their acculturation as higher than the standardization sample’s midpoint ($M=2.79$, $SD=0.64$), using a scale of (1), as strongly disagree, through (7), as strongly agree.

Table 6. Mean and SD of AVS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AVS</td>
<td>4.9078</td>
<td>.29463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>4.7359</td>
<td>.47881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>4.8292</td>
<td>.44389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.7783</td>
<td>.45844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive coping</td>
<td>3.0622</td>
<td>.41745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>3.1404</td>
<td>.28042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>3.1331</td>
<td>.37128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>3.1337</td>
<td>.32286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.1337</td>
<td>.32286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maladaptive coping</td>
<td>2.7524</td>
<td>.47428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>3.0418</td>
<td>.37590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>3.0130</td>
<td>.38547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>3.0147</td>
<td>.38508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.0147</td>
<td>.38508</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The AVS (Kim et al., 1999) was designed to measure six cultural values: (1) family recognition (2) achievement, (3) emotional self-control, (4) collectivism, (5) humility, and (6)
Among the AVS questions, “The worst thing one can do is bring disgrace to one’s family reputation” received the highest score with a mean of 3.64 ($SD=0.87$), whereas the original sample’s mean was 3.34 ($SD=0.57$). The study indicates a significant relationship between more acculturated KACS (by the author’s cut-off point of the AVS score) and adaptive coping patterns, and an insignificant relationship between less acculturated KACS (by the author’s cut-off point of the AVS score) and maladaptive coping.

Table 7. *Regression, B value and $R^2$- Adaptive Coping*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Un-standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$B$</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>-.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AVS</td>
<td>.387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic Stress (External)</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic Stress (Internal)</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$R^2$ | .515 |

*a. Dependent Variable: Adaptive Coping*

Regression of authoritarian and authoritative parenting, internal academic stress, and external academic stress on adaptive coping is summarized in Table 7. The independent variables accounted for 52% of the variance in the prediction of adaptive coping ($R^2=.515$). Further, the variables contributing significantly to the prediction, as shown in Table 7, were authoritative parenting and AVS.
Regression of Independent Variables on Maladaptive Coping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Un-standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (Constant)</td>
<td>.209</td>
<td>.473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>.075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>.023</td>
<td>.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVS</td>
<td>.304</td>
<td>.054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Stress (External)</td>
<td>.063</td>
<td>.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Stress (Internal)</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a. Dependent Variable: Maladaptive Coping*

Regression of authoritarian and authoritative parenting, internal academic stress, and external academic stress on maladaptive coping is summarized in Table 8. The independent variables accounted for 46% of the variance in the prediction of maladaptive coping ($R^2=.464$). Further, the variables contributing significantly to the prediction, as shown in Table 6, were authoritarian parenting and AVS.

**Discussion**

The current study investigated three research questions on how KACS’ coping patterns are related to academic stress, parenting style, and level of acculturation. The results were interpreted to imply that KACS perceive greater academic pressure from external academic expectations (parents/teachers) than internal (self) academic stresses. In other words, it appeared that their motivation to achieve is more for others (their parents and teachers) than for themselves. Second, the results may show that authoritarian parenting is more closely related to maladaptive coping than to adaptive coping. In other words, the children of authoritarian
parenting tend to have maladaptive coping, while the children of authoritative parenting tend to have adaptive coping patterns. Third, the results imply that a higher AVS score is positively related to adaptive coping. These findings contribute to the existing research not only on KACS’ coping patterns, but also on how three factors—internal and external academic stress, authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles, and acculturation—predict KACS’ adaptive and maladaptive coping. The following discuss implications of the current study.

**Academic Pressure and Coping**

Consistent with literature, these study results suggest a pressing need to reduce Korean students’ external academic pressures. Asian communities, including Korean communities, place a heavy emphasis on educational achievement (D'Zurilla & Sheedy, 1991; Mau, 1997; Misra & McKean, 2000). KACS are dealing with not only internal academic pressure from themselves, but also with teachers/parents’ expectations, perceived as heavy external academic pressure (Ang & Huan, 2006a). In this highly stressful context, KACS often develop maladaptive coping rather than adaptive coping. These heavy external academic stresses are commonly associated with depressive symptoms, anxiety, suicidal behaviors, and low self-esteem (Lee & Larson, 2000). KACS tend to lean towards maladaptive coping due to their lack of psycho education as well as loss of primary support system, such as family and familiar environment. Means of maladaptive coping are often easy to access, while positive coping requires effort and mental discipline. For example, drinking seems to be an easy avenue to distress, while exercise takes commitment. Therefore, Korean parents’ reduction of academic expectations could reduce students’ level of stress and promote psychological well-being.
Parenting Style and Coping

One of the reasons for the relatively high negative correlation of authoritarian parenting style with maladaptive functioning may be its negative emotional influence on children (Chao, 1994; Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Steinberg, 1996; Kim & Chung, 2002; Kim & Rhoner, 2002). In particular, this study revealed an authoritarian parenting style’s association with maladaptive coping patterns in children. KACS’ coping skills are related to their interactions with parents and family dynamics. Many Korean parents’ authoritarian parenting style may contribute to the source of KACS’ stress, due to high levels of demand and control and a lack of responsiveness to children (Baumrind, 1971). This research suggests Korean immigrant parents may have difficulty achieving a balance between demand and response. Well balanced parenting could positively impact their children’s coping behaviors and psychological well-being. In order to nurture and give psychological oxygen to their children, Korean immigrant parents also need to invest time and effort in understanding their own parenting. In addition, Korean immigrant parents need to be aware of their own coping patterns and strategies. Korean parents’ self-awareness of coping patterns is often limited (Kim, 2004). Furthermore, parents’ self-awareness is crucial to maximize KACS’ adaptive coping behaviors. Their self-awareness could create frequent communication, explanation, and expressions of affection in family interactions.

Acculturation and Coping

This study’s findings suggested that highly acculturated KACS are positively related with adaptive coping and less acculturated KACS exhibit more acculturative stress and have more frequent negative experiences in college. Berry and Annis’ (1974) also point out the connection
between acculturation stress and coping, the greater the acculturative stress, the less the individual will be able to cope.

According to Kim (2007), KACS’ acculturation stress creates conflict in reconciling the new western values of independence with their concerns about filial piety and family obligations. Their stress stems from struggling with the degree to which the norms of Korean culture need to be included and to which norms have been rejected. KACS’ level of acculturation could have a predominant influence on KACS’ coping attitudes and behaviors. The results of the current study imply fairly consistent findings with the literature about the relationship between acculturation and coping. KACS with a lower level of acculturation may exhibit more stress with maladaptive coping patterns in college campuses. To some extent, the experience of being an Asian minority on a predominantly white campus is one major source of stress for KACS. For example, the myth of the “model minority student” could create a distorted portrait of KACS as always studying, working hard, and persevering, while KACS in reality are struggling with academic, family, and acculturation stress. Many of the participants reported that they were reluctant to discuss their psychological concerns or seek psychological counseling because of the stigma. These individuals who are less acculturated have been shown to be less likely to seek psychological help, and remain in treatment for fewer sessions compared to their more acculturated counterparts (Sue, Zane, & Young, 1994). Therefore, acculturative stress is one of the important areas a counselor probably should consider when counseling KACS (Kim et al., 1999). Meanwhile, we should also consider individual differences in perceiving stressors and situations (Church, 1982) because personal temperament, levels of psychological coping skills, and life experience can also play a role in KACS’ responses to stressful situations.

Limitations and Direction for Future Research
Through the informal interview, researcher learned a variety of coping styles by KACS. One of the most popular ways to deal with stress was to turn to Korean American churches for support. Many of the participants found cultural support through the church. Some felt that this was their major source of relief from cultural barriers. Other participants coped with acculturative stress by seeking out Korean restaurants and entertainment. Others engaged in sports, yoga, and computer games. Some chose less constructive styles of coping, depending on alcohol to alleviate their stress. Some participants who had very easy-going attitudes or a very positive outlook experienced much less stress. They perceived their environment as a challenge rather than a threat, and generally had a high degree of confidence in both their social and academic endeavors.

Specifically, the following are limitations of the study as well as direction for further research. Caution should be applied when interpreting or generalizing findings from this study. First, the survey was collected with a self-report format. The format of self-reported data by KACS could have issues of reliability and validity. As a cultural aspect, KACS may answer questions more favorably than is truly realistic, in order to be more socially acceptable. Second, this sample, drawn from Korean American New England churches, is not representative of the KACS population in the US or elsewhere. This population was chosen for its convenience and accessibility to the researcher. The small sample size (n=126), as well as its’ imbalance of male and female participants, provide two other kind of limitations of the study. In addition, 14 participants were not included in the results due to incompletion of the questionnaire. These students might have represented a different group than the ones who remained in the study. The sampling needs to address a greater number of KACS, with a balance in gender, without limiting the religious and geographic location, in order to generalize about KACS populations. Third, the
study did not address KACS' gender differences. Further study should investigate these differences. In addition, this study did not address differences in students’ financial status. Because 15% of the KACS did not report their parental financial situation, it was assumed that there are wide discrepancies among KACS in terms of financial status. Future research needs to explore how KACS’ families, as units, influence levels of academic stress and coping patterns. It would be valuable to determine the relationship between coping response patterns and personality traits such as hardiness and optimism of KACS. These analyses would further our understanding of the complexities of the acculturative stress and coping. It should also be noted that, in addition to the coping patterns and factors covered by the survey, there is a variety of coping styles among KACS. For example, in an informal conversation after the survey, some participants shared that their positive attitudes coincide with experience of less stress. They perceived their environment as a challenge and had a high degree of confidence in both their social and academic endeavors. Some use church and community resources to help them cope with stresses. Others had less constructive styles of coping (i.e. depending on alcohol or isolation). Finally, the researcher’s identity as a Korean American with a certain degree of acculturation stress, perspectives and biases can be a limitation factor as well. For example, the researcher’s own experience of academic stress, parenting style and acculturation stress could be a limitation, preventing the researcher from exploring alternative factors.

Conclusion

Although KACS groups are often portrayed as highly successful in higher education, this researcher argues that KACS’ academic stress could negatively impact their psychological well-being. The current study indicates that external academic expectations create greater academic
pressure than internal academic stresses. Second, on the family level of risk, which involve interaction between children and their parents or other family members, KACS’ high external academic stress levels and authoritarian parenting were closely related to maladaptive coping style rather than adaptive coping. Third, lower acculturation was an insignificant predictor of KACS’ maladaptive coping, whereas higher acculturation was a significant predictor of KACS’ adaptive coping. Understanding the relationship between these factors and KACS’ coping patterns may lead to more effective counseling of this population.

The findings may have several clinical implications. First, Korean immigrant parents need to better understand the importance of parenting style and need to be aware of their own coping patterns. Second, in order to understand and effectively work with students, counselors could actively educate themselves on the concerns that KACS face. Third, Korean American communities need to provide or sponsor psych-education for community members. For example, self-awareness training or healthy parenting workshops for Korean immigrant parents may promote healthy family dynamics and minimize their children’s potential maladaptive coping behaviors.
References


Yeh, C. J. (2003). Age, acculturation, cultural adjustment, and mental health symptoms of

Appendix A
Consent Form of Study

Title of Study
Korean American College Students’ Coping Patterns in Relation to Academic Stress, Parenting Style, and Acculturation.

Purpose of Study
Dear Korean Students, this study is designed to investigate the relationship between KACS’ coping patterns in relation to academic stress, parenting styles, and acculturation. The results of the study will assist counselors to better understand KACS’ psychological pressures and will also increase awareness in the Korean community. Findings will also inform college counseling centers about effective ways to reach out to KACS, provide resources, and develop effective intervention strategies.

Safety and Eligibility of Study
There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study. In order to participate in this study, you must (1) be Korean-American, (2) be a legal resident or citizen of the US, and (3) currently attend a university. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time.

Benefits of Study
Although participation in this study will not benefit you directly, your responses will be informative to mental health providers for Korean Americans. The survey will be administered in person following the main service during the fall semester, 2012. The survey takes up to 30 minutes to complete.

Confidentiality of Study
This survey is designed for research on Korean American college student. Your responses will contribute significantly to this study and will be used for research purposes only. I also want you to know that you will not be identified or described in any way that would reveal your identity. I want to make sure that I have your informed consent to participate in this study. You should feel free to ask me questions about the research at any time. If you decide that you would rather not participate in the research, you can make that decision at any time.

Contact Information
The researcher conducting this study can be contacted athong.sa@neu.edu. You may also contact faculty sponsor, Dr. Chieh Li, at Northeastern University’s Department of Counseling and Applied Educational Psychology Office: 404 International Village, 360 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA 02115, Email:c.li@neu.edu. For inquiries about rights as a research participant, contact the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board (NEU-IRB) at 617-373-7570 or irb@neu.edu and Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Thank you for your time.

I hereby freely agree/decline to take part in this research project.  I agree □ I decline □
Appendix B

Participant Demographic Questionnaire

Please try to answer every item in this survey. Your effort will be greatly appreciated. Thanks.

1. Age________________ Birth Place ______________________________

2. Major __________________________

3. Year:    Freshman □    Sophomore □
             Junior □    Senior □
             Graduate □  Others □

4. Your G.P.A ________________________

5. Years in U.S. ________________________ (If the birth place is not U.S.)

6. generational status

7. Gender:    Male □    Female □    Transgender □

8. Korean- American: Yes □    No □    Unknown □

9. Parent’s Nation of Origin: Mother _________ Father _________ Unknown □

10. Parental Relational Status : Married □   Separated □   Divorced □   Remarried □

11. Parents’ Education:
    
    Graduate Degree         - Mother □   - Father □
    College Graduate        □     □
    Some college            □     □
    High School             □     □
    Less than High School   □     □

12. Annual Income of family: We would like a general estimate of the total family income for you and for all family members living with your during the this year. Considering income from all sources – from job, interest, rent and so forth- for you and all family members living with your, what would you say was your total family income in this year?

    Less than $ 30,000 □
    $ 30,000- $ 59,000 □
    $ 60,000- $ 89,000 □
    $ 90,000- $ 149,000 □
    $ 150,000- $ above □
NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION

Date: November 14, 2012  IRB #: 12-09-18
Principal Investigator(s): Chieh Li
                              Samuel E. Hong
Department: Counseling and Applied Educational Psychology
                              Bouvé College of Health Sciences
Address: 404 International Village
                              Northeastern University
Title of Project: Korean American College Students’ Coping Patterns in
                              Related to Academic Stress, Parenting Style, and
                              Acculturation
Participating Sites: Church permission letter on file
DHHS Review Category: Expedited #7
Informed Consents: One (1) unsigned consent form

| As per CFR 45 46.117(c)(2) Signed consent is being waived as the research presents no more than minimal |
| risk of harm to subjects and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required. |

Monitoring Interval: 12 months

APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: NOVEMBER 13, 2013

Investigator’s Responsibilities:
1. The informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when recruiting participants into the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must be reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month prior to the expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nan C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630