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Living for the Children:

Immigrant Korean mothers' re-creation of family after marital dissolution

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A dissertation

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the

Requirement for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Washington

2012

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:

School of Nursing

University of Washington

Abstract

Living for the children:

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This study was Grounded theory research aimed at generating a substantive theory that accounts for the explanatory social processes in which immigrant Korean single-mother families were engaged in the United States. In-depth interviews were conducted with 15 immigrant Korean single mothers who were living with children under 18 years of age at the time of the interviews. A total of 21 transcripts of interviews provided data for analysis. Data collection guided by theoretical sampling and concurrent constant comparative analysis of the transcribed data and memos was conducted to identify the core social process.

The emerged core social process in which immigrant Korean single mothers were engaged was “living for the children,” which represented the driving process by which these women made transition to their new lives as single-mother families. The major task throughout the entire transition was re-creating their families. The women’s transition involved practical and psychological transitions, each of which involved stages; each stage involved major tasks and processes through which they were trying to achieve these major tasks.

The practical transition involved three stages: assuring family survival, struggling between the father role and the mother role, and doing my best as a mother. The psychological transition involved two parallel transitions: becoming strong and settling in with a new supportive network. Fighting with myself and letting things out were processes that functioned between stages and across transitions that resulted in mothers redirecting themselves toward positive thinking and releasing emotional and psychological burdens.

Programs and services to assist these women and their families should consider multiple aspects of their transition processes to effectively help them make transitions; this assistance should be synchronized to the context within which these women were embedded, including their stages in each practical and psychological transition; links between these women and established resources should be established; and collaborative awareness programs and community resources should be designed, modified and implemented to create an empowering environment for these strong but socially vulnerable women and families.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	iv
List of Tables	v
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1
Background and Significance of Problem.....	1
Purpose and Specific Aims of the Study	7
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW	8
Living as a Woman in the Korean Culture	8
Living as a Member of Single-Mother Families in Korea.....	17
Korean Women’s Transition from Korea to the United States	22
Living as a Single Mother in the U.S.	32
Perspectives on Single-Mother Families in Research	38
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY	42
Rationale for Choosing Grounded Theory Methodology	42
Grounded Theory and Symbolic Interactionism	43
Grounded Theory Procedures	45
Sampling Procedure	45
Data Coding and Analysis.....	46
Coding of Data.....	46
Memo Writing	49
Establishing Trustworthiness of the Data	50
Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research	50
Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis.....	53
Sample	54
Recruitment.....	55
Data Collection and Interviewing	57
Data analysis	59
Transcribing and Translating the Data	61
Protection of Human Subjects	63
Characteristics of the Participants	64
CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS	69
Separating.....	75
Practical Transition: Assuring Family Survival	76
1. Assuring a Place to Live	76
2. Securing Income	83
Summary of the Stage of Assuring.....	103
Practical Transition: Struggling between Father Role and Mother Role	105
1. Struggling between Working and Childrearing	106
2. Struggling to Manage Financial Issues	114
3. Living Month by Month.....	117
4. Raising Children without the Father	121
5. Filling in the Father’s Absence	127
6. Re-Organizing Family Lifestyle	133
Summary of the Stage of Struggling	139
Practical Transition: Stabilizing	140

1. Being assertive and capable in handling problems alone	141
2. Doing my best as a mother	142
Summary of the Practical Transition	147
Psychological Transitions: Becoming Strong.....	148
During the marriage: Burying or Losing the Self	148
Deciding to Go Against Social Norms	150
Post-Divorce: Getting Lost and Isolated	152
A turning point: Gathering Myself Up for My Children	157
Finding Myself	160
Becoming Strong.....	161
Psychological Transition: Settling in with a New Supportive Network	163
Being Neglected and Treated with Derision.....	164
Adjusting Distance from People	166
Making Myself Heard.....	167
Changing Mindset	169
Building New Relationships	170
Letting Go of Old Relationships	173
Settling In with a New Support Network.....	174
Summary of the Psychological Transition.....	177
Stabilizing as the Last Stage of the Entire Transition	178
Being content with the current life.....	179
Forgiving the person	180
Processes Working Across Stages	181
Fighting with Myself	181
Letting Things Out	184
Summary.....	188
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS	191
Discussion of Study Findings	191
Comparison of the Findings with Models for Post-divorce Adjustment	191
Reinforcement of Maternal Identity	194
Detrimental Impact of Social Stigma and Prejudice on the Transition.....	196
Other Conditions that Influence on Women’s Adjustment after Marital Dissolution	197
Relations to the Resilience Model	199
Methodological Implications	201
Challenges in Recruitment.....	201
Challenges in Translation and Verification	202
Clinical Implications.....	204
Services and Programs for Single Mothers.....	206
Programs for children of single mothers	208
Community-level interventions	209
Suggestions for Policy Makers.....	210
Implications for Future Research	211
Limitations of the Study	213
References.....	215
Appendix A: Interview Guide.....	234

Appendix B: Interview Guide (Second version)	235
Appendix C: Interview Guide (Third version).....	237
Appendix D: Demographic Information of Participants (English version)	239
Appendix D-1: Demographic Information of Participants (Korean version)	242
Appendix E: A Written Consent (English version)	245
Appendix E-1: A Written Consent (Korean Version).....	249
Appendix F: Confidentiality Agreement Form for Translation Verifier	253
Appendix G: Code Sheet	254

List of Figures

Figure Number	Page
1. Living for the Children: immigrant Korean mothers' re-creation of family after marital dissolution....	71

List of Tables

Table Number	Page
1. Demographic characteristics of the Participants	67
2. Living for the children: major processes and tasks in each stage	72

Acknowledgement

It has been a privilege to have worked with my supervisory committee. My deepest gratitude goes to the supervisory committee chair, Dr. Frances Marcus Lewis. I have been a heavy burden on her shoulders for years, but she has always believed in me, encouraged me, and mentored me. I cannot thank her enough for her unconditional love, trust, and support. I wish to extend special thanks to Dr. C. June Strickland, for her teaching and guidance in conducting grounded theory research. Her expertise and humor always helped me move forward throughout this difficult journey. And, special appreciation also goes to Dr. Mayumi Willgerodt, for her inspiring suggestions and insights for my dissertation.

Without the participants, this study would have never happened. I am indebted to those who participated in my study, especially for their willingness to share their stories; I learned a lot from those resilient mothers. I would like to praise their courage, their arduous pursuit of living for their children, and their resilience. I am also grateful to those who supported the recruitment efforts for this study. Without their support, I would never have a chance to meet with those wonderful and brave women.

The entire process of getting a doctorate in the U.S. had been guided by my Lord, who knows my path in life in advance and walks with me for the rest of my life. I extend heartfelt thanks to my family, who always believed in me, supported me, and helped to alleviate all the stress and pressure I had to bear during the doctoral program alone. My Special thanks goes to the new friends I met in church. They never hesitated to pray for me, be with me when I needed them, or entertain me when my spirits were dragging. I am also sincerely grateful for my dear

friends in Korea, who were there for me when I needed them. In the U.S., I would never been able to go through the difficult times without my cohort friends, the “Ravens” as well. I will always remember their perseverance, courage, and passion in academia.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge, with gratitude, the funding sources that provided financial support for my study and dissertation: the Hester McLaws Nursing Scholarship fund of the University of Washington, School of Nursing, GKNF-US: Korean American Nurse Scholarship and the Virginia and Prentice Bloedel Professorship fund. Acknowledgement is also gratefully extended to the Jeanne Q. Benoliel Endowed Fellowship, which enabled me to start my doctoral education in the United States.

CHAPTER1. INTRODUCTION

Background and Significance of Problem

Once Korean families immigrate to the United States, they experience a great deal of socioeconomic challenges, including high rates of marital conflict and disruption and having no insurance or being underinsured. While a vast amount of research has been conducted on vulnerable families, such as single-parent or immigrant families in the U.S., limited research has been undertaken with immigrant Korean single-mother families. Of those that have been conducted on this type of family focuses on deficits and does not provide an understanding of the processes by which they navigate life experiences and their strengths to manage them. What is needed is a greater understanding of the challenges faced by immigrant Korean single-mother families, their methods of navigating through these challenges, and their strengths in their own voices. Generating theory based on understanding their life challenges and strengths is needed and will provide much needed information to guide future interventions: findings will be of value to researchers for developing interventions to address issues for immigrant Korean families and to practitioners hoping to provide more accessible support for the families as well. Findings are also expected to address an important area in health disparities in the U.S.

Accompanied by socioeconomic disadvantages, health disparities among single-mother families and immigrant families continue to exist among these groups, which has received a great deal of attention from health-related researchers (de Chesnay, 2005; Kneipp, 2002). Such disparities are among the top priorities for research among governments and funding agencies, including the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) (Flaskerud et al., 2002).

Single-mother families that experience significant social disadvantages and disparities are of greatest concern (Cairney, Boyle, Offord, & Racine, 2003). In 2007, of seventy-five million family households, 14 million households were headed by females with no spouse present, compared with 10.4 million in 2006 (Kreider & Elliott, 2009); Of the single-mother families, one quarter of mother-headed households living with their children under 18 live in poverty, which is statistically higher than for any other type of families in society. Such a high poverty rate has a detrimental impact on families' physical and mental health (Avison, 1997; Lipman & Boyle, 2005). The primary causes of single-parent families' high poverty rate include significant loss of financial resources due to separation or divorce (Ford-Gilboe & Campbell, 1996; Lipman et al., 2005); the wage disparities that exist between genders (Gucciardi, Celasun, & Stewart, 2004); and the fact that most single mothers tend to work in low paying jobs, which rarely offer sufficient employment-based health insurance (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2000; Kneipp, 2002).

Previous research has shown that single mothers and their children are exposed to various physical and psychological health conditions. Single mothers are vulnerable to chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular diseases and mental distress including anxiety and depression (Avison, 1997; Lipman et al., 2005; Young, Cunningham, & Buist, 2005). In particular, single mothers report depressive symptoms at a rate that is two to three times higher than the general population (Croiser, Butterworth, & Rodgers, 2007). The frequency of depressive symptoms is even greater when mothers are on social assistance (Samuels-Dennis, 2007). Children of single mothers are also at high risk for physical, psychological, and developmental problems, such as: injury-related risks, poor nutrition and socialization in their early childhood (Gucciardi et al., 2004); behavioral adjustment problems, later marriage, and earlier childbearing (Weinraub, Horvath, & Gringlas, 2002).

Immigrant families exhibit similar social and health disadvantages and disparities as do single-mother families. Asian American families are not an exception even though they are often depicted as “model minorities” who experience less social disadvantages than other ethnic groups in the U.S. (USAsian Wire, 2008). For example, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have a higher prevalence of preventable diseases such as Hepatitis B and tuberculosis than the general population; 21% of them are uninsured; and there are low rates of cancer screening utilization and high mortality from various cancers in both Asian men and women (Asian and Pacific Islander American Health Forum (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007). In particular, Koreans are one of the top five ethnic groups with high rates of no insurance among all ethnic groups in the United States (APIAHF, 2006). Almost one third, or 31%, of Korean Americans were uninsured from 2004 to 2006, which was much higher than 17% of all Asian Americans and 12% of non-Hispanic Whites. Among all Asian American groups, Korean Americans have the lowest rate (49%) of health insurance coverage from employers (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2008).

Although the portion of female-headed households in Asian American families is smaller than that of Americans in general, Asian American families include substantial numbers of single-mother families who are at risk. According to the Population Reference Bureau, over 10% of Asian American families living with their own children under age 18 are single-parent households and 68% of those households are female-headed, based on the Census 2000 data (Kids Count Census Data Online, 2001). In 2005, 17.8% of mother-headed Asian families with no resident husband were in poverty (APIAHF, 2006). Although substantial research has been conducted on immigrants and their children’s health outcomes, Asian/Pacific Islander women are underrepresented in health research (Yi, 1996) and divorce experiences among non-white racial a

nd ethnic minority women have been much less studied and targeted by public programs than their White counterparts (Bogolub, 2001).

In particular, Korean immigrant families are likely to experience significant marital conflict and disruption after migration (Chang, 1998). In 2000, divorce rates of Korean immigrants were the second highest Among Asian Americans in the U.S. (Chang, 2003). The divorce rate for Korean immigrants after migration increases to five to six times higher than the divorce rate for Koreans who live in Korea. Annually, 36.8 per one thousand Korean American women get divorced while 6.2 Korean women divorce. Fifteen per one thousand for Korean American men get divorced whereas only 3.6 per one thousand for Korean men (Park, 2000). Also, divorced Korean American women are more likely to remain unmarried for a longer amount of time than divorced Korean American men; and Korean women are more likely than men not to remarry (Chang, 1998). Although there are no available data on the numbers of immigrant Korean single mothers, there is a high possibility that the Korean community in the U.S. includes a high percentage of single-mother households. More importantly, the combination of a high percentage of economic and health disadvantages and a high divorce rate suggests that Korean immigrant single-mother families are likely to be at great risk for multiple socioeconomic and health disadvantages.

An analysis of the published literature on Korean immigrant women's experiences also revealed an under-representation of immigrant Korean single-mother families in research. The vast majority of published studies are based on married women and only a handful of studies directly addressed issues related to post-divorce adjustment of Korean immigrant women. Existing studies indicated that raising children as a single mother, dealing with financial difficulties, and managing emotional difficulties were the most pressing problems for the women

(Chang, 1998). Self-reported health status, reasons for divorce, social support and income affected the quality of the women's post-divorce adjustment (Chang, 2003). Of these factors, self-reported health status and reasons for divorce were the most powerful predictors of the women's quality of adjustment (Chang, 2003). Despite the value of the small number of existing studies, results to date are primarily limited to data obtained from standardized measures that reflect the researchers' a priori perspective. Absent were studies that reflect the women's own viewpoints in their own words. Published studies were also limited in their ability to explain the complexities of the situations women were facing in their everyday lives as a single woman, a sole parent, and an immigrant.

The majority of the literature on single-mother families in general has been carried out within a post-positivist paradigm. Within that paradigm, single-mother families are vastly studied within a deficit-oriented approach (Coll & Patcher, 2002; Weinraub et al., 2002). Findings from the early studies comparing outcomes by family structure reinforced stereotyping female-headed households as problematic and malfunctioning (Ford-Gilboe et al., 1996). More importantly, the deficit-oriented perspective views the family as passive, incapable recipients of social and health disadvantages and vulnerabilities (Kong, 2000).

However, a deficit-focused perspective cannot be the sole valid way to understand socially disadvantaged families (Levine, 2009). It is necessary to explore the ways in which a family develops and uses its strengths and resilience to manage multiple life challenges in order to provide appropriate services to empower such families (Dunst, Trivette, & Deal, 1988). Thus, it is necessary for health researchers to see the family as capable actors in their contexts and investigate their strengths as well as weaknesses who actively interpret and respond to their contexts (Ford-Gilboe et al., 1996; Kong, 2000).

Little is known about the processes by which immigrant Korean single-mother families perceive, respond to, and make sense out of their day-to-day lives in the U.S. Since incongruent perspectives on phenomena of interests between health care providers and the client families often hinders development and implementation of accessible interventions for them (Hunt & Arar, 2001; Schlomann & Schmitke, 2007), it is necessary to investigate immigrant Korean single mothers' life experiences from the women's own perspective. What is needed is a new study within an interpretive paradigm that allows the researcher to explore the participants' own interpretation of their lives. Studying the processes by which immigrant Korean single-mother families manage their lives and challenges will help us better understand what they face, what they experience, and what they negotiate in their day-to-day lives. Implications from their experiences will be crucial to identify areas deserving of systematic program and service development.

Given the limited information on how to assist immigrant Korean single-mother families, the following questions need to be answered to address the family's needs: What are the experiences or issues that immigrant Korean single mothers are facing? What are the social processes by which immigrant Korean single-mothers sail through their day-to-day lives? What do they think are their strengths? What affects the family's life both in positive and negative ways? What are the areas that the family needs assistance most and when? Are the answers of the questions different from those of single-mother families in other ethnic groups and Korean single-mothers as well?

Purpose and Specific Aims of the Study

The purpose of this proposed study is to generate a substantive theory that accounts for the experiences of immigrant Korean single-mother families and the explanatory social processes in which they are engaged in the United States. The substantive theory was developed to understand the processes by which the Korean single-mother families perceive and respond to their situations as single-mother families from the mother's perspective. The theory will serve as a foundation for developing nursing programs and services that are culturally appropriate and accessible to this population. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the major experiences and problems that immigrant Korean single-mother families (might) encounter?
2. What are the processes under which the problems are resolved or not resolved?
3. What are the strengths of the family in relation to facilitating the processes?
4. How does the mother perceive herself as a single woman?
5. How does the mother perceive herself as a single mother?
6. How does the mother perceive her family?

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize what is known to date about the experiences of immigrant Korean single-mothers who undergo a family transition and acculturation. Given that only a few studies directly address this issue, the current review of the literature analyzes relevant studies and organizes them around four themes: 1) cultural influences, which have deeply affected Korean women's lives both living in Korea and in the United States; 2) challenges faced by Korean single-mother families in Korean society; 3) transition experiences of Korean immigrant families in general and women in particular; and 4) experiences of American single-mother families in general. Finally, the chapter analyzes how single-mother families in research are examined in order to identify an appropriate view and understanding of the lives of Korean single-mother families.

Living as a Woman in the Korean Culture

Introduction: Korean Sociocultural Tradition—Confucian Patriarchy

Culture encompasses many elements which form individuals' judgments about life events and their outlook on their environment, including political, religious, and social standards (Triandis, 1994). A specific culture provides an ontological orientation that provides a basis for the worldviews of individuals living in the culture which determines the individual's social behaviors (Yamashiro & Matsuoka, 1997). Asian countries have some cultural commonalities, one of which is the great emphasis on collective identities and interdependence within and between social systems (Pedersen, 1991). As part of East Asia, Korean culture also shares some of the religious and philosophical foundations with other Asian countries such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism (Yamashiro et al., 1997).

Among those foundations, Confucianism has been a powerful source from which many Asian countries developed major principles that shape their peoples' way of thinking and their behavior (Boo, 1985). Since the *Chosun* dynasty (1392-1910) adopted Neo-Confucianism as the national principle, which was derived from the Chinese classics, Confucianism has been a major foundation on which Korean social principles and ethical standards were built (Yu, 1987). Confucianism also provides a strong underlying foundation that shapes Korean women's lives in the legal, institutional, and ethical systems in Korean society (Park & Bernstein, 2008).

Confucian ideology views stratified social relations as bringing and maintaining social harmony and order (Boo, 1985). It emphasizes relatively rigid hierarchical relationships based upon age, gender, and inherited social status such as father and son, husband and wife, older and younger people, man and woman, master and servant, ruler and subject and so on (Park et al., 2008). Within the hierarchical systems, an individual is encouraged to fulfill designated social roles, such as a father, mother, son, daughter, in order to become a true human being, a good citizen, and eventually to build a moral society (Boo, 1985). The needs for group harmony and social order take precedence over individual needs and interests (Pak, 2006). Filial piety, the worship of ancestors and respect for authority are the values that are highly praised in traditional Korean society (Keum, 2003).

Confucian society is characterized by male-authoritarian systems, which strongly reinforces Korean patriarchy (Kim & Ryu, 2005). The male figure, especially the oldest son, has authority and responsibility to manage the entire household, which represents a typical patriarchal social system in Korean society (Im, 2003). Confucianism strictly distinguishes gender roles, strongly emphasizing the dominant roles of husbands (Park, 2005). This gender role dominance imposes lifetime obligations to Korean men on Korean women (Park et al.,

2008). Such male centrism in Korean patriarchy is based on the Confucian notion that women are inherently inferior to men, thereby incapable of performing non-domestic social roles: it prescribes that the woman's life domain is confined to their home (Boo, 1985).

Traditional Korean Family System

The traditional Korean family operated on the submission of family members to male authority and emphasized collective family identities. The family pursued its harmony, which was considered the initial and essential step toward a prosperous and moral society through members' obedience and loyalty to and sacrifices for their patriarchal authority; respect for the older members and roles within the family hierarchy were important messages of family nurturing (Moon & Hoang, 1997). The family used pride and shame to control its members' behavior, based on the Korean notion that an individual represents the entire family, whose performance affects the entire family's pride and face, not just individual accomplishment, misconduct or failure (Boo, 1985). Individual members of the family were supposed to maintain "face" for the family and to not bring "disgrace" or "shame" to the family. Filial piety was the major principle for intergenerational relationships within a family (Keum, 2003).

Strict gender role differentiation contributed to the persistence of Confucian male headship in the family. The husband was the main wage earner and had the authority to make major decisions regarding overall family business. Only men, especially the first son of a family, were regarded as a continuation of family lineage and only sons had the right to receive the inherited wealth (Im, 2003; Moon et al., 1997). Therefore, sons were preferred to daughters and had priority over daughters in the allocation of family resources and educational opportunities (Yu, 1987). On the other hand, the first son was obliged to take care of the entire family. His

filial duties included living with his parents, providing financial support and caring for them, and offering worship after the parents' death (Janelli, 1987; Moon et al., 1997).

In contrast, Korean women were always placed in inferior or secondary positions. Their primary roles were childbearing and childrearing in the family system: "Traditional Korean culture regarded production of sons as the woman's obligation to her family" (Im, 2003, pp. 208). Having a son guaranteed the woman's secure position in the family, continuation of family lineage, and entitlement to filial piety (Yu, 1987). As a wife, the woman was supposed to assist her husband and was responsible for most household tasks; the daughter was also expected to be involved in domestic activities and prepare herself to become a good wife (Kim & Grant, 1997; Pak, 2006; Park et al., 2008). The individuality of traditional Korean women was almost invisible; instead, they were likely to be defined in relation to their socially defined gender roles within the family system, e.g., so-and-so's mother, so-and-so's wife (Song & Moon, 1998). They are often collectively called "girls," "house persons" or "inside persons" (Boo, 1985).

Korean women were indoctrinated to perform non-dominant and assisting roles and to become dependent on men for their entire lifetime; marriage means "a transfer from the father's territory and protection to that of another male" (Boo, 1985, p.73). Korean women's individual values are still judged by their husbands' social status and achievement in part (Lee, 2003). Also, marriage was likely to be considered her final goal in life rather than a life event through which the woman pursues self-growth (Boo, 1985; Song, 1997). Marriage also entailed discontinuation of close contact with the woman's own family and a belonging to her husband's family (Kim et al., 2005).

Social Ideals of Traditional Korean Women

Confucianism played a significant role to instill discriminatory ideologies that significantly deteriorated Korean women's lives (Boo, 1985). Three doctrines of male-female relationships were representative: 1) *Nam Jon Yŏ Bi*, which means men should be respected and women should be lowered, a leading ethical principle (Pak, 2006); 2) *Yŏ Pil Jong Bu*, meaning that the wife should obey the head of the household (Park, 2000); and 3) *Yeol Nyŏ Hyo Bu* was an image of ideal Korean women in the *Chosun* dynasty, which represented a chaste wife who remained single after her husband died and was a dedicated daughter-in-law (Koh, 1987).

The *Nam Jon Yŏ Bi* principle was based on the Confucian notion of women's innate inferiority and incompetence. Such conception of women is reflected in the principle of *Yŏ Pil Jong Bu* in the family system, which placed women under the male members' control in the overall life of the family. "The rule of three obediences" (*Sam Jong Ji Do*) showed such lifetime subordination of women to male family authority: traditional Korean women were socialized to become dependent on their father before marriage, on their husbands after marriage, and on her son(s) during their widowhood (Kim, 2006). *Yeol Nyŏ Hyo Bu* reflected such an emphasis on Korean women's roles as a wife and daughter-in-law by the society. As such, principles originating from Confucian patriarchy imposed cultural obligations to Korean men and their families on Korean women and hindered the women's realization and development of self (Park et al., 2008).

During Japan's forced occupation of Korea in the early 20th century, the concept of *Hyun Mo Yang Chŏ* emerged as an ideal for Korean women (Lee, 2003). During the colonization period, the traditional ideology of Korean women was reconstructed into the *Hyun Mo Yang Chŏ* ideal, which literally means "a wise mother and good wife." The *Hyun Mo Yang Chŏ* ideal was a motto for the ideal Korean woman: a sacrificial mother and submissive wife in the context of

Confucian patriarchal families. The ideal emphasized the woman's mothering role, which can serve to nurture and raise good citizens capable of achieving modernization and liberation of the country (Kawamoto, 1999). The agenda of bringing up competent citizens was one of the primary needs of the times and subsequently resulted in the encouragement and expansion of women's education to train them to fulfill the role. Social situations along with the emphasis of the *Hyun Mo Yang Chǒ* ideology allowed women to be engaged in social activities and acknowledged as 'citizens' (Kawamoto, 1999). Within a household, the mother has been placed in its center and the mother-child dyad has gained more attention than other relationships among family members (Lee, 2003).

Since its emergence in the early 1900s, *Hyun Mo Yang Chǒ* has been deeply embodied in both Korean men and women through familial and institutional educations (Boo, 1985; Yu, 1987) and still significantly influences the conception of marriage and gender roles of Koreans (Park, 2000). Although the idea of "a wise mother and good wife" contributed to improving Korean women's social status, its basic premise involves strict gender role distinctions and has been significantly influential to the confinements of the woman to domestic worlds, forcing her to comply with the traditional family system (Kawamoto, 1999). The idea of a wise mother and good wife in the context of Korean society continuously entailed unflinching and sacrificing service of the women for the sake of the entire family. She was characterized as subservient, self-sacrificing, chaste, soft-spoken or not outspoken, and so on (Park et al., 2008). Such characteristics and devotion of women to the family have been highly praised in Korean society, often masking the women's physical and psychological distress from their overloaded responsibilities (Im, 2003).

Discriminatory ideologies have been reinforced through major social institutions such as families, educational systems, and legal systems, e.g, the household registry based on male family lineage. Besides the family structure, the education system and public media worked to perpetuate the *Hyun Mo Yang Chǒ* ideal through educational goals, textbooks, and personal instructions. School curricula emphasized different values for male and female students – e.g., leadership skills for males, obedient personalities for females (Yu, 1987). Women’s college education in its early stage also served Korean women to conform to the ideal by preparing them for their marriage rather than stimulating them to develop themselves (Boo, 1985). Female characters in TV dramas or columns in newspapers also continued to convey such ideals to Korean people.

Self-perception of Korean Women

Confucian patriarchy forced women to view themselves as other-oriented and selfless (Park et al., 2008). As described in the previous sections, Korean women’s lives were often constrained by their cultural obligations to men, which rarely offer them chances to display their own identities. Self-perception of the traditional Korean woman was characterized as “self-in-the-family,” a collective identity through which she viewed herself based on the relationship with family members, especially male figures in her life. Further, her perception of self was always toward others and inseparable from her perception of the family (Pak, 2006). Even though rapid industrialization and westernization changed a great deal of Korean society, Korean women still internalize the traditional ideal of women (Park, 2000).

Changes in Women’s Living in Contemporary Korean Society

After World War II, industrialization, modernization, and westernization brought rapid change in the socioeconomic structure in the traditional Korean society and its Confucian

patriarchal systems and doctrines (Rhee, 1998; Keum, 2003). Rapid economic growth and urbanization quickly changed family structures – more families no longer lived with their parents-in-law – and there were increased opportunities for modern education and economic participation for women (Yu, 1987).

While the traditional marriage implied disconnection from the woman's family of origin, increasing numbers of married women are closely related to their family of origin or are taking care of their own parents, instead of their husband's parents. The strong primacy of the father-son dyad in the traditional patriarchy has weakened. Instead, the mother-child dyad is regarded as the key relationship in contemporary Korean families and the former strict parameters for gender roles and the division of work are slowly being blurred (Kim et al., 2005).

Although there are some visible changes that appear to be an improvement in Korean women's social status, the majority of the Confucian patriarchal traditions remain unchanged, even today. The male family headship has continued to be the main family structure (Kim, 2006). Still, many married women feel pressured to bear sons by their parents-in-law, especially in the case that their husbands are the "only son" (Lee, 2003). The influence of in-law members in decision making is still significantly affecting household matters, even if the family does not live with the in-law family (Kim et al., 2005). Good relationships with in-law parents are perceived as one of the essential components to maintaining high marital quality by married Korean women (Lee, 2003). Many married women still do not share household tasks with their husbands, despite feeling overloaded and distressed (Im, 2003). More importantly, changes in women's social status and roles are accepted, particularly among the young adults, not across all generations (Kim et al., 2005). This may aggravate conflict between family members due to the differences in conceptions of family, marriage, gender roles, and child education.

Changes in Social Images of Contemporary Korean Women

During the recovery phase of Korea from Japan's ruling and the Korean War, the next-generation's academic success was necessary for national survival and prosperity (Kawamoto, 1999). Later, children's success – e.g., achieving excellent school performance, thereby getting admitted into highly-valued universities – has been regarded as almost the sole and best means of social mobility as well as the entire family's success since the 1960s, a time period where Korea has been modernized and prospered financially (Lee, 2003). Among the multiple identities of Korean women, the identity as “a mother” is at the center of their lives. The ideal of “a wise mother” has evolved into subtly different images that are reinforced by some women as a means to secure their status (Lee, 2003).

Along with the modernization of Korean society, the traditional emphasis on the role of women in family during the early 1900s had been changed. After the liberation from Japanese rule in 1945, traditional knowledge about childbearing and childrearing started to be denied or rejected by women because it was considered to be unscientific and unreliable; instead, “scientific childcare” was replaced at the center of the image of an ideal woman, which expected that expert-proved childrearing would produce qualified members of the nation to develop the country (Lee, 1999).

During the 1960s -1970s, economic and socio-demographic changes in Korean society, such as improved living conditions, reduced family size and reduced birth rates followed by economic growth of the nation, brought the nation-wide spread of the ‘nuclear family’ ideology. Changes in social class and family structures induced high recognition of ‘the middle class’ and the “dedicated mother” was the ideal image of married women who were regarded as experts in

child education or seeking information/advice on childrearing from educational experts. Mothers were entirely responsible for their children's academic failure (Lee, 2003).

Lastly, "a pro-mother" represents the latest ideal of Korean mothers (Lee, 2003). It places a great emphasis on scientific evidence-based childrearing; the ideal has been typically accepted and shared among young, middle-class mothers in Korea. While different ideals or images of Korean mothers stress different aspects of motherhood, they all are the products of social construction of the children-centered and labor-intensive motherhood ideology in Korean society (Lee, 2003). Since fulfilling the "pro-mother" role requires women's complete commitment, including time and money, working poor mothers feel greatly stressed and frustrated at not being able to support their children as middle-class, full-time mothers do (Lee, 2003).

In sum, despite the rapid industrialization and subsequent exposure to Western culture and values in Korea, Confucianism remains a fundamental force in the legal, institutional, and ethical systems in Korean society (Park et al., 2008). Rapid social changes in the past few decades in Korea have been accompanied by some improvement of Korean women's social status. However, it also has generated an ideal that emphasizes motherhood, which in turn becomes another tool to confine the woman's mobility largely within the domestic world.

Living as a Member of Single-Mother Families in Korea

Becoming Single-Mother Families

Women can become single due to a variety of reasons, including widowhood, separation, divorce, abandonment, and non-marital childbirth. While divorce and non-marital childbirth are the major paths to being single (Weinraub et al., 2002), widowhood and divorce have been the primary reasons of being single mothers for Korean women in the past decade (Yang, 2004). The

number of single mothers through divorce has rapidly increased in the past decade (Kong, 2000). In the traditional society, only men could initiate divorce. The husband could divorce his wife when she violated any of the following seven conditions: failure to give birth to a son, disobedience to parents-in-law, outspokenness, stealing, jealousy, adultery, and hereditary disease (Yu, 1987). In contemporary Korea, the major reasons for divorce include extra-marital affairs, spousal abuse, neglect or abandonment of the family; in particular, divorced women report spouse abuse as the leading cause of divorce while divorced men report extra-marital affairs (Yoo, 2000).

Social and Self-Perception of Single-Mother Families in Korean Society

Traditionally, divorce brings “shame” to the entire family (Im, 2003). Since the powerful Confucian patriarchy as a sociopolitical system since the *Chosun* era emphasized the importance of the family unit and its harmony, divorce has been viewed as social failure and a stigma to avoid (Kim, Park, & Choi, 2010). Divorced men or women are seen as breaking up their families, the single most important social unit in Confucian culture (Park et al., 2008). Thus, the members of divorced families tend to suffer from a heavier stigma than those in American society (Kim et al., 2010).

Divorced women are viewed as responsible for breaking up the family and are treated negatively (Korean Womenlink, 1999). Social prejudice against divorced women depicts them as failing to maintain a good relationship with their husbands, having a problematic personality, or being selfish enough to sacrifice their children’s lives for their own happiness (Yang, 2004). Such bias against the divorced woman permeates various aspects in her life; both the single mother and her children are discriminated against by neighbors, community, society and even by their own families (Kong, 2000).

Children of the divorced mother are viewed as maladaptive and more vulnerable to juvenile delinquency compared to children from two-parent families (Oh, 2000; Yang, 2004). Because of the absence of their fathers, children of divorced families are regarded as less well developed or as potentially underdeveloped personality-wise (Kim, 1998). Divorced single-mother families are generally considered “in deficit.” “Families in deficit,” the name by which the female-headed families were originally called, reflects the biased perspective on such families (Korean Womenlink, 1999).

Life Challenges of Single-Mother Families

Single-mother families are known to experience significant financial challenges after the loss of spouses (Kim, 1998). In 2000 in Korea, of 14,000 households, 2,600 or 18.5% of households were headed by females a year (Korean National Statistical Office, 2002). Of the single-mother families, 50% of the mothers were widowed; 21.4% were single with cohabitating partners 16%; and 11.6% were divorced. Although Korean women are now actively participating in the labor force, single-mother families have a higher probability of living in poverty than single-father families (Park, 2008). Among all the expenses for single-mother families, mothers often reported that paying for their children’s educational expenses was the most difficult. This means that children of single mothers may not be able to receive support for their academic success (Kim, Lee, Kim, & Song, 2001).

Along with the absence of the father in a family, single-mother families are likely to deal with potential and actual crisis because of altered family roles and relationships (Oh, 2001; Yang, 2004). Since the mother must deal with the dual roles of caregiver and breadwinner, her children are expected to help with the mother’s tasks; this can easily overburden the child, especially the

first born. The eldest daughter helps the mother maintain the family routines. The eldest son, on the other hand, is often expected to perform the father's role to take care of his younger siblings. During familial transition from two-parent families to single-mother families, establishing new role boundaries between the mother and her children is not always easy. Individual members of the family may experience role confusion or even inversion of each other's role, which might lead to family conflict or eventually the family's malfunctioning (Byun, 1996). Whereas the relationship between parents and children is usually hierarchical, that of single-mother families may become collaborative.

A lack of communication among family members is often reported by Korean single mothers in that the mother is not likely to have enough time to interact with her children due to her long working hours and exhaustion (Ok, Sung, Lee, & Lee, 2002). Single mothers, especially those working full-time, often feel guilty about not taking good care of their children or not providing enough support for the children's academic achievement (Ok et al., 2002). In addition, as the mother must deal with her own psychological distress and acclimate to her new life without a spouse, the mother might not be able to respond to her children's needs in appropriate ways or express her affection toward them. Such financial burden and the mother's own transitional difficulties may result in poor parenting quality: inconsistent disciplines, too much comparison with other children, and a reluctance to actively engage in the children's education (Kim, 1998).

Korean single mothers often report self-withdrawal of interpersonal relationships after immediately becoming single (Kim & Kim, 1996; Moon & Kim, 2000). While the mothers tend to rely on their parents and family members of origin for seeking help, mothers intentionally try not to meet friends and withdraw from other social relationships to avoid being stigmatized by

others (Moon & Kim, 2000). It occurs most in the first few years immediately after physical and legal separation from the spouse, a time when single mothers need social support and network support the most (Kim, 1998). A loss of a supportive network and withdrawal from social activities has the potential to exacerbate the mother's social isolation.

Although the extent to which the offspring of Korean single mothers encounter problems varies, children of single mothers tend to experience a variety of adaptive issues after the father's absence. The issues include: low relationship quality with mothers (Koh & Han, 1995; Oh, 2001); being overburdened by housework responsibilities; being emotionally distressed; a lack of role models due to loss of the father (Asan Welfare Foundation, 1997); more negative self-perceptions; viewing minor life and school events in more negative ways (Kim, Kim, & Choi, 1995); and poor academic achievement, a less supportive network, and more adaptive problems than their counterparts of two-parent families (Oh, 2001). When children of single mothers perceive that their relationship with their mother is poor and the mother's attitudes are hostile and authoritarian, the children are likely to have more problems across diverse psychosocial areas (Kim et al., 1995).

Factors that affect single-mother families' well-being during their familial transition include the mother's educational level, employment status, number and age of her children, match between genders of the mother and her child, e.g., mother-daughter, father-son, psychological distress level, relationship qualities between her ex-spouse and children, religion, physical and mental health status, etiology of formation of single-mother families (divorce, separation, widowhood, etc.), and duration of being a single-mother family (Kim, 1998; Kim et al., 1995; Kong, 2000; Moon et al., 2000). Mothers' educational level, in particular, is a strong predictor of the family's well-being across studies, whereas it is not always the case in research

conducted in Europe and the U.S. (Kong, 2000). Although outcomes of interests are rarely analyzed by the type of single motherhood in research, widowhood has more positive outcomes than single motherhood by divorce (Park, 2008) on mothers' depression, general well-being, and self-esteem (Kong, 2000).

Korean Women's Transition from Korea to the United States

Korean immigrants can be divided into three distinct groups who have different demographic characteristics and grew up in different times of Korean society; thus, how they acclimate to the new society has also changed (Pak, 2006). The first group of Korean immigrants was male workers who migrated to the Hawaiian Islands from rural areas in Korea. They immigrated to the new land first by themselves and later brought their Korean wives. These wives were chosen through exchanging pictures, so-called "picture brides."; the Korean wives made significant contributions to the family economy by working at sugar cane farms or running boarding houses (Yang, 1987). They were known to maintain a strong ethnic identity as Korean, but daughters and granddaughters of these first generation women are currently disengaged from the mainstream Korean community in the U.S. and very little is known about them (Yu, 1987).

The second wave of Korean immigrants was largely composed of two groups of young Korean women after the Korean War (1951 to 1964): those who were married to American servicemen and those who were adopted by American families. Korean wives of American servicemen were less educated and from lower social classes of Korean society compared to the rest of the Korean immigrant women. They are known to have had a variety of adjustment difficulties after migration but were also ignored and stigmatized both by the Korean community and the mainstream American news media (Yu, 1987). Also, relatively little has been

documented about the experiences of Korean girls who were adopted by American families (Yu, 1987).

The third and largest group of Korean immigrants included those who migrated to the U.S. after 1965, when the Immigration and Naturalization Act passed (Um, 1996). The third group is different from the other groups in three aspects: first, they migrated to the U.S. as a family, not as individuals. Second, many of them are relatively highly educated and from professional occupations. They enjoyed urban life in the middle-class of Korean society and came from a modern Korean society whose social norms and values reflected the rapid economic development described earlier (Hurh, 1998). First-generation Korean women from this group are the largest group of women in the current Korean community in the U.S. (Yamamoto, Rhee, & Chang, 1994). The experiences of immigrant Korean women and their families described below are those of the last group of Korean immigrants. Common issues experienced by immigrant families across cultures will be described and Korean immigrant women's experiences in particular will be followed.

Acculturation Experience of Immigrant Families

The term acculturation has been used to describe the phenomena associated with culture change in multiple cultural contexts and its emphasis has changed over time (Berry, 2006). Acculturation is considered a complex process that involves multiple aspects of life and changes over time. Various factors are associated with different components with varying degrees. Even if subjective experiences of acculturation vary according to immigrants' cultural and social backgrounds, some issues are shared by all immigrants, such as lack of language proficiency, down-grade in employment and social class statuses, disrupted social ties, and discrimination

(Nah, 1993; Park, 2005).

At the family level, relational challenges induced by acculturation are unique to each relationship, i.e., husband-wife, parent-child, and between siblings (Chun, 2006). According to Helman (2007), immigration to a new environment may bring about two common inversions in the family's functional structures. The inversions include 1) generational inversion, a situation in which children have a new or greater power over their parents because immigrant children are likely to achieve language fluency much faster than their parents; and 2) gender role inversion caused by situations that require the husband and the wife to rearrange and share responsibilities for domestic work and finances for the entire family. Such inversions tend to decrease family solidarity and increase marital and generational conflict, potentially compromising the mental health of family members. As families are the center of acculturation processes particularly for individuals from collectivistic societies –e.g., Koreans – and children (Chun, 2006), it is potentially more difficult for such immigrants to bear concurrent family transitions such as divorce or widowhood.

Acculturation Experiences of Korean Immigrant Women

Common issues resulting from immigration include experiencing downgrades in social status; loss of social ties/networks; and role conflicts (Im et al., 2001; Kim et al., 1997; Kim et al., 2005; Park, 2005). Issues that appear to be particularly challenging for Korean women include participating in economic activities, difficulties in child rearing, obligatory relationships with families-in-law, and commitment to Protestant faith and activities (Ref).

Participating in economic activities has been described as one of the most apparent changes induced by immigration for Korean women (Boo, 1985; Um, 1996; Yu, 1987). Korean

immigrant women tend to be the partial or principal source of family income after arriving in the U.S. (Kim et al., 2005; Shin, 2007). To meet the family's financial needs, many Korean immigrant housewives start working outside the home after migration. Working outside the home was conventionally the man's role in a household and thereby was new for some women. Women's economic contribution is not always perceived by women and men in the same way. For women, it gives them more independence and power in household decision-making, but also is accompanied by being overburdened by multiple roles as well. Some Korean men take it as loss of their position and authority within a family, which results in marital conflicts (Boo, 1985; Kim et al., 2005).

Korean immigrant couples are known to experience substantial marital conflict post-migration, most of which is attributed to changes in gender roles between husband and wife (Im, 2003; Nah, 1993). The extent to which marital conflicts and role division of household responsibilities are resolved appears to be dependent on how close couples are in age, their level of education, and their devotion to traditional values (Kim et al., 2005). The division of domestic work and rights is less equal among older couples than it is for their younger counterparts (Kim et al., 2005). A rising number of Korean women choose to escape from such a conflictual, male-dominated marital relationship by divorce or by marrying non-Korean men, while the majority of them tolerate their multiple burdens (Yu, 1987).

The worst cases of family conflict have been manifested in various forms of husband-to-wife domestic violence – e.g., emotional, physical, or sexual – to which more and more Korean immigrant women have been exposed after migration (Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence, 2005). Un- or under-employed husbands who feel marginalized by their more limited language proficiency and earning power compared to their wives might use

violence to compensate for such damaged self-image or loss of face as a male (Kim et al., 2005). In Kim and Sung's (2000) study of conjugal violence in 256 Korean American families in the Chicago area, husbands who perceived higher levels of stress reported a higher rate of assaulting their wives; the rate of wife beating was four times higher in male-dominant couples than that in egalitarian couples. Such domestic violence is not easily exposed and has often been condoned in Korean communities (Kim et al. 2005).

Mothers' employment status also affects their child-rearing environments. Finding affordable child care, practical limitations to offer sufficient time and supervision for their children due to long working hours, and difficulties in discipline are examples of issues frequently reported by Korean immigrant mothers (Nah, 1993; Kim et al., 2005). In Nah's study (1993), Korean parents feel inadequate as parents when they cannot help with the children's school work, they are anxious when they see the children losing their ethnic identity and not observing traditional values and norms. In Kim and Hong's study (2007), Korean American parents, particularly the mothers, were warm, sensitive, and responsive to subtle cues of their children. However, they were not likely to express affection as often as American parents. Because children grow up in American culture, which emphasizes opposite values, e.g., independence and assertiveness, Korean parents who grew up in a Confucian patriarchal society that values interdependence and obedience may find it difficult to become familiar with the American style of discipline and to integrate two different methods of discipline into their own parenting style (Kim & Cain, 2008).

The most frequently reported challenge in the parent-child relationship after immigration is conflict or tension due to a widening disagreement on cultural values and beliefs between the parents and their children (Chun, 2006). As children become rapidly accustomed to American

cultural values and mindsets, but lack Korean cultural context and norms to which their parents have been enculturated and vice versa, it is expected that the parents and children will experience more disagreement on various issues in their daily lives as children grow up (Kim et al., 2005).

Different expectations about parent-child relationships and academic achievement between Korean parents and their more Americanized children are often cited as major contributors of such dyadic conflict and tension (Kim et al., 2005). Korean immigrant parents have grown up in the context of a ferociously competitive and hierarchical society in which the parent-child relationship is also hierarchical and children's academic success is regarded as the best and most legitimate means of social mobility, that is, a key to the entire family's success as well as to the children's own success (Lee, 2003; Sorensen, 1994). Therefore, children of Korean immigrants are usually expected to be submissive and deferential to their parents and be greatly successful in school, both of which are not vastly emphasized in American society into which the children acculturate (Kim et al., 2005). It may be very stressful for children to find a way to compromise in their day-to-day lives between the two values of a more egalitarian individualistic American culture and a more authoritarian collectivistic Korean culture. The lack of adequate conversation and time spent with children due to long working hours (Yu, 1987), using a translated language to communicate each other (Kim et al., 2005), generational role inversion due to the parents' lack of language proficiency – when children are performing a “cultural broker's” role – can aggravate such conflict (Kim et al., 2005).

In many cases, Korean women's intricate and obligatory relationships with families-in-law continue in the U.S. Although marriage has been seen as a union of two families, not only of two individuals in Korean culture (Im, 2003), the husband's family is more influential and

actively involves itself in the couple's decision making; it also imposes cultural obligations on the wife (Lee, 2003). Married Korean women are expected to fulfill extended obligations to their in-law family members, especially parents-in-law and the husband's siblings, even if they do not live together. When the couple is not financially independent nor have their children yet, the influence of in-law families may continue to exist (Kim et al., 2005).

Unlike earlier Korean immigrants, many of the Korean immigrant families who immigrated to the U.S. since 1965 followed their families-in-law, which means the family's life immediately after migration was greatly dependent on their in-law family (Shin, 2007). In such circumstances, the proximity to and dependency on the sponsoring families-in-law tends to limit the family's social and spatial mobility to a significant degree. It also adds cultural obligations to the woman's burdens, which may lead to increased troubles with in-law families and marital conflicts (Nah, 1993; Shin, 2007).

Psychological Well-Being of Immigrant Korean Women

A review of the existing literature on Korean women's acculturation experiences showed that immigrant Korean women often experience severe depressive symptoms compared to immigrant Korean men and any other Asian ethnic groups in the U.S (Kim et al., 1997). Most studied was the relationship between depressive symptoms and acculturation-related factors among Korean immigrant women. Depression among Korean immigrant women has been examined in relation to the women's acculturation patterns (Bae, 1998; Choi, Miller, & Wilbur, 2009; Kim, 2007), acculturative stress (Choi, 1994), and barriers to seeking mental health services (Choi, 2006).

It seems that the negative relationship between acculturation level and severity of depressive symptoms experienced by Korean immigrants has been well established.

Acculturation, in most cases, was a significant predictor of depressive symptoms among Korean immigrant women. Less English fluency and preference for Korean culture and interactions within Korean ethnic groups were positively associated with a higher number of depressive symptoms (Bae, 1998). Those who belonged to the ‘marginalized’ group, which was characterized as not willingly involved in both Korean and American cultures, were likely to have the highest level of depressive symptoms among four acculturation patterns (Bae, 1998; Choi et al., 2009). In Choi’s (1994) study, acculturative stress was the most significant predictor of depressive symptoms for both Korean men and women.

In contrast, English fluency, adoption of American appearance, having individualistic values, and having social support were positively associated with less depressive symptoms experienced by Korean immigrant women (Park & Burnstein, 2008; Choi, Miller, & Wilbur, 2009). Such results imply that either retaining the culture of origin (i.e., “separated”) or acculturating to the new culture of the host society (i.e., “assimilated”) is associated with better mental health outcomes than being marginalized. Although it is relatively well-known that those who are marginalized in both cultures display worse outcomes in mental health – depression in particular – than any other groups, research on the process of marginalization has been less studied. Studies are still needed on how immigrants become marginalized and how they manage their health problems, including Korean immigrants’ mental health.

Kim’s study (2007) was the only exception that there was no significant association between group membership and mental health outcomes. Also, those who lived with their family members were likely to have greater numbers of depressive symptoms than those who lived alone. The results show that the relationship between depression and acculturation level among Korean immigrants cannot be determined in simplistic ways

Religious participation, especially ethnic church membership appears particularly helpful for Korean immigrants to dispel stress and tension due to immigration and thereby prevent them from experiencing serious depressive symptoms (Huh & Kim, 1990; Park, Murgatroyd, Raynock, & Spillet, 1998; Shin, 2007). Korean immigrants' church involvement post-immigration (70-80%) is greater than any other Asian ethnic groups in the U.S (Ng, 1995) and those of Koreans (47%) as well (Kim et al., 2005).

Christian churches in Korean communities in the U.S. have been the primary institutions in which Korean immigrants can be assisted with their new environment. With Christian missionaries' active involvement, the first group of Korean immigrants to the U.S. formed Christian churches, which provided social functions for Koreans in the new country (Pak, 2006). Huh and Kim (1990) describe three major roles that Korean ethnic churches play: social, cultural, and educational. Korean churches are the most inclusive and accessible institutions where Korean immigrants can have primary and secondary group interactions in the U.S. (p.30). Church is also the place where they can find people who undergo and understand similar struggles as immigrants, and can seek psychological and material support as well (Kim et al., 2005).

Church participation per se, however, may not be a strong predictor of better mental health of Korean immigrants. In a study that examined relationships between religious orientation and depressive symptoms among 95 Korean immigrants in Louisiana (Park et al., 1998), the level of intrinsic religious orientation (that is, attending church for searching for meaning and guidance in life) and education level were negatively associated with depression. However, the length of residence, level of extrinsic religious orientation (i.e., joining church for instrumental and utilitarian purposes), and divorce experience are positively related to depressive

symptoms. Merely attending church does not make positive changes in immigrant Koreans' mental health. .

For immigrant Korean women in particular, participation in church activities is likely to have two contradictory consequences: empowering them and consolidating conventional Korean ideologies for women (Shin, 2007). Participation in church activities provides opportunities to relieve spiritual crisis incurred by immigration and supportive networks (Kim et al., 2005; Kwon, 2000; Park et al., 1998; Shin, 2007). In contrast, Shin (2007) found that the submissive and docile image of traditional Korean women was reinforced through married Korean women's active interpreting and applying some of the Christian principles that emphasize patience and forbearance. Findings of Kwon's study (2000) also support that Korean Protestants tend to emphasize collectivistic, other-oriented values. Thus, the combination of traditional family ideologies and Korean women's ways in which they apply, interpret, and practice Christian beliefs as a woman substantially shapes their preferences toward new life situations. For example, married Korean women in Shin's research had low career ambition and viewed their economic activities as 'extra' or 'additional' to those of their husbands. Since Korean women primarily socialize with Koreans within Korean community, such a limited spatial mobility and rare contact with American culture may restrict their social mobility to the mainstream society.

In sum, the major challenges that Korean immigrant women experienced were closely intertwined within the altered relationships with their husbands and dissonance between their perceived social statuses and those imposed by the society to which they immigrated (Im et al., 2001; Kim et al., 1997; Kim et al., 2005; Park, 2005). The changed socio-cultural environment leads them to reassess and redefine their roles and identities (Lee, 1988; Pak, 2006; Park, 2005; Suh, 2000). The process of relocation involves a search for a new identity that empowers the

person to face existential loneliness and isolation, and Korean ethnic churches provide the place where they can find meaning and a new perspective on their lives (Park et al., 1998). Religious faith and participation play a central role in Korean immigrant adaptation to the U. S. (Kim et al., 2005; Park et al., 1998).

However, the majority of the studies on Korean immigrant women's experiences were based on married women. Even if single-parent women were included, the number was too small to conduct a separate analysis. More importantly, since the women's major difficulties were likely to result from the relationships with their husbands, all of the issues may not be true for immigrant Korean single mothers.

Living as a Single Mother in the U.S.

Single-mother families to date are not a homogenous group (Weinraub et al., 2002). There are many types of single mothers, including never-married, widowed, divorced, separated, single-mothers by choice, lone mothers, and the like. Each group has a unique set of issues as well as common problems shared with almost all types of single-mother families (Hetherington & Stanley-Hegan, 2002). Among the different groups, the focus of this chapter will be on single-mother families who consist of mothers who are solo parents, not cohabitating with partners and their dependent children.

Being a Single Mother in American Culture

While widowhood and divorce are the primary etiologies of increased single-mother households in contemporary Korean society, divorce and non-marital childbirth are the main types of single-mother families in the United States in the past decade (Weinraub et al., 2002). The largest segment of single-parent families in the U. S. are European divorced mothers,

whereas almost half of the never-married single mothers consist of Black mothers (Hetherington et al., 2002).

Demographic characteristics of single-mother households have changed in the past few decades. The former social image of single mothers in the U.S. was that they were generally younger, less-educated and with significantly more limited personal, social, and economic resources and a suboptimal child-rearing environment compared to two-parent families (Ricciuti, 1999). However, since 1990 there is an increased proportion of single mothers who are older than 20 years old, working in managerial and professional positions and never married (Weinraub et al., 2002). In general, single parenthood in the U.S. tends to be temporary, rather than enduring or permanent (Hetherington et al., 2002), whereas immigrant Korean divorced mothers are more likely to remain single for a longer time or never to remarry (Chang, 1998).

Major Challenges for Single-Mothers

Single mothers and their children experience many changes during their family transitions. Economic hardships, difficulties in parenting, and loss or changes in quality of social contact and support are challenges commonly experienced by single-mother families (Ricciuti, 1999). Mothers are known to experience declines in psychological well-being, which include decreased happiness, mastery, and poor self-concept; increased symptoms of depression, emotional distress, social isolation, and alcohol consumption. Whereas single mothers appear to have reasonable access to social support, they are notably disadvantaged with respect to psychological resources, as documented by studies of depression and psychosocial well-being (Amato, 2000). Single mothers also report more health problems than do their married counterparts (Benzeval, 1998). Such challenges and difficulties appear to subside and the family

is likely to achieve a new stability two to three years after separation or divorce (Amato, 2000; Hetherington, 1989).

Among multiple difficulties for single mother families, economic hardships and parenting difficulties have been the most challenging tasks reported by the mothers (Kim, 1998). Single mothers are more likely to experience significant decline in family income after marital disruption (Amato, 2000). While non-custodial fathers' income is likely to remain stable, custodial mothers experience significant decline in their income approximately 13 to 30 percent (Hetherington et al., 2002; McLanahan & Booth, 1989). Decreased family income results in a lower standard of living (Amato, 2000). Financial distress is negatively related to parental well-being, parent-child relationships, and the use of effective discipline and supervision of children by mothers and positively associated to mother and child depression, and behavioral problems in the children (Hetherington et al., 2002).

Parenting has been one of the hardest challenges for single mothers (Hetherington et al., 2002). Single parents in general tend to have more difficulties in raising children, use less authoritative parenting and have greater parental role strain than do their married counterparts (Hetherington et al., 2002; McLanahan et al., 1989). Divorced mothers are known to be less supportive, engage in more conflict with their children, invest less time and supervision, have fewer rules, but implement harsher discipline (Hetherington, 1993; Simons, 1996). The more the mother perceives distress, the more she uses inappropriate rearing behaviors such as authoritarian parenting, less expression of her affection to the children, or being reluctant to respond the children's needs or to communicate with them (Dornbusch et al., 1985; Kim, 1998; Hetherington et al., 2002). Belle (1982) pointed out that it may be especially hard for single mothers to manage their stress because the majority of their stresses are chronic and deeply

embedded in their day-to-day lives. Emotional instability of the mother due to such chronic distress aggravates her inconsistent, nervous or impulsive response in interacting with the children (Hetherington et al., 2002). Since the majority of single mothers are working, the conditions of the mother's working environment should be taken into account, including type of occupation, employment status (e.g., full or part time), flexibility of working hours, and perceived financial well-being (Kim, 1998; Lee, 2003).

Parenting quality of single mothers is negatively affected when the mother has two to three or more children in the household, and the child is younger (Kim et al., 1996; Ok et al., 2002). Moreover, the mother's own adjustment to family transition is also closely associated with the quality of parenting; when the mother experiences psychological distress such as anxiety and depression and when the family's financial hardship is getting worse, her parenting pattern is more likely to be more inconsistent, restrictive, more dictatorial, and harshly punitive (Conger et al., 1992; Hashima & Amato, 1994).

Children's Adjustment to Family Transition

Examining the impact and consequences of changes in family structure on children's adjustment has been a central issue in research on single-parent families (Amato, 2000; Hetherington et al., 2002; McLanahan et al., 1989). Children living with single mothers are likely to experience more problems than children from two-parent families on academic, social, psychological, and behavioral adjustment (Hetherington et al., 2002). They tend to achieve less academic outcomes, show less intellectual abilities, be more emotionally unstable (Kline & Tschann, 1991) or depressed, more rebellious to authority, express more anxiety (Amato & Keith, 1991), and show more deviant behaviors, e.g., delinquent behaviors, substance abuse, or running

away from home (Ref). They are also likely to have a more negative self-concept (Amato, 1993). When children are over-burdened, that is, their responsibilities within the household are beyond their capabilities or inappropriate for their ages, children from single-mother families are more likely to exhibit low self-esteem, increased symptoms of depression and anxiety, and compulsive caregiving (Hetherington, 1999). Such adjustment problems experienced by children increase substantially during the first few months immediately after parental divorce (Hetherington et al., 2002) but subside after two to three years (Amato, 2000). Therefore, the first two or three years after family transition is a critical period for both mothers and children who undergo family transition.

A vast majority of research has been conducted to identify crucial factors and conditions under which the children from single-mother families are able to adjust well and have less negative consequences of the family transition on their later stage of lives, i.e., young adulthood (McLanahan et al., 1989). The children's relationship with the custodial parent and her parenting quality are closely associated with the children's adjustment (Amato, 2000). Frequent conflict with the custodial mother or her ineffectual parenting is related to the children's lower academic achievement, externalizing as well as internalizing problems, lower self-esteem, and poorer social competence (Hetherington et al., 2002).

Evidence on the effects of parental divorce by the children's gender and age is inconsistent. Living with a same-sex parent has mixed results: gender match of parent-child was not significantly helpful for children's adjustment (Downey & Powell, 1993). However, gender match of the parent-child was advantageous for academic achievement in children who lived with same-sex custodial parents (Hetherington et al., 2002).

Long-term Consequences of Parental Divorce

A meta-analysis of studies that compared children of single-mother with dual-parent families shows that children of single-mother families are likely to show more negative consequences in their later lives. Offspring of single mothers tend to have less education, higher rate of high school drop-out, become poor, and receive some type of welfare, especially for daughters (Amato et al., 1991). They are likely to form one's own family earlier, give birth to a child earlier, are more likely to divorce if married, and daughters of single mothers are more likely to become single mothers themselves either through divorce or non-marital childbearing than those of two-parent families (McLanahan et al., 1989).

A critical review and meta-analysis of the literature on intergenerational consequences of family transition show that the most important factors in children's adjustment in divorced families include authoritative parenting of the custodial mother, cooperative relationship in parenting between divorced parents, and the quality of children's relationship with parents (Amato, 2000; Hetherington et al., 2002).

More importantly, studies that compare children's outcomes by quality of marriage (between happily and unhappily married couples or between low- and high-conflict families) and family structure (single-mother and two-parent families) provide interesting evidence that the offspring of single-mother families are not significantly different from those of unhappy or high-conflict families (McLanahan et al., 1989). Although such studies are based on relatively small samples, it would be reasonable to speculate that children's frequent or chronic exposure to family conflict may be a determinant of the children's behaviors rather than divorce per se or the absence of a father figure in the household.

Even though a vast majority of research on single-mother families has been conducted, little is known about how single-mother families of ethnic minorities accommodate during and after a family transition. Instead, the primary focus of the literature has been on white middle class women's transition; racial and ethnic minorities are rarely presented in divorce research (Amato, 2000; Chang, 1998, 2003). Existing studies on divorced Korean immigrant mothers indicate that raising children as a single mother, dealing with financial difficulties, and managing emotional difficulties are the most pressing problems (Chang, 1998). Self-reported health status, reasons for divorce, social support and income affected the quality of the women's post-divorce adjustment (Chang, 2003). Of these factors, self-reported health status and reasons for divorce were the most powerful predictors of the women's adjustment quality (Chang, 2003).

In conclusion, although only two studies have addressed immigrant Korean single mothers' experiences, findings suggest that they undergo similar issues as sole mothers and heads of household such as parenting difficulties, economic hardships, and dealing with their own psychological problems. Economic hardships and mothers' psychological well-being are closely associated with maternal parenting quality and children's well-being as well. Immediate and long-term consequences of growing up in Korean single-mother families remain unanswered due to the under-representation of the specific group in research.

Perspectives on Single-Mother Families in Research

There exist two different perspectives on single-mother families (Amato, 2000b). One viewpoint on such families claims that single-parent families formed through divorce or non-marital childbirth are pathologic, and thereby children from such families were assumed to demonstrate pathologic behaviors (McLanahan et al., 1989). An increase in such "pathologic"

families was assumed to be conducive to an increase in a variety of social problems, including poverty, crime, or lowered academic standards (Amato, 2000b). A basic premise of this perspective is that the two-parent family is the ideal for individuals in which a person can grow and cultivate oneself as a healthy and competent citizen. Early studies on children from single-mother families supported such a perspective as long as the children exhibited more negative outcomes than those from two-parent families. However, this research perspective was criticized because study samples were small and heavily relied on extreme cases, such as children who were in facilities for emotional disturbance treatment or in crime justice systems (McLanahan et al., 1989).

The second perspective argues that an individual can grow up successfully in any family structure (Amato, 2000b). Although a family transition would produce temporary distress and hardship, this perspective views a single-mother family as an alternative that relieves mothers and their children from harmful domestic environment, which may cause an enduring negative impact on the family members' well-being. According to this second perspective, poverty, the lack of public services, and unsafe neighborhood or poor community environment would be more threatening to a family's well-being than marital disruption (Coontz, 1992; Demo, 1992). The argument has been supported by methodological critique that differences of various outcomes found in research between single-parent families and two-parent families were confounded by socioeconomic status (e.g., Herzog & Sudia, 1973). This second perspective also enables scientists to more positively view single-mother families (McLanahan et al., 1989).

Recent studies have focused on diverse trajectories of single-parent families and the conditions under which the family fares better or worse (Kong, 2000). Empirical evidence shows that disadvantages or problems experienced by children from single-mother families cannot be

entirely explained by families' socioeconomic status, although it is still a major predictor of children's well-being in single-mother families (McLanahan et al., 1989). Studying each type of single-mother families separately, rather than aggregating them, and examining social strains imposed on them are needed (Kong, 2000).

Studies to examine single-mother families' strengths and ways by which the family fares well despite the presence of multiple hardships started more than three decades ago (McLanahan et al., 1989). However, a majority of the existing research still focuses on the family's deficits and negative outcomes (Ford-Gilboe, 1996; Coll et al., 2002). Shedding light only on problems and deficits of the family deteriorates their marginalized statuses, ignores the diversity among them, which eventually reinforces stereotypes about the family (Ford-Gilboe et al., 1996). Therefore, more balanced views are needed to reveal the family's strengths and resilience as well as document problems unique to specific groups of families.

More importantly, the family's experiences need to be understood from their own voices. The ways in which persons perceive and respond to a specific phenomenon reflect their own causation and explanation of what happens and how social context influences their lives (Schoenberg & Drew, 2002). Since incongruent perspectives on phenomena of interests between health care providers and the client families often hinders development and implementation of accessible interventions for them (Hunt et al., 2001; Schlomann et al., 2007), it is necessary to investigate phenomenon of interest from the family's own perspective.

In conclusion, an empowering and necessary view on immigrant Korean single-mother families requires a more balanced perspective in which to view the family's strengths as well as their problems, without assuming homogeneity across the families. A paradigm in which

research can avoid imposing any predetermined frameworks is also needed. Conducting a qualitative study within an interpretive paradigm is a first step to understand the processes by which immigrant Korean single-mother families manage their lives and challenges from their own perspective.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology and methods chosen for the proposed study and the actual processes of collecting and analyzing study data. Sections in this chapter include: 1) the rationale for choosing Grounded Theory methodology; 2) symbolic interactionism as the philosophical underpinnings of the methodology; 3) Grounded Theory procedures; 4) establishing trustworthiness of the data; 5) procedures for data collection and analysis; ; and 6) protection of human subjects; and 7) characteristics of participants. .

Rationale for Choosing Grounded Theory Methodology

While the vast amount of research has been conducted on vulnerable families such as single-parent or immigrant families in the U.S., limited research has been carried out with immigrant Korean single-mother families. Of studies that have been conducted, results to date are based on data obtained on standardized measures with a vast emphasis on the family's deficits or problems. More importantly, such findings do not reflect the women's viewpoints in their own words. Published studies are also limited in their ability to explain the complexities of the situations women face in their everyday lives as a single woman, a sole parent, and as an immigrant.

What is needed is to gain a greater understanding of the challenges immigrant Korean single-mother families face and the dynamic moving processes by which the family navigates life experiences and conditions under which the processes occur, including the strengths of the women to manage the experiences as told in their own voices. A substantive theory that accounts for such processes by a specific group of immigrant Korean single-mother families is necessary

to develop accessible and culturally appropriate services, supports, and programs to assist their families.

Grounded Theory methodology was chosen for the current study because this methodology is particularly recommended to study research areas that are relatively understudied and in which basic problems and relevant processes need to be identified (Creswell, 2007; Stern, 1980). The goal of the methodology is to generate a theory that accounts for key social and psychological processes in a particular social setting (Stern, 1980). A theory generated by use of Grounded Theory will be empirically grounded and work properly with the specific group of participants, immigrant Korean single-mother families. Since nursing is a practice profession, information that will assist interventions and nursing practice is critical to the advancement of science. The emerging theory will serve as a foundation for developing nursing programs and services that are culturally appropriate and accessible to the special population.

Grounded Theory and Symbolic Interactionism

Developed by two sociologists, Glaser and Strauss (1967), Grounded Theory is a methodology for developing mid-range theory that is grounded in empirical data that is systematically gathered and analyzed. As an inductive research endeavor, Grounded Theory has its roots in symbolic interactionism that focuses on human behaviors and interactions that are mediated by symbols such as words or objects (Annells, 1996).

Symbolic interactionism stems from the ideas of pragmatist philosophers including George Herbert Mead, Charles Cooley, and Herbert Blumer. Blumer was the one who coined the term 'symbolic interactionism' and expanded and refined Mead's perspectives (Crotty, 2007). Symbolic interactionism can trace its basis to the concept of 'looking glass self' described

by Charles Cooley in the 1920s (Heath et al., 2004). The looking-glass self is the process of identity development in which an individual views oneself through others' perceptions.

Individual 'identity' is the outcome of social interactions and perceptions of the self by others that is integrated into the self (Yeung & Martin, 2003). In addition to Cooley's conceptual foundation, Mead argued that an individual should see oneself as a social object and take the others' standpoint in order to understand and grow oneself (Crotty, 2007).

In the 1960s, Blumer elaborated on Mead's work and integrated the interactionist approach with naturalistic inquiry (Heath et al., 2004). Blumer argued that human beings associate with each other using interpretive interaction. That is, individuals react to others based on their own interpretation of verbal or nonverbal cues (Annells, 1996). Therefore, human action and reaction are mediated by an interpretive process and such interaction can take place only by symbols, such as language or objects through which those involved share collective (or social) meanings and communicate with each other (McCann & Clark, 2003). In general, symbolic interactionism explores the human meaning system: the generation, persistence, and transformation of meaning through 'symbolic' interactions (Kendall, 1999). Such emphasis on a transactional and interpretive nature of social interaction in symbolic interactionism is consistent with the fundamental premises of interpretivism. In fact, symbolic interactionism is considered to be a branch of the interpretive paradigm (McCann et al., 2003a).

The influence of symbolic interactionism can be found in Strauss' conception of human action. Human action is a complex and variable phenomena and persons are actors to take an active role in responding to problematic situations; persons act on the basis of meaning which is defined and redefined through interaction (Strauss et al., 1998). Glaser (2002)'s great emphasis on the Grounded Theory interview as 'a very passive listening' shows the essential viewpoint of

symbolic interactionist about social interactions. Namely, to attempt to understand meanings and patterns of behaviors one must take attend to participants' standpoints. Moreover, according to Heath and Cowley (2004), Blumer emphasized the role of concepts that are sensitizing rather than definitive; that gain their utility and significance from patterned relationships rather than from quantifiable correlations.

Grounded Theory Procedures

Sampling Procedure

Since theoretical sampling is completely dependent on emerging categories, the initial decisions for data collection are based on general notions about subjects or study areas. In this regard, the initial sampling in the theoretical sampling process involves purposive sampling. In general, purposive sampling aims at finding 'good informants' who experienced the phenomenon under study and are reflective and willing to share their experience (Richard et al., 2007). The process is usually informed by the researcher's knowledge about the population involved or the issues under study that form 'pre-conceived' criteria for participants (Coyne, 1997). But, it is limited to the 'first' step of the sampling; the pre-conceived criteria for the initial sampling will be discarded and not be allowed to control the entire process (Strauss et al., 1998).

Subsequent recruitment will be carried out using a theoretical sampling strategy. Theoretical sampling refers to a process where the researcher decides what data to collect next and where to find them in order to gain variation of categories in their properties and dimensions with varying conditions as much as possible (Strauss et al., 1998). By using theoretical sampling, the researcher can discover and saturate categories and their properties and dimensions. Thus, the initial theoretical sampling aims at discovering as many categories as possible; after the

beginning, the process focuses more on densifying and saturating emergent categories; and continuing to discover new categories.

Throughout the procedure, the researcher will locate incidents, events, or happenings that enable the researcher to compare them with the previously-emerged categories in relation to properties and dimensions (Strauss et al., 1998). Newly selected groups of data will be compared to the pre-coded categories in terms of their similarities and differences. The researcher must continue to saturate all emerged categories until he or she feels confident that the core categories are identified and saturated.

When no new concepts or categories are generated from the data, it is the moment that the categories are theoretically saturated: that is, theoretical saturation is achieved (Kendall, 1999). Achieving theoretical saturation also means the analysis has accounted for much of the possible variability of the emerged concepts in the data (Strauss et al., 1998).

Data Coding and Analysis

In Grounded Theory methodology, research aimed at discovering theory requires concurrent data collection, coding and analysis to the fullest extent possible, which are “the underlying operation when generating theory” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 71). Coding is an essential aspect of transforming raw data into theoretical constructions of phenomenon of interest (Glaser, 1978). Constant comparative analysis and theoretical sampling are the two major procedures to achieve conceptual development and density of the emerging theory (Strauss, 1987).

Coding of Data

Coding systems fracture the empirical data first, and then group them together into conceptual codes, which are the basis of the emerging theory. Data are coded using the gerund ('-ing') coding process to capture dynamic moving processes (Glaser, 1978), sorted into categories, and then constantly compared throughout the entire process of the joint collection and analysis (Strickland, 1999). In Grounded Theory methodology, three distinct coding procedures are used to discover and organize ideas that emerge from concurrent collection and analyses of data: open, axial, and selective coding.

Open coding is defined as “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Strauss et al., 1990, pp.61). The coding process in this stage starts fracturing data into analytic pieces (codes) which can be raised to a conceptual level. During this stage, the researcher examines data at different level: words, line, sentence, paragraph, or the entire document (Strauss et al., 1998). Each action or incident that the researcher considers significant is identified and labeled with the terms used by participants (*in vivo* codes) or terms assigned by the researcher. Open codes that appear to pertain to a similar phenomenon are sorted into a “category,” which is more abstract than individual codes, and properties and dimensions of the categories are also identified. Properties are defined as “characteristics of a category,” the delineation of which defines and gives it meaning. Dimensions refer to “the range along which general properties of a category vary, giving specification to a category and variation to the theory” (Strauss et al., 1998, p.101). Incidents can be coded as indicators of multiple categories, but each category will be mutually exclusive.

Axial coding is the process of relating categories to their subcategories, the main goal of which is developing and relating categories systemically (Strauss et al., 1998). All the analyzed categories in open coding will become subcategories and such subcategories will be compared in

terms of their properties and dimensions and reorganized into conceptually/abstractly higher categories as the connections emerge. The process is guided by a paradigm model, which is an organizing scheme that enables the researcher to see how categories connect to one another by analyzing conditions, context, action/interactional strategies, and consequences of each category.

Selective coding is the final process of integrating and refining theory. The first step to integrate the theory is determining a core category. A core category is the “category under which all other categories can be subsumed” (Strauss et al., 1998, p. 146), so that the phenomenon under study can be most explained by it. In this effort the research is asking: what is the major theme the study participants are aiming to address. After the core category is identified, the researcher refines the theory: the initial set of categories will be reorganized around the core category; categories that need further development will be identified and saturated through additional theoretical sampling; and codes or categories that are excessive or not essential to the main ideas of the theory will be removed, which is called “delimiting the theory.” Throughout the delimiting process, the theory is made more dense and efficacious in order to explain the social process under study (Glaser et al., 1967). Conditions under which the category is likely and unlikely to occur and consequences of the core category will be examined. Finally, validation of the theory can be done by comparing the theory to raw data or by the participants’ approval.

Constant comparison, the process of joint coding and analysis, will be performed throughout the entire study procedure. Constant comparative analysis aims to generate and elaborate theoretical properties and to integrate and refine them, so as to form a grounded theory more systematically (Kearney, 1998). In the early phase of the coding procedure, the researcher codes each incident in the data for as many categories as possible. Newly coded incidents are

constantly compared with the prior incidents coded in the same category. Throughout the comparison, similarities and differences between incidents are determined.

Memo Writing

Memo writing is crucial to data analysis in Grounded Theory methodology. In Grounded Theory research, memo refers to “very specialized types of written records – those that contain the products of analysis or directions for the analyst” (Strauss et al., 1998, p.217). Memo writing enables the research to remain grounded and maintain the awareness of the researcher by forcing the analyst to work on conceptualizing the data rather than working with raw data and acting as reflections of analytic thoughts (Strauss et al., 1998).

Memo writing in Grounded Theory research can vary in terms of its content and form. It includes: theoretical memos in which the investigator records his or her developing ideas about codes and their relationships (Glaser, 1998) and stores theoretical ideas, decisions, and modifications throughout the analytic process (Kearney, 1998); and operational memos that contain procedural directions and ideas regarding data collection (Strauss et al., 1998). Memoing will begin with initial analysis and evolve as the research progresses. Throughout the research process, memos will be written to document: the progress; insights about the major tasks the individual is seeking to achieve; and directions and decisions made regarding construction of a theory (Strauss et al., 1998).

Throughout the data collection and concurrent analysis processes, each type of memo will be kept separate and recorded with dates, references to the documents from which ideas were derived, and denotations of the concepts or categories to which they pertain. Sorting the memos on each category will be the first step to writing the emerging theory. By doing that, the researcher is enabled to discover interrelationships among codes and categories including their

relations to the core category. Reviewing theoretical memos also allows the researcher to identify areas that need to be further developed or validated. By using memos, the researcher can easily return to the coded data when validation of a suggestive point or provision of specific data is needed.

Establishing Trustworthiness of the Data

Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research

Various criteria for evaluating qualitative studies have been proposed for the purpose of both assessing and enhancing the quality of the research. Despite the divergence of such criteria, trustworthiness criteria delineated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) have been used most by qualitative researchers (Polit et al., 2004). Trustworthiness is the term that Lincoln and Guba used to substitute for validity and reliability in quantitative research (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002), aspects of which are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln et al., 1985).

Credibility. Credibility refers to confidence in the “truth value” of the data and interpretations of them. Lincoln and Guba (1985) point out that credibility involves two aspects – credibility in following established research steps and the researchers’ rigor to enhance credibility. Among the most frequently used techniques to enhance credibility of qualitative research – triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checking.

Member checking, also known as respondent validation, refers to allowing participants to review findings from the data analysis in order to confirm or correct the work (Lincoln et al., 1985). Member checking is viewed as the most important technique for establishing the credibility of qualitative data.

Peer debriefing is one of the crucial techniques to establish trustworthiness of interpretive study (Lincoln et al., 1985). It involves sessions with peers to review and explore various aspects of the inquiry. Peer debriefing assists researchers to avoid arbitrary implementation of research procedures and interpretation of data. Through interaction with expert peers, the researcher can find implicit assumptions or preconceptions that he or she might have on the data.

Transferability. Transferability refers to the generalizability of the data: that is, whether the research findings can be applicable to other similar situations. Whereas quantitative researchers prove their findings' generalizability through statistical analysis and randomization, qualitative researchers need to provide as much detailed information about the research context as possible. Such description about the context, which Lincoln and Guba (1985) called "thick description", allows readers to judge whether the situation is similar to their own or not.

Dependability and Confirmability. Dependability (corresponding to reliability in conventional research) refers to the degree to which another investigator can follow the decision trail made by the original researcher. It is also called auditability (Beck, 1993). An audit trail refers to a systematic collection of materials and documentation that allows an independent auditor to come to conclusions about the data. The audit trail provided by the original researcher allows the auditor to scrutinize the research process and internal consistency throughout data analysis.

Confirmability (objectivity in conventional research) refers to the extent to which the research findings could be confirmed by other researchers. The audit trail, triangulation or keeping of a reflexive journal are methods that can enhance confirmability. An audit trail can be used to establish both dependability as well as confirmability because it allows scrutiny of the data and process (Polit et al., 2004).

Keeping a reflexive journal aims at active acknowledgement processes in which the researcher makes one's own sociocultural position explicit, instead of being objective or neutral, and realizes that the position will both help and hinder the interpretation of narrative data (Lietz, Langer, & Furman, R. 2006). Lincoln and Guba (1985) encourage using the reflexive journal in that it is applicable to all four trustworthiness components and provides a basis for the auditor's judgment regarding the data and process.

Building trustworthiness of the data in this study was pursued in five ways including: peer debriefing, member checking, material collection for an audit trail, reflexive journals, and thick description of the study context.

For the current study, four nurse scholars were invited to serve as peer debriefers: two members of the doctoral supervisory committee and two Korean nurse researchers who had earned their doctoral degrees conducting qualitative research. The Grounded theory methodology expert on the committee read the transcripts of interviews conducted in the first two rounds of interviews. Debriefing sessions with the expert were conducted based on discussions about the newly emerged codes and categories from the interview data and the integration of data across interviews. Other member of the committee also served as a peer debriefer to ensure that the analyses and interpretation were confirmable. Debriefing sessions with the two Korean nurse researchers were less formal. The discussion about common behaviors and attitudes among the study population prompted identification or consideration of possible links between emerging codes and categories. In general, the discussions with peer debriefers provided opportunities to examine the researcher's bias and confirm that the interpretation of the data was not arbitrary and was understandable to others.

For member checking, three out of fifteen participants reviewed the findings. Before having face-to-face meetings with the participants, the researcher summarized the analysis results and sent them via email. To prevent mutual influence of multiple participants on the review process, member checking was planned and carried out in the form of individual meetings with the three participants. In general, the participants confirmed that the researcher's interpretation of their life experiences conveyed the essence of their stories. These participants compared their own situations and experiences to the summarized processes of transitions, which was reflected in the findings as variation and conditions under which such variation occurred.

In the current study, a collection of materials for an audit trail was kept by the researcher, including audio-recorded interviews, the interview transcripts, transcripts translated into English, reflexive journals, field notes, theoretical memos, analytic notes and diagrams, written materials related to the substantive theory formation, and the final reports.

Keeping a reflexive journal served two aims: recognizing the researcher's influence on study processes and documenting the process of analysis and discovery of the core social processes in which the participants were engaged. As a Korean doctoral student researcher, an outsider of the Korean immigrant society as well as a professional with a higher level of education, the researcher was aware of her potential influence on the research process.

Lastly, the researcher provided thick description of the context where the findings were emerged. In particular, the findings of this study involved multiple stages and multiple transitions; conditions relevant to each stage and transitions were essential components of the findings. By providing detailed information about the context, readers can evaluate the transferability of the data in this study.

Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

Sample

To obtain information about the experience of immigrant Korean single-mother families living in the U.S., four single mothers who met these eligibility criteria were recruited for the initial in-depth interviews. Eligibility for this study included immigrant Korean women who were 1) born in Korea, 2) divorced or separated and whose former husbands were Korean, and 3) currently living with children under 18 years of age. Each single female parent did not have a cohabitating partner. Other conditions of the participants were not limited for the purpose of expanding, refining, and enriching the emerging theory. A total of 15 women participated in this study.

Those who identified themselves or their children as being under treatment for medical conditions were not excluded in the initial sampling, but the decision to include data from these participants was made after carefully comparing the theoretical relevance of the data to data from other participants. One participant identified herself as having a disability due to the former spouse's physical abuse. She was not under treatment at the time of the interview; and her health status allowed her to participate in the interview. Data from her stories were not significantly different from others' and were included in the analyses.

Since theoretical sampling is completely dependent on emerging categories, data from the first four interviews were transcribed and coded; theoretical sampling technique was applied until major codes became saturated. The first interview guide was revised based on the analysis of the first four interviews: questions and probes were added to inquire about how children contribute to getting the housework done, fulfilling the father's role, emotional hardships and comfort and support that mothers get when having such difficulties; comparison before and after

the divorce/separation; and working experiences. Data from the next five interviews were coded and compared with data from the initial interviews.

Constant comparative analysis revealed that data from the five new interviews were quite comparable to the data from the first four interviews. Newly emerged codes and categories were interrelated around childrearing, both sense of self as an individual and a mother, and psychological adjustment to and protection of the family from discrimination in the community. Based on the analysis results, the interview guide was revised again and questions and probes were added to inquire about mothers' introspection, filling in for the father's absence, and how to deal with negative emotions.

Data from the last round of interviews provided more stories about mothers' lives that were prioritized to nurture their children's growth. Participants in the last round of interviews were comparable to earlier participants in terms of the path to become a single mother, dependency on public assistance, and the ways in which they related to the community. To saturate codes and categories emerged from previous data, participants who were already interviewed but had not asked the newly added probes or questions were contacted again. The theoretical sampling procedure was stopped when the researcher found that no new data were added to the major codes and categories that were already established.

Recruitment

Recruitment was planned to be carried out in five different ways. The purpose of employing five different methods of recruitment was to sample different groups of women, especially in terms of religious groups, including churchgoers, Buddhists, and those who do not

have any religious beliefs. Eventually, three recruitment methods were effective. Fifteen immigrant Korean single mothers were recruited through Protestant churches, a social worker in California; and a website popular among Koreans. The majority of the participants were Christian, regardless of the route of recruitment. The researcher contacted two different religious agencies and obtained permission to recruit participants through the agencies via intermediaries; most of the participants were recruited via church intermediaries.

The researcher planned to have pastors of Korean churches as intermediaries, but changed the plan after consideration of the power of pastoral leadership in ethnic church communities. The major concern was potential coerced participation. Recruitment through pastors also had the potential threat of over-representation of women who are compliant and might be likely to give answers they believed would please the researcher during the interview. Based on advice from other church members, the researcher decided to ask small group leaders to serve as intermediaries. Three small group leaders identified and introduced the research to potential candidates. One-on-one meetings were held with the intermediaries to explain the study, introduce the recruitment flyer and its potential use as a recruitment tool and answer questions about the study.

The researcher made the recruitment flyer, which contained a brief description of the purpose of the study and the researcher's contact information. The study flyers were provided as their guide for introduction of the study; the intermediaries were trained about how to provide the flyers to eligible women and let them decide to participate or not. Since disclosing a status of being a single mother was a very sensitive issue among immigrant Korean women, it was often

challenging for them to ask divorced women to participate in research that would explore their experiences as divorced women. A total of five women were recruited via church intermediaries.

Participants in California were recruited through the researcher's informal network in Los Angeles, where the largest Korean community in the U.S. is located. A social worker who works at a Korean community center played an intermediary role. The researcher sent the flyers to the social worker and she approached eligible women; four single mothers participated in the study.

Participants were also recruited via a website that is popular among Korean immigrants. The study flyer was uploaded periodically and appeared on the homepage of the website. Women who were interested in the study contacted the researcher via email or phone call. These women were asked questions to verify their eligibility.

The interview took place at a location selected by the participant. At the beginning of each meeting, the study's purpose and procedures, benefits and potential risks and the participant's rights were reviewed. The consent form, in either Korean (Appendix E-1) or English (Appendix E), was distributed and participants were allowed to ask questions and express concerns. Questions regarding confidentiality and distribution of the data were brought up by a few participants and their questions were answered. After obtaining a signature, participants were asked to fill out a demographic information form (Appendix D or D-1). Filling out this form often provided the opportunity to initiate the interview in a comfortable manner. After the interview, a copy of the signed consent form and a \$25 gift card was mailed to each participant.

Data Collection and Interviewing

Interviews took place at a time and location selected by the participant. Interviews were conducted in participants' homes, the researcher's hotel room, a room in a community center, or an uncrowded corner in a coffee shop or bookstore. Interviews usually took about one and a half hours; they ranged from 40 minutes to 3 hours. Each participant participated in a face-to-face interview and six participants were interviewed twice. A total of 21 transcripts were analyzed. Interestingly, those who found themselves becoming strong tended to comment that the face-to-face interviews with the researcher were a great time to reflect on what they had been going through and appreciate how they had changed throughout their experience of being a single mother.

The interviews were audio-recorded. At the beginning of each interview the researcher provided an introduction and brief history about why this research was being conducted. Almost all participants were curious about the purpose of the research and were surprised that a nursing student was doing research about their lives as single mothers. The topic did not fit with their conceptualization of "nursing" or "what nurses do." After the introduction, the interviews started with asking a set of broad open-ended questions and probes listed in the interview guide (Appendix A). The initial interview guide was used for the first four interviews. Subsequent interviews also included three anchor questions and probes to elicit information about emerging codes. Based on the emerging codes and categories, the initial interview guide was revised twice and subsequent interviews were guided by the revised interview guide. Follow-up telephone contacts were made to clarify interview responses and obtain additional information from the prior interview participants based on revised interview guides. Relevant information regarding the prior interview was recorded. Methodological or theoretical memos were written whenever ideas regarding data analysis came to mind.

In the initial interview, each participant was asked to fill out a demographic information questionnaire (Appendix D), which asked: 1) mother-specific information; 2) general information about the entire family; and 3) child-related information. Participants were reminded that they had the right to refuse to answer any of the questions in the demographic questionnaire.

Data analysis

Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed immediately after the interview. The first four interviews were transcribed and the transcribed data were coded using gerund coding to capture characteristics of moving processes in which the participants were engaged. Coded data were transferred to code sheets (Appendix G) that described information about each code including its definition, examples from the interview, conditions under which the code does or does not occur, and relationships with other codes. The data were analyzed to key gerund codes and the related conditions to identify categories relevant to the problems and processes by which immigrant Korean single-mother families perceive and respond to their situations. During the analysis, theoretical memos and methodological memos were written in a notepad or audio-recorded in order to capture any ideas when they came up. Four major categories emerged from the initial data analysis: taking on the head of household role; raising children by myself; dealing with emotional turmoil; and accepting the situation. The results of coding and analysis of the data from the first four interviews provided the basis for the revision of the initial interview guide and theoretical samples needed in subsequent interviews. The initial interview guide was revised based on the major categories that emerged from the data.

Subsequent interviews conducted with the revised guide provided rich data to saturate each of the major categories and resulted in the addition of new codes related to the mothers' psychological processes to deal with emotional issues and relational problems within

communities. After the analysis of nine interviews, three major aspects in the participants' experiences became gradually prominent: the relationship between the mother's self and childrearing; the existence of different stages; and distinguishable psychological processes. Categories were interrelated around childrearing as a solo parent. 'Living for the children' emerged as the potential core process. Major categories at this point included: equipping the living conditions; living month by month; making things simple; filling in the father's absence; settling in with new relationships; protecting myself and my children; accepting the situation; fighting with myself; and burying myself on behalf of my children. Based on the analysis results, the interview guide was revised again and the study was directed to obtain data for the relationship between established categories and childrearing and the mothers' psychological processes to deal with new living situations.

During the last round of interviews, the children were identified as the most powerful motivator for the mothers to move forward. Living for the children was confirmed as the driving task for the mothers throughout their transition processes. Each major category was explored until no new codes or categories emerged from the newly gathered data.

Axial coding and selective coding were simultaneously conducted throughout the concurrent data collection and analysis. The main purpose of these coding procedures was to identify the relationships between categories and to build the explanatory model. The researcher reviewed theoretical memos, including drawings, diagrams, and images that would represent the relationships between categories. These coding processes and review of the theoretical memos assisted the researcher to: separate psychological processes and practical processes in which the mothers were engaged; identify the relationship between the two major processes; and distinguish stages in each processes.

Living for the children was found as the core category that explained and logically linked all the emerged core categories; living for their children was the powerful driving process which enabled the mothers to move forward and achieve their major task of ‘re-creating’ the family after marital dissolution. Conditions under which participants’ actions and processes did or did not occur were identified by stages in both psychological and practical processes. Non-relevant categories were excluded from the explanatory model (delimiting theory). Peer debriefing with a member of the supervisory committee, member checking with three participants, and literature review provided validation of the emerged model.

Transcribing and Translating the Data

In order to achieve assistance with data analyses and to facilitate the peer debriefing process, the first nine interviews conducted in Korean were translated into English. All participants chose to be interviewed in Korean. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim in Korean immediately after the interviews were completed. The average time to transcribe a one-hour interview took three to five hours. After transcribing was completed, the typed interview transcripts were compared to the audio-recordings to ensure the accuracy of the data. Verification of the transcription took an average of one and a half to two hours for a one-hour interview. In general, transcription took three to five times longer than the actual interview time; transcription verification took about one and a half to two times longer than the interview time.

The translation process was intentionally conducted by the researcher to achieve two aims: to maintain the consistency and reliability of the translated data and to protect the participants’ privacy. The researcher translated the first nine interviews and translated data were all verified by verifiers who were bilingual in English and Korean.

After recruiting the first participant, but before conducting the interview, the researcher searched for a “translation verifier” who could verify the translation of the data in English. Requirements for the verifier included: 1) being fluent in both Korean and English in reading, writing, and listening; 2) having some experience translating text or conversation written in Korean into English or vice versa; and 3) having experiences that the verifier has been emerged or at least understood both Korean and American cultures. The researcher tested candidates with a half-page of Korean text and its translation into English for the purpose of evaluating the person’s ability to fill the position. Verifiers were intentionally sought outside the Korean community in order to protect participants’ privacy in that the researcher was aware of how close-knit Korean communities are. The main purpose for using this recruitment method was to prevent unintended disclosure of the participants’ personal information through the verification process. Five verifiers were hired to check the reliability of the translated data. The verifiers were required to read and sign a confidentiality agreement (Appendix F) prior to conducting their work. A Korean transcript and its translation were given to the verifier. The verifier compared the two versions of the transcripts and noted discrepancies or made suggestions related to accuracy in terms of word choice or sentence order. No major discrepancies were found. Suggested changes were integrated to enhance understanding for native English-speaking readers.

The last six interviews were not processed in the same way. In order to follow the researcher’s timeline, they were transcribed and analyzed in Korean, but not fully translated into English. Essential parts of the interviews, which were used as quotes in the results section were translated and then edited by a native English-speaking editor. Then, a graduate student who is

bilingual in Korean and English back-translated the interviews into Korean. No major discrepancies were found between the translated and back-translated versions of the quotes.

Protection of Human Subjects

The study proposal was submitted for internal review to the department of Family and Child Nursing, which was a preliminary review process in prior to obtain a formal review and approval by the Human Subjects Committee at the University of Washington. The proposal was reviewed and qualified for exemption. The certification of exemption was provided to the Committee. The research procedures were carefully planned to protect the participants' human rights and privacy.

During the informed consent process these aspects of informed consent were explained: the purpose of this study, detailed study procedures potential risks and benefits, the right not to answer any question, including the demographic information questionnaire, and the option to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants chose their preferred language for the consent and demographic information questionnaires as well as for the interview. Participants were provided with a copy of the signed consent form.

Data protection protocols were established and followed. Signed consent forms were stored separately from digital voice-recordings. To ensure confidentiality of the participants' data, each study participant was given a code number. No names or agency-identifiers were linked with the audio-recorded interview data. Audio-recorded and transcribed interview data and consent forms were kept in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home; electronic files of the audio-recorded and written interview data were password protected in a computer accessible only to the researcher. Translation verifiers were required to agree to completely delete the electronic files of the written interview transcripts immediately after the verification process was

completed for each interview. Participants were given 48 hours to think about what they had told the researcher and to request that deletions or additions be made to the interview records. Digital voice-recordings will be retained for two years after the completion of the analyses and report of the findings for additional analyses and then they will be destroyed.

The participants' privacy was also protected during the translation and verification processes. The researcher intentionally translated the interviews into English; verifiers were sought outside of the Korean community to prevent unintended disclosure. Participants received a \$25 gift card for a store of their choice for each interview they completed as a token of appreciation for making a contribution to nursing knowledge.

Characteristics of the Participants

Fifteen immigrant Korean single mothers living with children participated in the study. Eleven of the participants lived in the state of Washington and four of them were recruited in California. Demographic characteristics of the participants are in Table 1. The age of the participants ranged from 33 years to 53 years, with the average being 43.6 years (SD= 6.1, median=44). Four of the participants became single due to separation; the other eleven mothers divorced. Length of marriage ranged from one year to 16 years, with a mean of 9.9 years. Time of being a single mother ranged from 6 months to 18 years, with the average being 5.8 years (SD=4.5, median=5). Eleven participants were Protestant; two were Catholic; one stated she was both Christian and Buddhist; and one did not have a religion. Three of the women claimed a religious affiliation after immigration.

Average time of being in the U.S was 12.6 years, with a range of one year to 29 years. Seven of the mothers immigrated to the U.S. with husbands; four of them gave birth to their first child after immigration. Three of them came to the U.S. as single adults; one of them came to

the U.S as a high school student. Four of them immigrated as single mothers with children; the exception was one mother who followed her children to the U.S. after they were brought to the U.S. by their father.

The average level of the participants' education was 16 years. Two participants graduated from high school in Korea; two finished college-level education in Korea and in the U.S. respectively; eight of the participants earned a bachelor's degree (seven in Korea and one in the U.S.); and three of the participants earned graduate or professional degrees (two in Korea and one in the U.S.). One of the mothers earned her bachelor's degree in the same major twice – once in Korea and once in the U.S.; another participant was repeating her graduate school education in the same major in the U.S. at the time of the interview.

Thirteen out of fifteen participants were working at the time of the interviews: eight of them were former full-time mothers; four of them were continuing what they had been doing for a living; one participant had just started a new job. Two of the thirteen mothers, who were also former full-time mothers, were students and working part time on campus. Only two mothers were not working at the time of the interviews: one was receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and the other had been laid off a month prior to the interview. Average income for the mothers was about \$2,680 per month, with a range of \$340 to \$4,500 per month. Two mothers declined to disclose their monthly income. Income for four out of 15 families was below the Federal Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines. Two families were in between 100% and 200% of the poverty guidelines. Only three of the mothers were receiving child support on regular basis; one participant received alimony all at once. Four of them never received it. One of the four separated mothers was receiving financial support from the husband, which was not in the form of child support. Five out of fifteen participants were benefiting from

public assistance, including Food Stamps, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), children's medical insurance and SSI.

Average number of children in the family was 1.53, with a range of one to three: six mothers had two children, eight mothers had one child, and one mother had three children. Of the 23 children, 12 were female and 11 were male. Mean age for the children was 13.6 years, with a range of three to 23 years.

Six out of 15 participants were receiving treatment for various health conditions. One mother had Basic Health plan and two mothers' health insurance was covered by their employers. Four of the children were receiving medical treatment or counseling for allergies, mild asthma, an infectious disease, and emotional disturbance. People to turn to when they needed support included: mothers' natal families, either in Korea or in the U.S., and church friends. Four of the mothers identified that they had nobody to turn to.

In summary, study participants were highly educated; in their early to mid-forties; had one or two children who are mostly in early adolescence at the time of the interviews. The majority of the mothers had been single mothers for about 5 years; had no natal families nearby; were Christian; and two-thirds of the mothers started working one or more low-paying jobs outside the home after becoming single mothers.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the Participants

		Mean (SD)	Median	Frequency	Range
Age (in years)	mean	43.6 (SD=6.1)	44		33-53
	31-35			2	
	36-40			2	
	41-45			4	
	46-50			5	
	51 or greater			2	
Education	mean	16 years			
	High school diploma			2	
	Some college			2	
	Bachelor's degree			8 (1 in the U.S.)	
	Graduate or professional degree			3 (1 in the U.S.)	
Religious practice	Protestant			11	
	Catholic			2	
	Buddhist and Protestant			1	
	None			1	
Become religious in	Korea			12	
	After immigration			3	
Migrated as a	Child			1 (HS student)	
	Single adult			3	
	Family with husband			4	
	Family with husband and children			3	
	Single-parent family			4	
Length of Stay in the U.S. (in years)	mean	12.6 (SD=7.6)	11		1-29
	1-5 years			1	
	6-10			6	
	11-15			3	
	16 or greater			5	
Length of marriage	mean	9.9 (SD=5.7)	10		1-16
	1-5 years			5	
	6-10			4	
	11-15			4	
	16 or greater			2	
Reason of becoming a single mother	Divorced			11	
	Separated			4	
Current medical condition	Yes			6 (1 disability)	
	No			9	
Family income	Average (per month)	\$ 2680 (SD=1570)	3300		340-4500
	Below poverty line			4	
	Between 100-200%			2	

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the Participants (continued)

		Mean (SD)	Median	Frequency	Range
Receiving child support	Current			3 in regular basis 2 in other forms	
	In the past			6	
	Never			4	
Currently Working	Yes (N=13)	as Part time	5		
		as Full time	5		
		Other	3		
	No			2	
Receiving public assistance	Yes			5	
	No			10	
Number of children	mean	1.53			1-3
	1			8	
	2			6	
	3			1	
Children's Gender	Female			12	
	Male			11	
Age of children	Average of the first child	13.6 (SD=6.2)	15		3-23
	Average age of the second child	14.7 (SD=3.3)	16		11-18
	Average age of the third child	6			6
Children's Medical condition	Yes			4	
	No			11	

CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

Living for the Children: immigrant Korean mothers' re-creation of family after marital dissolution

Immigrant Korean single mothers go through multidimensional, complex processes through which they make a substantial transition to their new lives as single-mother families. They are engaged in two major transitions: a practical transition for family survival and the mother's psychological growth. Each transition involves stages and each stage involves major tasks and processes through which they are trying to achieve the major tasks. Throughout the entire transition, the mother's primary task is re-creating the family. Living for the children is the driving process that enabled the mothers to move forward across stages in their transitions: children of single mothers are the most powerful motivator for them. Figure 1 presents an integrated model of living for the children based on these women's transition experiences.

The practical transition for family survival consists of three major stages: assuring family survival, struggling between father role and mother role; and stabilizing. The mothers' psychological transition involves two major processes: psychological growth and relational transition. Their psychological journey started with their decision of going against social norms; getting lost and isolated; gathering myself up for my children; and finding myself and becoming strong. Concurrently, the mothers were engaged in a set of processes for rebuilding relationships with others in the ethnic community: being neglected and treated with derision; adjusting distance from people; changing mindset; making myself heard; building new relationships; letting go of old relationships; and finally settling in with a new supportive network.

There are two processes that are operating throughout the entire transition processes: fighting with myself and letting things out. Fighting with myself plays an essential role in redirecting mothers' mindset and emotions to the positive side. Letting things out enables mothers to release emotional and psychological burdens and stress as they go through each stage of transitions. Mothers' religious beliefs and supportive people around their families are significant facilitating conditions for both transitions. Reliance on religious beliefs and supportive relationships with people in the community played an intermediary role between mothers' practical transition and psychological transition.

Processes involved in the mother's transition are depicted in the text that follows as linear processes (see Figure 1). However, the transition, overall and for each of the two major transitions, occurs as a non-linear and non-unidirectional transition. Single mothers move along different trajectories, rather than unified, similar pathways. Although it is not always possible for the practical transition for family survival and the mother's psychological transition to be achieved concurrently, mothers who are successful in handling both transitions together are more likely to enter into the most stable stage in their transition. Processes and stages that account for living for the children are described. Relevant conditions and relationships between processes are also presented. Practical transition is portrayed first.

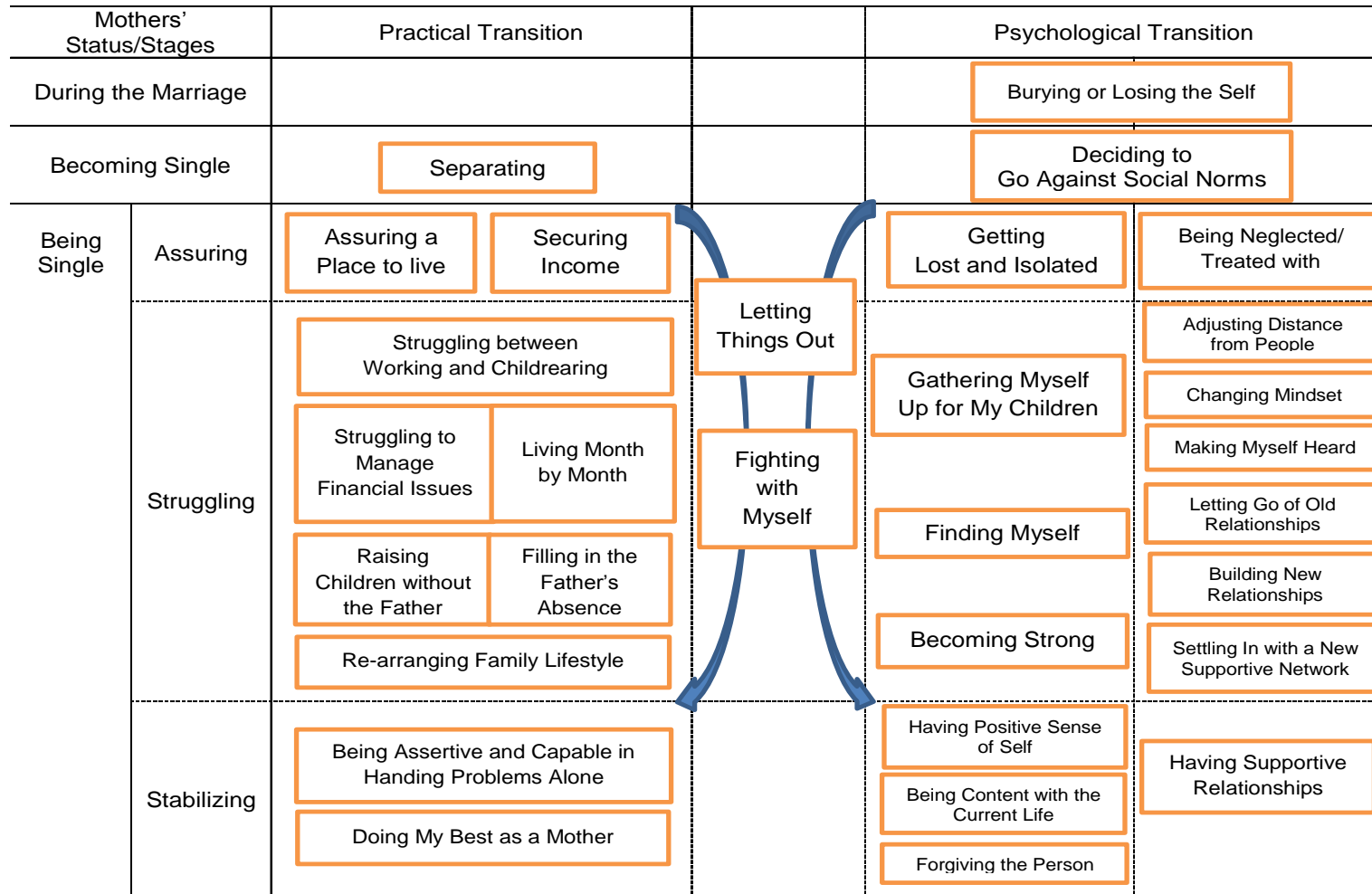


Figure 1. Living for the Children: immigrant Korean mothers' re-creation of family after marital dissolution

Table 2. Living for the children: major processes and tasks in each stage

<i>Practical Transition</i>			
Status	Stages	Major tasks and Processes	
During the Marriage			
Becoming Single		Separating	
Being Single	Assuring Family Survival	Assuring a place to live	Staying in a shelter Moving into public housing Remaining in unaffordable housing Relocating
		Securing income	Holding off working Getting employed Adjusting to varying financial needs Continuing her career Going back to school Depending on public assistance
	Struggling between Father role and Mother Role	Struggling between working and childrearing	Not being available when children needed Being unable to protect children from negative emotions Being physically exhausted
		Struggling to manage financial issues	Struggling to pay bills Being unable to support the children as other parents do
		Living month by month	Reducing living expenses Benefitting from Public Assistance Having no plans ahead
		Raising children alone	Dealing with guilt feelings for the children's loss of father Realizing the need for a father Having nobody with whom to discuss childrearing
		Filling in the father's absence	Learning from others' stories Addressing his developmental needs Helping him with his psychological struggle
		Re-organizing family lifestyle	Making things simple Sharing housework Doing it myself

(Table 2 continued)

Status	Stages	Major tasks and Processes	
Being Single (continued)	Stabilizing	Being assertive and capable in handling problems alone	
		Doing my best as a mother	Putting motherhood before self Planning ahead Seeking information on childrearing Engaging in a new network or community for the children
<i>Psychological Transition</i>			
Status	Stages	Major tasks and Processes	
During the Marriage		Burying or losing the self	Burying the self Losing the self
Becoming Single		Deciding to go against social norms	Deciding to break up
Being Single	Assuring	Getting lost and isolated	Losing life goals Staying away from people
	Struggling	Gathering myself up for my children	
		Fighting with myself	Admitting the situation Forcing myself to fixate on positive thoughts
	Stabilizing	Having positive sense of self	Finding myself Becoming strong
Being content with the current life Forgiving the person			
<i>Relational Transition</i>			
Status	Stages	Major tasks and Processes	
Being single	Assuring	Being neglected and treated with derision	
	Struggling	Adjusting distance from people	Setting the line Assessing people Applying different attitudes
		Making myself heard	
		Changing mindset	
		Building new relationships	Seeking a community for children Socializing with a new group of people
	Letting go of old relationships		
Stabilizing	Settling in with a new supportive network		

<i>Processes working across stages</i> (Table 2 Continued)			
Status	Stages	Major tasks and Processes	
		Fighting with myself	Admitting the situation
			Forcing myself to fixate on positive thoughts
		Letting things out	Crying alone
			Relying on faith in God
			Seeking professional help
			Giving myself a break

Separating

Immigrant Korean women's lives as single mothers began with separating from the husband. Separating refers to physical and psychological separation of the mother and her children from the husband. In most cases, separation was caused by long-term marital conflict, domestic violence, or the husband's repeated marital affairs. Psychological separation and subsequent physical separation did not necessarily result in the legal process of divorce. Since Korean culture does not approve of divorce and divorced people, some mothers chose to maintain their status of being separated, as long as the husband did not want to complete the divorce filing.

Psychological separation and its impact on the mother's emotional responses to physical separation varies from person to person. In cases in which the mother experienced the husband's repetitive faith-breaking behaviors, such as affairs, uninformed initiation of filing, or neglect of fulfilling his responsibilities, she would begin separating from him psychologically and become less dependent on him. If such psychological separation occurred and was firmly maintained during the marriage, the actual process of divorce or physical separation could mean nothing more than a perfunctory process and does not make a great deal of difference in how or when she perceives herself as a single mother. Under such conditions, psychological separation is the point from which the woman conceptualizes herself as a single mother, rather than the time of legal termination of her marriage. Sometimes separation was expressed as 'no possibility to get back together.'

Psychological separation does not necessarily equip the woman to live as a single mother. In particular, if the mother was economically dependent upon the husband, resolving financial issues would become a pressing issue after the physical separation. Physical separation occurred when the husband left home without notifying the wife; both the wife and husband agreed to have a separation period with or without filing for divorce; when the couple got divorced without being separated before the divorce; when the couple was required by a court order to divorce, especially in the case of severe domestic violence; or the mother left home with the children in order to protect herself and the children from the agonizing marriage, after which she initiated the legal process of divorce.

Practical Transition: Assuring Family Survival

After physically separating from their spouses, single mothers are often overwhelmed by the pressure of taking on all the responsibilities of assuring the family's survival by themselves. Assuring family survival, the first stage of their transition of living and working as a single mother, is the core social process in which single mothers are engaged immediately after becoming single. Major tasks in this stage have two components: assuring a place to live and securing income.

1. ASSURING A PLACE TO LIVE

Once physical separation takes place, assuring a place to live becomes the first challenging task to achieve. Mothers engage in four processes: 1) staying in a shelter (becoming homeless); 2) moving into public housing; 3) remaining in unaffordable housing; and 4) relocating.

Staying in a shelter

If the father left home at the time of separating, mothers would have three options to assure a place to live: remaining in regular housing—where the family lived; staying in a shelter or public housing; or relocating to a new area. The family's financial situation was the primary condition on which the mother's decision about where to live was based, especially moving into public housing.

Under certain circumstances, such as being verbally and physically abused by the husband or in-laws, mothers chose to become homeless to escape the excruciating relationships and to protect themselves and their children. Mothers ran out of their homes with their children, having almost no money. Staying in a shelter was their only way to assure housing immediately after leaving home. Although shelters for such women provided a safe place to stay, it involved a huge transition for the women, especially when they had no family or friends nearby in the U.S.:

“At the time I ran out of the house, when I was in a shelter in Seattle, without a green card, I escaped with my child all of a sudden; I just didn't know what to do for a living. So, I wondered if I should go back to Korea. I felt so heavy with worries. Whew, it was really overwhelming.” (Interview 111, p.27, #23-26)

“When I left with my four-month old baby, I only had \$200 in my pocket. Fortunately, I had a car – a clunker that can only roll. I left having only 200 dollars, without knowing anybody in the U.S., without knowing what the word ‘shelter’ really means – when you say a ‘shelter,’ it literally means ‘a place to rest,’ right? I thought it just meant a bower; but getting to know ‘what the shelter really is,’ I feel like I came to know real life in America. There [at the shelter], I was able to get a divorce and then everything and anything about living the real life began.” (Interview 112, p.02, #03-12)

Staying in a shelter provided additional benefits for the family including: free legal services that helped the women proceed with filing for divorce; information and practical help in

applying for and receiving public assistance; and assistance to plan for life after getting out of the shelter. Such services were difficult to find if the mothers tried to obtain them by themselves.

Although mothers could benefit by going to a shelter, the major task of finding a place to live still needed to be done. Limits on length of stay in shelters required mothers to make several moves during the first one to two years after escaping from their homes; the allowable length of time the woman and her family could stay in a shelter is very limited—generally from 3 months to 6 months—and usually too short to secure income that fully cover living expenses. After moving out of shelters, mothers and their children would move into transition housing or public housing. Staying in shelters for domestic violence victims made families eligible for public housing, but women often lived elsewhere to wait for a vacant public housing unit. A mother's reflection below illustrates the complexity and difficulties in assuring a place to live:

“I moved around six times. Moving six times. I looked back on the days yesterday and then found I did six times, till I moved into this place [= public housing]. I've lived in this place for 2 years. I didn't plan to be a single mom, but one day I realized 'I can't live with this person like this any more' so I just drove the car to get out of my home, taking my child with me; I went to a shelter and began to stay there – because you can't stay there longer than 3 months. I got a one-month extension, so I stayed there for four months. Then I had to rent a room and then I needed to find a job. I worked part time and made around \$1,000 per month. So, I thought I was ready to move out because I could pay for rent with that income. Then I got out of the shelter and moved into my pastor's house – the pastor of the church I attend now is running a lodging house. His daughter let me know that there was a vacancy and they offered it; so that was my first move [after staying in a shelter]. I lived there for six months and rented an apartment and moved out, after getting a job.” (Interview 112. p.12, #18-32)

Moving into public housing

Until the family's financial situation stabilizes, assuring a place to live is an on-going issue and the family moves in and out of shelters or transition housing as needed. If mothers are

able to move into public housing, their family enters into a type of stabilizing period. Staying in public housing enables the mother to save income, even if she is not working in a formal setting. For example, some participated in a work-study program at a college or university.

When the mothers received child support it enabled them to wait for public housing to become available. For example, one mother who left home at the time of divorce was able to rent a home in regular housing and obtain the qualifications needed to get a job while she was waiting for a vacancy in public housing. Still, paying rent was a heavy burden for this mother due to her limited budget.

Living with children in public housing often means that mothers had to bear living in undesirable environments while rearing children. Mothers wanted better living conditions in a better area, but were not able to make this happen right away. Sometimes that reality made them bitter.

“This apartment... sometimes I feel ‘Oh my’ and the children living there are really, how I can say it... they are so disorderly. They just throw cigarette butts here and there and garbage, too. The apartment has coin laundry machines on every floor. In the laundry, [they] just put their laundry into the washer and don’t take it out. When I see this... and then because my unit is on the first floor, it gets damp easily, so clothes in my closet were damaged – covered with mold. So, it smells moldy from the entrance. But, when I got the unit I was so pleased. (...) It’s huge and the rooms are big. There’s no apartment like this. Well, after spending more time there, these things began to bother my daughter and me. (...) Therefore, children are somewhat...how to say this...anyway I told my children to avoid hanging out with those children. And, the lady who told me about the apartment said that I had to get out of there as soon as I made a lot of money if I want to raise my children [in a better environment]. But my earning ability is limited, so I have to live there as long as possible.” (Interview 102, p.12, #32-p.13, #01)

“By the way, my son attends a public school. Seventy percent of the students receive free lunch from the State government. (...) It tells the [socioeconomic level of those 70% of eligible children in the school. Teachers who work with those children differ from those who work at the school where I used to work. I used to work at Puyallup. The level of the

teachers where my son is now is different from the teachers I used to see in Puyallup. That is, my child is receiving a poor education, because of the environment. (...) I feel bitter about it as a mother. It is not always the case but financial conditions--teachers seem to be affected by such conditions. So, I hope to provide a better environment and better conditions for him. Ultimately, everything relates back to the environment. Nevertheless, it is unavoidable that he is in such conditions; I can't help it." (Interview 112, p.39, #10-p.40, #05)

Mothers became increasingly aware of the negative consequences of living in public housing on their children. Mothers attempted to compensate for the environment by putting increased effort into their children's learning. The negative impacts of the relationship between the location of residence and its impact on the children's education were viewed as 'unavoidable,' unless the family was able to leave.

Remaining in unaffordable housing

Assuring a place to live is not merely finding a place to eat and sleep, but instead, is finding a place to protect children and the family's dignity. Despite financial constraints, some mothers chose to remain in housing they could not afford in order to retain their pride or to reduce the negative impact of sudden changes in living conditions on their children. Two mothers' stories illustrate this:

"You cannot manage all the living expenses on the money from the government. You will never manage them with only \$300 or something. If you want to manage on that money, you have to go to the poor village, stay in public housing without a car, and commute by bus. But, you know, America is not a country where you can live in that way, right? I can't live like that because I live with my child." (Interview 110, p.02, #05-11)

"When I became a single mom, I wasn't able to pay rent at that time. [Because] I became alone all of a sudden. That's how it was. Others advised me to stay in a shelter or something like that. But, what I insisted was that I didn't want to give my child such a harsh environment. Just the facts that his dad and mom broke up and that he will not live

with his dad must have been such a big environmental shock [to my son]. So, I just wanted to stay where my child has been.” (Interview 115, p.04, #10-20)

Remaining in unaffordable housing pushed mothers to work in available jobs, which enabled them to maintain their housing situations. Under such conditions, maintaining housing becomes the biggest financial challenge for mothers. Depending on how quickly the mother secures a sufficient income, the family could stay in the housing and move into the stabilizing phase; otherwise, the family would move into a new area where public housing is located.

Relocating

Some mothers decided to relocate the family to a new area at the time of separation. Relocating is similar to moving into public housing in that the family might settle down in a new area where they never lived before. Relocating, however, differed from moving into public housing because it was driven by the mother’s intention, rather than by the family’s financial situation. The purpose of relocating included protecting the children from gossip they experienced in their former community; breaking off painful relationships with the ex-husband and in-law families; providing a better environment in which to start over; and getting support from the natal family.

When mothers took actions to relocate by immigrating to the United States, having supportive family members in the U.S. became a significant facilitating condition for the process. For example, one mother’s parents were taking care of her child in Korea while she was studying to earn a U.S. degree for settling down and immigration; a divorced mother came to the U.S. with her child and settled where her sister’s family lived within walking distance; a separated

mother, bringing her two children with her, immigrated to the U.S. in order to live together with her natal family. These situations stood in stark contrast to the situations of mothers who moved into shelters, with nobody to turn to, no idea of what to do for a living, and experiencing a heavy emotional burden during the beginning stages after separating.

Even though relocating was planned to benefit the children, it sometimes had an undesirable impact on the children's transition. Leaving the area in which the family resided for a long time and relocating to where the family has no connections at all (i.e., family members or close friends of the mother and the children) causes a deterioration of the children's transition, especially during the first few months or years when the mothers were also occupied with their own transitions and thereby often not as available to their children when their children needed them.

"My second son is the kind of child who is very reserved and usually keeps things deep inside of his heart and doesn't express himself through words much and so that made me worried. So, I quickly moved here to ***. I moved somewhere *different*. I moved quickly because I was afraid he might hear some gossip, bad gossip [about the trouble]. However, at first, it turned out that it had a worse impact on him. Because...we moved and... my second son has a very difficult time making even a single friend... (...) On top of that, his friends were all where we used to live, a place we lived for a long time, ever since he was born. And so, looking back on it afterward, I was able to see that it had made him more depressed." (Interview 104, p.01, #19-34)

"Because I couldn't complete the divorce process, we repeated separating and getting back together over and over again, I just became so devastated. So, I thought I had to do something to survive and that's why I prepared to come to the United States... (...) Yeah, by doing so, finally the repetition of separating and getting back together came to an end and I became healthier after coming to the U.S. It must've been hard for my child though, because she was separated from her grandmother and grandfather." (Interview 106, p.02, #20-33)

2. SECURING INCOME

Securing income that covers the family's living expenses is another critical task for the mother to achieve. Securing income included processes in which the mother engaged to secure money for the family's living expenses such as housing, monthly utility payments, cell phone bills, car-related fees and so forth. Mothers' choices of actions depended on two major conditions: the mother's decision on where to live and the extent of the family's financial strain at the time of physical separation. Securing a job was particularly difficult and stressful for mothers who had never worked during the marriage when they decided to secure non-public housing, but did not have sufficient funds to maintain their housing choice. To secure income, mothers were involved in 1) holding off working; 2) getting employed; 3) adjusting to varying financial needs; 4) continuing her career; 5) depending on public assistance; and 6) going back to school.

Holding off working

Holding off working refers to a process in which the mother delays entering into the formal workforce. Among those who never worked during the marriage, mothers whose financial situations at the time of physical separation were sufficient to maintain the family without immediately working took the action of holding off working until they needed to earn a steady or supplemental income.

Two major conditions enabled the mothers to hold off working: receiving substantial financial support from the ex-husband and not paying housing-related fees.

“Even though there are good things in America, the greatest worries are financial issues, financial issues. A house in Korea, for example, is my own house. But here, a house means a ‘down payment,’ which requires a monthly payment, and a car is a necessity so you need to keep paying auto insurance and the like, along with maintenance. Fortunately, my ex-husband made a lot of money at the time. So he used to give us \$5,000 a month. Therefore, I didn’t need to work.” (Interview 101, p.03, #10-17)

“Because the house is in his name he has to make the payment, so he’s been paying it. Besides that, while he was out of work a lot here, his mother sent money on a regular basis, a little more than \$1000 a month. But [even after he left home], the money has been sent continuously. So, it covers basic expenses. At least I have my own house. Although it’s not in my name, I have a place to stay. This is how I am doing.” (Interview 109, p.04, #35-p.05, #02)

Holding off working gave the mothers time to prepare themselves for entry into the workforce. Unless they earned wages and made a significant contribution to the family’s finances during their married lives, the entire responsibility of making and managing a living was usually on the husband’s shoulder; such financial dependency made initiating a job search and starting work intensely stressful. Commonly, they had to rush into the process of finding a job, without sufficient time and preparation. However, if the mothers were able to hold off working outside their home, they had time to gather information on job openings or obtain training to enhance their job qualifications better job opportunities. In addition, they could start generating a side income such as hosting homestays or working part time, income that added extra money to the family’s finances or could be used to cover a financial shortfall.

Holding off working was associated with complex psychological meaning as well. Although it was not always the case, one participant’s experience illustrated that holding off working served a different purpose: delaying a complete end to the marriage and disclosure of the mother’s altered family situation to others:

“At that time, I didn’t want to start working in this state. I wanted to start it after all things were done [the divorce was finalized]; I mean, I thought ‘I will not go out and neglect my children, because of such an irresponsible person [the husband], while we were separated’.” (Interview 109, p.04, #10-13)

Mothers were not able to hold off working forever. Child support from ex-husbands or financial support from others – i.e., from the mother’s parents – was perceived as temporary and limited, as money upon which the mother should not be dependent. In addition, mothers usually anticipated upcoming cut-off of support, such as when a child turns to eighteen (the maximum legal age eligible for child support and public assistance such as medical coupons) or when the father was going to remarry; and were aware of running out of what the family received. Such realization made the mothers stop holding off working and resulted in their proceeding to getting a job.

“Before I tried to sell my house, the year before last, I was planning to run a business. While I was looking for places, the doctor’s wife helped me a lot. But I didn’t feel good about it. (...) But, I had to run my own business to survive because my ex-husband doesn’t give us money any more. I was conflicted about it. (...) But, I got a job... just in the nick of time...” (Interview 101, p.09, #17-29)

Getting Employed

The main purpose of getting employed was to earn income that could cover or contribute significantly toward paying the family’s living expenses. The process involved three subprocesses: 1) getting information: letting people know or searching alone; 2) getting a job: doing whatever was available or doing what fit the situation; 3) adjusting to varying financial needs (getting additional jobs or hours to work). Getting employed was the most urgent task for

former full-time mothers who never received or were receiving insufficient child support; they needed to earn an income immediately after becoming single.

Divorced single mothers are supposed to receive child support on a regular basis, but that was not always guaranteed. Half of the divorced participants never received any form of financial support from their ex-husbands, including child support. Even if the mother had received the support, the family still needed other financial resources so that their basic living expenses could be covered. In contrast to those who held off working at the beginning, child support could be the major income for them. By getting one or more jobs, the mother was able to earn income, along with whatever else was received, which meant they could barely cover the family's living expenses. At the beginning of the process of getting a job, two different actions were taken by the mothers: either letting people know or searching alone.

Getting Information: letting people know For mothers who were primarily interacting with Koreans in the community – ethnic Korean churches in particular – getting a job usually started by letting others know about the job search. This was the moment that disclosure of her separation or divorce to others in the community occurred. Although the women did not wish to disclose, disclosure was necessary for her to maintain the family within the Korean community.

“At the beginning, I didn't tell others, but then I started telling people that I needed a job; that I had to work. Uh, after that [the separation], I was able to secure minimum living expenses. (...) In the beginning, because financially it's impossible, I used to sell what I have or spend the money my mom sent me – that's what I did at that time but after 6-8 months, I ran out of money. I had nowhere to turn to. Anyway I held out for 1-2 months and realized that it was not right. (...) Then I mentioned to one of my acquaintances that I had to work, so to let me know if she knew of any job openings, and she goes 'Really? Really?' I told a lot of people I was looking for a job and they let me know of any openings.” (Interview 109, p.04, #01-23)

“Before [2007] I was working as a caregiver for ill, elderly women. In 2007, a deaconess in my church was doing that, but she retired and suggested that I do nail care and I thought it sounded good so I started doing that.” (Interview 102, p.08, #18-21)

Jobs available for mothers who did not have specialized skills, English proficiency, or U.S. degrees were mostly limited to generally low paying service jobs in small businesses that were run by Koreans, in the majority of cases. It was not easy to get a more secure job than menial work and subsequently it was hard for mothers to change jobs later, even if they wanted to:

“Before I work here, [even] I started to work here, I decided not to do nails [again]. It doesn’t suit me. I cannot do the details well; I have no talent to do it, and I should speak English well...but there’s nothing else I can do in the U.S. unless I was highly educated.” (Interview 102, p.19, #33-37)

Since the job-related information was obtained from people around them, the single mother’s first job(s) were likely to be jobs that Korean women usually do after immigration. These jobs include caregiver positions made available through a non-profit organization for Korean American women; working at skin care or nail shops; and working at cafeterias or grocery stores. None of these jobs require professional degrees or licenses. Even if a qualification was required, it was not difficult or did not take a long time to obtain (e.g., manicurist license).

Getting Information: searching alone Those who had few social connections within the Korean community struggled alone to seek job-related information. While those who actively participated in religious gatherings in ethnic Korean churches conducted their job searches by

letting other members in their religious community know. Mothers who were not actively connected to a church used the Internet or job advertisements on the street.

“Meanwhile, finally, because I didn’t have enough money, I had to depend on public assistance, I have to work. The process of finding a job and the fact that I had to get a job consumed me for three months... How I lived at that time was, at night I searched for a job and wasn’t able to sleep; and I was working during the day time and not sleeping well at night. If I slept, I fell asleep around 4 or 5 a.m. – at the dawn.” (Interview 103, p.01, #37-p.02, #04)

“Because we used to live in Mercer Island, an area where the living costs are high, it was extremely hard to make payments for the house and the car. I came to know about things [all the information] by digging myself, not by others letting me know. If I picked up something from somebody, then I visited the place and asked for more information there – that’s how I did it. One thing led to another and I came to know such things one by one. Really, I didn’t know anything and I had such a hard time [to find out such information]. I just picked up anything and everything and then tried to search and learn more about it. I found ‘*Work source*’ on the street and got in and asked there.” (Interview 110, p.04, #31-p.05, #05)

Although the process of getting a job did not start with searching within the Korean community, lack of English proficiency led these mothers to work at places where they could primarily work using the Korean language. Another mother who struggled alone could communicate in English and found positions at a major department store and a school.

Getting a job Based on the information gathered from friends and acquaintances or by themselves, the mothers decided what to do for a living and got jobs. The mothers’ major concern in deciding what to do for a living was working conditions, for example, if the job was flexible enough to accommodate childrearing.

“When I was looking for a job, I got a lot of full-time offers. [Among the offers there were] For some jobs, although [the pay is] not much, if I worked in the evening then I could make a lot of money. But my criterion [for selection] was my children. I’ve never neglected my son before. He’s just started adolescence. Although working full time

doesn't mean you're neglectful, I felt like I had to have him in my sight and that if I missed something because I was not there, then it may not be addressed in a timely fashion. So I started part time first, although I got paid very little, I just started working like that. Now I go to work in ***, which is too far away from here. But, I chose to work there because the working conditions fit my criteria. So that's how I got to work." (Interview 109, p.02, #22-33)

"When deciding on a company to work for, I chose a company that could accommodate such situations [taking care of my daughter]. [A company that is] Close to my place and [its rules are] flexible to such situations." (Interview 106, p.04, #28-32)

Depending on the children's age at the time of getting a job and the availability of support in child care, mothers took different actions in getting jobs: doing whatever is available or doing what fit the situation.

Getting a job: doing whatever is available: Mothers who felt extreme pressure to get a job would take whatever job was available for their first job. Situations under which the mothers felt intense pressure to work included: having a financial crisis before processing separation/divorce; never being employed or mostly being unemployed during married life in the U.S.; remaining in non-public housing after physical separation without financial resources; and rearing more children than others – more than two children who were school-age from pre-kindergarten to primary school at the time of physical separation. When situations were combined, few options were available for employment and it made them rush to take any job opening available:

"At that time, it was teriyaki... When I first came here, I worked in a teriyaki place. But it was so hard, so I collapsed after working for 10 months. It was 10 months after I came to U.S... well, about a year or 10 months. So... I worked again anyway. After that, I worked in a shop... things like that. I worked in different places, sometimes... I couldn't find a place to work." (Interview 105, p.05, #10-16)

“I did everything I could do. I worked at a hotel, a school, a deli, and a cafeteria, whatever I could do.” (Interview 110, p.03, #33-34)

Conditions under which the mother took any job available were availability of others to help with babysitting. For example, one mother was able to get help from the ex-mother-in-law with babysitting her three daughters, all of whom were younger than 10 years old; the other managed to take care of her young school-age daughter by participating in a free after-school program run by a local library.

Getting a job: doing what fits the situation: Children’s ages at the time of finding a job were a significant condition that limited the mothers’ choices of jobs and working hours.

Mothers who could not afford day care, until children entered kindergarten, were often not able to work full time or as much as they wanted. Some were not even able to work because they needed to stay with their children.

“I ran out of my home when my child was about one year old... I became single. So, that was the time when the child needed a lot of care – around the first birthday. So, I couldn’t do anything, I didn’t have any training or education here from which I had special skills; I wasn’t able to work outside [the home]. Having said that, I wasn’t comfortable at all leaving my child one-year old baby in someone else’s hands. And, hmm, because of my child... It was really hard to adjust my working schedule. Even if I tried to work in the evening, such as working as a waitress...it was really hard to find a babysitter in the evening time. Because I do not have my [natal] family here, there is nobody to turn to. That was the hardest thing ever.” (Interview 111, p.01, #05-15)

“I had nothing because I ran out of my home with empty pockets. Having nothing in my hands, I gave birth to a baby and it was really tough to make a living, taking care of the baby in that situation. Anyway, I asked an elder lady in my church, who had been babysitting for a long time, to babysit my child and went out to work. But my child was very sensitive. He didn’t cry when he was with me, but he started to cry right after I went out. So, the lady, who had been babysitting for more than 30 years, gave up on him, because she couldn’t take care of a baby like him. So, later, after all, I had no choice but to do sort of a kindergarten school so that I could stay and take care of him. Doing a job in

that way worked out – bringing him with me and taking care of him while working.”
(Interview 107, p.09, #14-25)

“At the beginning, it [=divorce] happened when my child was about four years old, past three years old and almost four years old. That is, at the beginning, I came to babysit. At the beginning, really, I didn’t know how to start, my child was so young, and it was almost impossible to bring him with me or leave him with others. Also, my parents lived far away in Oregon at that time. Things were like that. In the meanwhile, I came to do babysitting, by chance, by the introduction of an acquaintance. So that’s how I made a living. And then I used to teach piano just a little bit, teaching only four students. Then [I] increased the lessons gradually; since my child was young, it was not possible to work full time [at that time]. And in the American society, I never studied here; I did not have any degree here. But, in my case, because I attend a [Korean] church, my church friends introduced me [jobs] and helped me a lot.” (Interview 115, p.01, #11-25)

Mothers rearing young children tried to do anything for a living, but it was not always possible to do so because it was hard to find affordable child care or they had nobody to turn to. In such situations, jobs that allowed the mothers to stay with their children were the best fit, such as babysitting in their own homes. Having their parents or siblings living nearby was of significant help to ease their pain of finding and paying for day care in order to start and keep working.

In many cases, using an ordinary day care center required most of the salary mothers earned from work since their jobs were not well-paying. For some mothers, especially whose living expenses were dependent upon public assistance, special programs to support families in need were of significant help with child care.

“Well, at the beginning, I found a sort of babysitting program for the homeless; the program offers free day care for a certain amount of time per month. (...) And, I attended a college; then the school introduced almost all services like that. There was a program named ‘Work First’ in the school, which was something that single moms usually do. ‘Work First’ assisted with my tuition and linked me to day care programs. I got such assistance through the school.” (Interview 111, p.24, #10-19)

Since special programs sponsored by local governments or institutions usually have their own eligibility requirements, mothers who were not able to meet the requirements and had no support networks (i.e., families or friends) could not benefit from such public assistance. In addition, meeting such requirements added another burden to their distress about making a living:

“In my case, I didn’t even think about using a day care actually. Because, for day care, DSHS here, if I was low income or [have green card] in the U.S. – if my child was an American, or a permanent resident then I could get the benefit. But, in my case, my child and I were foreigners; [we were] foreigners, even though we lived here. But, for my child, only his health insurance was covered. Once, I tried to use a day care, but it didn’t work out. If I wanted to use it, I had to put all I earn, not touching even a penny, to pay for it—so there’s no advantage for doing that. Yeah, I didn’t think about it at all at that time. So, I’ve never used a day care. I mean, I never used a day care that I needed to make regular payments. Instead, I got a lot of help from people around me; my parents moved nearby when my child was six years old, so they also helped me a lot; and also my church friends helped me a lot. That’s how I managed it at that time.” (Interview 115, p.06, #03-17)

“The government also helps with day care use. This [=the assistance] is provided for day care. However, such assistance also... It was not unconditional. You had to do something forty hours a week. You had to do something like working, studying or whatever for 40 hours in order to receive the benefit. Because I was working on campus, there’s nothing to do [in the break]. But, I had to do something. So, it was... actually...that got me stressed. I mean, I had to do something for 40 hours; I had to find something to do out of nothing. Things like that. (...) If you want to get the benefit from the government, you have to submit documents; there are always documents you have to submit that show what you did; you have to submit them weekly and you have to do this, do that, a lot of things that bother you so much.” (Interview 111, p.01, #31-p.02, #13)

Adjusting to varying financial needs

In most cases, mothers worked more than one job unless their job was professional or well-paying. If the family’s financial needs were not changing much, getting one or more jobs would end and the mother would maintain the job she got. However, financial needs usually

varied over time, usually increasing as children grew up. Also, there were some upcoming events that mothers usually anticipated such as cut-off of financial support, including when a child turned eighteen (the maximum legal age eligible for child support and public assistance such as medical coupons) or when the father was going to remarry.

Under such conditions, the mothers took concurrent actions of working and searching for additional work to secure income for shortfalls. Mothers used the strategies of getting additional jobs or increasing working hours to meet increased financial needs. Also, although it was not possible for all, one mother was successful in switching from multiple low-paying jobs to one or two better-paying jobs (including a secure full-time job):

“When having the separation, I had to work besides that [working night shift], but I struggled so much to find a job, I was desperate to look for a full time job...and I begged and begged [the manager] to give me maximum hours for my part time job as if it’s a full time job and hung in there. Finally, I got another part time job. So, we started the separation in June, and by the following September, I had two jobs. [From] June, for three months, I had one part time job and since September I had two jobs. (...) Then during that time I got another part time, no, I got a full time job and quit the part time job that I used to work in the morning. (...) But, once I got two jobs, one was full time and the other was my second job, financially...I could manage to take care of my children.” (Interview 103, p.02, #19-p.03, #06)

As children started attending school, mothers were able to take on another job or work more hours while their children were in school, thereby increasing their incomes. As children grew up, their needs also increased; under such circumstances, increasing the number of jobs or working hours was an important means to secure income that could meet increased needs.

“And, after my child started school, I looked up any job that I could do during the time my child was in school, part-time jobs that I could go out to do. So I did work like that. Yeah. When my child turned to an age that he could do well in others’ hands for a while in the afternoon, I increased piano lessons. Also during the day time, while my child was in school, in my case – I was not able to do so at the beginning though, others usually work

as a cashier at a restaurant, a teriyaki or something like that. So, I tried such things, too. After working four hours part time, I picked him up and dropped him off at somebody's who babysat him or brought him with me on the way to go teach a piano lesson. Yeah. That's how I did." (Interview 115, p.02, #08-19)

"Well, as my child grew up, the costs for him also increased little by little. That is, even though my child attends a public school, there's something to pay, such as bringing 5 dollars [to the school] something like that. Things needed for school education. So, when he started school, I was like 'Whew' because of such small payments, but my income increased as well. (...) Everything, such as his medical [insurance], his school, such extra money for his education, [had been taken care of] so far – as my child grows up, my income also increases, even \$50, \$100. Yeah. Compared to others' earnings, it is still a small amount, but I'm just grateful, thinking that there are a lot of jobless people in these hard times." (Interview 115, p.05, #08-23)

Until the mother felt that her family was financially secure, the process of getting a job would occur repetitively for the purpose of achieving financial security. Since getting a better job without further education was almost impossible, repeated failure to secure a job made mothers take other actions, such as moving into affordable housing and to continue searching for jobs.

Continuing the career

If the mothers were self-supporting breadwinners for their families during married life, divorce or separation did not significantly affect the way they made a living. They continued doing what they had done for a living or career. Under such conditions, getting employed was not a new experience.

When the mothers were the providers in Korea before immigrating to the U.S. or during the process of separation or divorce, getting a degree in the same major in the U.S. was their first step. For those mothers, getting a U.S. degree was perceived as the most effective and sole means to settle down and (re)gain their self-sufficiency in the U.S.:

“I came here not for a break, but for settling down. If I didn’t study here and get my degree, I wouldn’t be able to settle down. Also, I had no relatives here, so that was the situation. So, I finished school, got a job and then brought my child.” (Interview 106, p.02, #25-29)

“I entered the country on a student visa. Well, originally I got my master’s degree in Korea, but I’m attending the master’s courses again here. Yeah. So I’m attending [graduate] school. And, as for fees such as tuition or something like that, I’m spending the money that I brought over from selling my house as well as the alimony and child support I received. My daughter came here with me and she’s attending high school. Firstly, the reason we came here to the U.S., was for the purpose of education for myself and my daughter, and then preparing to settle-down here – that’s the plan I came[here] with. So, I came here on a student visa, but after finishing the master’s program, (...) I’m thinking of an alternative – to finish my degree and to get a job so that I can obtain a green card through employment.” (Interview 108, p.01, #07-23)

After having the degree, the mothers would engage in the process of getting employed, as previous full-time mothers did. The major difference between the two groups was that the process of getting information and getting a job occurred with more choices and in a shorter period of time; getting a full-time job was more likely to happen. Conditions that assisted those mothers to complete the processes were: when financial circumstances allowed (during the study); and having people who helped them with childrearing. Those who engaged in the process of continuing their careers were more likely to experience less stress during the process of securing a job than former full-time mothers in other groups.

Going Back to School

Going back to school included two different actions by mothers who wanted to further their education: getting vocational training and getting a degree. The main purpose was to increase opportunities to get a better and more secure job. Depending on their financial situations, timing for such actions varied. Mothers who needed immediate income started

working part time in jobs that required no specific qualifications and pursued vocational training later when their situations permitted. Having a longer duration of marriage with no working experience, never working before the marriage, lack of confidence in communicating in English, and rearing school-age children (meaning higher financial needs) were common situations in which the mothers chose to get vocational training. Combined with the mother's age, – especially those who were approaching menopause – having no qualifications often resulted in mothers in working a series of low-paying service jobs, often related to the mother's fear of failure to survive. Getting vocational training was one way to combat this fear:

“Keeping working like this [=working multiple menial jobs], I felt like, if I continued to live like that, reach my 50s without having any particular skills, never speaking English well, I could never survive. So, I attended college and studied in an office assistant program for three months, which taught me computer skills, with working a few jobs at the same time. Then I got the certificate and got a job at a lawyer's office.” (Interview 110, p.03, #34-p.04, #05)

Mothers who wanted to get a professional job were likely to focus on further education rather than striving to earn as much as possible immediately. They earned a college degree in Korea, but were studying a different area aimed at a degree pertinent to their professions of interest. Those who pursued a degree were: relatively younger (early and mid-thirties) than others at the time of physical separation; married less than two years; having previous working experience in Korea; having only child who was younger than one year at the time of separation; and staying in shelters at the beginning of their life as a single mother.

Mothers pursuing a degree started their education by taking ESL courses. Since finishing ESL and getting a degree takes at least four to five years to complete, getting a degree was not a practical choice for those in urgent need. However, the combination of a few conditions made

the process feasible for some mothers. Since they started their transition by becoming homeless, the mothers were eligible for public assistance for vulnerable families. Although the amount of financial support was minimal, such assistance helped them effectively reduce living expenses. In addition, as they were rearing their young and only child, the financial needs were likely to be much lower than mothers of more than one child or mothers of older children.

“In the U.S., you can receive benefits such as Food Stamps or TANF. And, the place I used to stay was public housing. So, since I didn’t spend money so much, unless I got a big problem with my car or something, I don’t think I had big financial challenges. If you search a little bit, there are a lot of resources out there like, support for paying for electricity, a place where you can get toys for free. There are a lot [of supports you can get]. So, such things were not really hard to me.” (Interview 111, p.01, #15-23)

In contrast, for some mothers who were not eligible for public assistance, plans to obtain further education to enhance job qualifications were hard to achieve. Time in school meant losing time to work and earn money for survival. Moreover, if mothers needed to take ESL courses, which take two years or more to finish, they were not likely to keep combining working and studying; since they needed to choose survival, they stopped learning and subsequently reduced their opportunities to improve or practice their English proficiency.

“It takes 2 years to finish ESL, but you can’t get a job by finishing ESL. So you need to study something that you can get a certificate from at the same time. Anyway, it didn’t work out for me because I didn’t plan it well. I got a bookkeeping/accounting license but I couldn’t take advantage of it because I can’t speak English very well. It was really hard to understand textbooks written in English. Nevertheless, I was good at math and I passed the test. Although I was able to understand 70% of the class, writing was really challenging because I didn’t learn English in a systematic way. If I submitted my resume, usually I could get interviewed because I have some qualifications, but in the end, I couldn’t get or keep the job because I can’t communicate in English over the phone or in emails.” (Interview 110, p.02, #32-p.03, #08)

Depending on Public Assistance

There were two situations under which mothers became dependent on public assistance for a living: being homeless with no income and being disabled. The former allowed mothers to be eligible for public income assistance such as TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). Participants who depended upon TANF also benefited from other support programs for families in need including financial aid for tuition, day care support, public housing and such. Being eligible for multiple benefits helped the family to manage their living expenses on very little.

“[I am] Receiving TANF, Food Stamps, and paying tuition with financial aid. When it comes to housing, because I was a victim of domestic violence, I became eligible for applying for public housing. That’s how I got housing. While studying, I earn money for living expenses through participating in work study. I think I received every benefit I could receive. Could I benefit more? Ha, ha, ha.” (Interview 112, p.02, #16-21)

Public assistance was even more crucial for the mother whose health condition did not allow her to work. Although there was only one case among mothers in the current study, her story illustrates the importance of public assistance. One participant became disabled due to the former spouse’s abuse and violence. She had no choice but to depend on assistance for her family. The assistance provided financial support and health insurance benefits for her and her child.

“I used to do a different job before. I was teaching children, since my major was music. But, I can’t do it anymore because I got a disease. I can’t do it and anyway I’m on disability now. I’m disabled. So, in my case the government provides support for people with disability. Therefore, with my child, he also gets the support. So, we live with that money. Because I can’t use my body at all, I can’t work. If I work, I get sick. I can’t move and need to stay in bed.” (Interview 107, p.18, #24-30)

Significant Conditions that Affected the Process of Securing income

Five major conditions were closely related to the process of securing income: 1) the initial conditions of the family finances; 2) mothers' background, especially previous work experiences, level of education, and level of fluency in English; 3) mothers' and their children's ages at the time of the family's physical separation; 4) mother's physical health conditions; and 5) the family's support networks, the mother's natal family in particular, close friends, and active engagement in a Korean church community.

Condition of the family finances was the primary condition under which the mothers could hold off working and thereby prepare themselves to enter into the workforce. Receiving child support and having additional financial resources (e.g., receiving money from the mother's parents) were of significant help if such supports could substantially cover housing fees.

Mothers' backgrounds were interrelated and affected the process of getting employed to a great degree. Certainly, highly educated mothers (equal or higher than some college education) in Korea were likely to pursue further education (getting a degree) and get more secure jobs than those who were not highly educated. However, lack of English fluency can override almost all other qualifications. For some mothers, lack of English proficiency related to their need to stay only within the Korean community and it created more disadvantages to assure income:

"Of course, there is no [salary from the church]. There aren't many Korean churches that are financially independent. Especially larger churches only hire male pastors; they hardly hire female pastors. So, there's no way to be hired. So, the only place I can do ministry is in small churches. I can serve only at small churches, but the pastors of such churches are not financially independent at all, especially Korean churches. They are not paid independently by the churches, so they have to support themselves. Given that situation, how can they provide an honorarium for volunteers like me? They can't even pay the rent

for the church building. (...) It's how things are going here, not like in Korea. If I were in Korea, there would be many ways for me to get by, but nothing here." (Interview 107, p.19, #09-22)

In addition, more than 10 years of marriage without working experience made it difficult for mothers to pursue a profession or a degree that requires English proficiency and investment of time, money and effort in learning. In contrast, when the mothers had previous working experiences before marriage and had a shorter marriage (less than 1 or 2 years), it was relatively easy for the mothers to make such a choice because it was similar to how they made a living in Korea before marriage.

Being self-supporting before physical separation was the most significant condition under which the mothers could make the smoothest transition to being a single mother in the U.S.: they already had experiences in getting employed and they experienced less distress or pressure to succeed in getting employed. These women experienced fewer changes before and after the separation in terms of securing income.

Children's ages at the time of physical separation were important in three aspects of securing income: level of the family's financial needs; limitations in finding and maintaining jobs; and availability of support with babysitting while the mother was working. The younger the children, the less the financial needs, which was helpful for the mother. However, these women still needed to find affordable day care or somebody to leave their babies with during working hours, or they needed to find jobs where they could bring their child along or stay and take care of their children at home.

Mothers' ages at the time of physical separation were related to their physical strength and health conditions, which were essential to bear long working hours and menial jobs. These were more pertinent to adjusting to the varying financial needs of the family, rather than a direct impact on the process of getting employed. When the mothers needed to add more jobs or hours in order to meet the family's increased financial needs, compromised health conditions were a significant barrier:

"By next year, no child support... because my first daughter will be 18 I will not get child support any more for her starting next year. So with this issue, with this difficulty... since I'm working four days a week now I feel like I'm losing my energy these days. I don't have as much strength as I used to do. I'm off on Monday, then I work two days, and then I'm off on Thursday and then work two days. I wish... I know I have to work more due to my circumstances, but I'm getting more tired. So next year, when my daughter will be 18, what am I going to do? Maybe I can say that this is the greatest worry in my heart now." (Interview 102, p.11, #08-17)

"You know what? Actually, your age at the time of divorce is really important, because in my case, since I am going through my menopause now, physically I can't do a lot of work. It started 2 years ago and since then I am getting physically weaker and this is accompanied by depression, too. So, it's been very, very hard for me." (Interview 110, p.03, #22-27)

Having a supportive network was of significant help to securing adequate income.

Among people in the network, the mother's parents were the most important members of the network; they were a credible source of emotional and practical support, including babysitting and financial support. Having a support network through active involvement in church activities was another source of support for the participants; through church friends and acquaintances mothers got information about employment as well as practical help in resolving child care issues. Mothers who did not have their family or church friends were likely to have more

hardships in securing income. These mothers spoke of hardships such as more energy drain and more emotional burden in assuming financial responsibility for their families.

Emotional Response to Securing Income

Although separation or divorce was an outcome of long-term marital conflicts and (subsequent) domestic violence in most cases, mothers did little to prepare or plan how to stand on their own in advance. Former full-time mothers started to take actions to get a job after the actual process of separation or divorce. The mothers' level of financial dependency on their husbands during married life accounted for their emotional reactions to unemployment. Being unemployed, they experienced overwhelming anxiety and fear of failure to survive.

“At a glance, for 3 months, if I divide my time period, I was at the edge of a cliff for 3 months, but... It's not depression. It was fear...just fear. (...) Once I got a job, regardless of whether I had two part-time jobs, or one full time [job], once I got a job, a little bit, my fear subsided.” (Interview 103, p.03, #33-p.04, #06)

“It feels like “there's no exit.” If I spoke English well, I could easily get a (steady) job but I can't. If I could... It is impossible to invest 4-5 years of time only to studying. Physically, I am burned out.” (Interview 110, p.04, #11-16)

Working made life for both the mothers and their children much more challenging because the mothers became so busy and focused on resolving practical issues for survival. This was especially noticeable during the initial period of working. Reduced social activities were likely to leave them socially isolated and feeling lonely throughout the process of securing income. Mothers also avoided people in response to public embarrassment due to being a single mother. This avoidance further elevated their loneliness.

“Well, I've become so busy. I have to work. While I used to be busy because of religious activities, now I am busy working, working for a living. I am busy working, I'm so busy

with that. So, I'm working, and am not able to participate in church activities like I used to in the past, and because I can't be involved in church activities as much, I have less opportunities to meet people. It's just the children and me; that's about it." (Interview 109, p.01, #05-11)

"I lost contact with many of those whom I used to hang out with. This year, especially, I realized I lost contact with old friends so much. I have been too much focused on myself. So I was thinking like "How many people can I keep in touch with now?" I have a few people I got to know through attending a Catholic church, since I used to work a few jobs and attend school. Practically speaking, I don't have time to get together with people. If they keep in touch with me first, then we can keep in touch each other. But, because my situation is like this, I would not call them first." (Interview 110, p.06, #25-32)

SUMMARY OF THE STAGE OF ASSURING FAMILY SURVIVAL

The first challenges that the women were facing after becoming single were re-creating the living conditions for their families. Re-creating in this stage involved primarily with assuring a place to live and securing income. As a new head of the household, the mother was taking the sole responsibility of family survival. Housing choices and the family's financial needs were closely associated; securing physical environment for the family was also accompanied by overwhelming stress and intense emotions, especially for those who were former full-time mothers.

Assuring a place to live is not a simple task to merely find a physical space to eat and sleep. Rather, it includes a complex process that involves multiple actions and repeating strategies to retain the family's dignity and protect the children from negative consequences of separation.

Housing choices were influenced by various conditions: who left home at the time of physical separation; pathways to becoming single (e.g., escaping or legal separation or divorce);

initial conditions of the family finances after becoming a single-mother family; and mothers' perception of the relationship between housing choice and its consequences on family dignity and for their children. The decision about where to stay after separation was likely to affect the family's financial situation to a great degree, which often pushed mothers to take immediate actions to secure income for maintaining the home.

The process of securing income was not linear. Mothers took different trajectories to make a living by combining some of the sub-processes for the purpose of obtaining financial security and meeting the family's financial needs, which was related with her children's age. Unless the former husbands were providing sufficient child support or covering housing fees, getting employed was the first step taken by the mothers to secure income for their families. Depending on the family's financial strain at the time of physical separation, mothers would take a set of actions to secure income including: holding off working, getting employed, adjusting to varying financial needs, continuing their career, depending on public assistance and going back to school.

Five major conditions affected how easily the mothers could succeed in securing income: mothers' previous working experiences during the marriage in the U.S., level of education (especially having a U.S. degree), English proficiency, both the mother's and the children's age at the time of physical separation, mother's health conditions, and having an available support network for the family. These conditions were intertwined and had the greatest impact, particularly on those who never worked outside the home during marriage and had no or few

qualifications for a job; the process of securing income, getting employed in particular, was intensely stressful for them.

Among the conditions, having higher education in the U.S. and having English proficiency (especially speaking ability) were perceived by the mothers as essential to getting a secure job. For some mothers, the lack of English proficiency overrode all other qualifications that prevented them from getting and maintaining an employed status.

When the mothers were successful in obtaining a steady income to cover basic living expenses, such as rent or a mortgage payment, car-related payments, and utility fees, the family entered into the stage of struggling: the mothers were struggling to re-create their new ways to operate their new families.

Practical Transition: Struggling between Father Role and Mother Role

Struggling between the father role and the mother role refers to the mothers' struggle to integrate fulfilling the father's tasks into motherhood. The major task throughout the process was to maintain living conditions secured during the first stage. Since earning income and managing finances were the father's major tasks, those two tasks were perceived as the primary and most challenging tasks for mothers as the head of their families. The stage of struggling involves three major parts: struggling between working and childrearing; struggling to manage financial issues; living month by month; raising children without the father; filling in the father's absence; and re-organizing family lifestyle.

1. STRUGGLING BETWEEN WORKING AND CHILDREARING

Struggling between working and childrearing refers to a process in which single mothers were trying to integrate working into their role as mothers. Since the majority of the study participants were former full-time mothers, the integration of working and childrearing was an especially painful struggle for them. In addition, working created restrictive conditions that prevented mothers from fulfilling their mother role. It was actually very difficult to find practical solutions that helped them mother their children as they did before becoming single. During this stage of struggling, mothers experience challenges due to working that affected the quality of their mothering and family routine. Such challenges included: not being available when children needed them; being unable to protect children from negative emotions; and being physically exhausted.

Not being available when children needed them

Working outside the home often generated circumstances in which mothers were not able to: be physically available for their children when needed; attend to their physical and psychological needs; or put in enough time and effort to take care of them. Even though the purpose of working was to provide better conditions for their children, the mothers were not always able to make their children the first priority.

“And there are times when I can’t take care of my child because of work. [For example] I went on a business trip and while I was gone, my child won a prize at school. I was not there. In such situations, I become a sinner. Even last Friday, my child’s teacher told me off quite a bit. Whenever such things happen, I get home and am like ‘Huh.... [What am] I [doing]...’ these things are hard. Then, on the reverse side, I make this amount of money from work (with gestures). But, this [money] cannot be placed above my child. So these days I’m seriously thinking of quitting my job and washing dishes at a restaurant instead,

and spending more time with my child. This is my dilemma these days.” (Interview 106, p.05, #13-24)

“The most decisive reason [of having hard times due to the daughter] was that I did not have time to talk to my daughter. There was too much work in a day and I was completely exhausted at home; since I was always like ‘what am I doing?’ I couldn’t listen to my child. She said she tried to talk to me, but I did not listen. (...) For my daughter, I was the only one who could listen to her, but because I built a wall against her and did not listen the rebellious stage came. We try to talk to each other, like ‘let’s talk’ but we easily get upset toward each other because we didn’t talk to each other for too long.” (Interview 110, p.09, #14-25)

The extent to which the mothers were able to manage their time for child care needs affected how easily they could negotiate or resolve multiple demanding situations. Mothers were not able to manage their time because they did not have control over work hours or schedules; thus, daily routines were affected, such as missing meal time or quality time with their children. Subsequently, the dissonance between work schedules and family routines added to the mothers’ stress and inability to emotionally respond to their families.

“In the morning I get up, feed my children breakfast, give them a ride to school, and take the youngest to day care (long pause) hmm... The first job ended at 3:30 or 4 o’clock? If the second one ended around 6, then I could come home and give my children dinner, but... If the second job was scheduled around 4, then I needed to go directly to work without seeing my children; I had to go to work right away. Then the time I saw my children was only when they were sleeping. I saw them in the morning and when they were sleeping at night. Then I would see them in the morning the day after and at night, and I lived like that for about 3-4 months, no, for about 6 months.” (Interview 103, p.02, #26-37)

“The other day, on Wednesday, I left there at almost 7:45. I arrived home at 8:30. As soon as I opened the door, my younger daughter said ‘Mom, I’m hungry.’ That made me so annoyed. ‘What the heck is it? Do I have to live like this to make that amount of money?’ (...) I wish I could have regular working hours, because it’s far from here; it would be really great if I had control over it. (...) I came home at 8:30 and was so upset, I yelled at my children ‘why don’t you have your dinner without me? Just eat whatever you have, please!’ I got upset with my children because of that thing, and thought ‘what am I doing

here.' In my opinion, all family members should have dinner together. (...) Before, working at a different shop, since I was able to control my time, I could clock off work at 4:30 so I could come back no later than 5 o'clock and I could adjust my working hours if I had to take care of something. But, such things are not allowed here [at the current job]. It [the schedule] is fixed." (Interview 102, p.23, #32-p.24, #19)

Working back-to-back was an important condition under which mothering quality decreased. Mothers delegated responsibilities in order to manage multiple demands. Older children, especially the oldest daughters, were likely to take over some of the responsibilities to help the mother.

"In order to resolve practical problems, I must work and give up taking [great] care of my children. And, more and more responsibilities go to either the oldest or the second daughter." (Interview 103, p.09, #14-16)

"Fortunately, working as a caregiver, I was able to manage my time. When I took care of a kind old lady, for example, I had to do 5 hours, but she said, 'Hey, just do the half.' So I worked half. And the lady signed off on 5 hours. I was lucky to have met many kind ladies. Thanks to that, I was able to keep working. And at the nail shop where I used to work before, I worked on commission, which allowed me to manage my time. If I had an urgent situation with my children, then I could take some time off to take care of it. (...) Now, my first daughter, since I work, takes care of everything." (Interview 102, p.12, #02-15)

Working also required mothers to handle multiple demands concurrently. Often the demands were associated with finding a babysitter or handling children's urgent needs:

"For example, because I have three children, it's when I have to take care of two of them concurrently. For instance, I have to get one of mine somewhere by 10 a.m., but also have to get another child somewhere else by a certain time. And, sometimes I have to pick one up in one place and drop another one off somewhere else at the same time. Also, it's hard if I have to go to work but one of my children suddenly gets sick." (Interview 103, p.08, #02-07)

"So for me, since all of my family is in Korea right now, only my daughter and I immigrated, I do not have options [for childcare] here. If I go on a business trip or

something like that, there is no place to leave my child and also my child doesn't rely on anyone – there's no option at all. Except Ms.*** [counselor], except the *** center, you can say that there is nothing." (Interview 106, p.01, #34-39)

Finding help in an emergency situation added to the mother's stress. The optimal solution was to find somebody to take care of the children until the mother finished her work. However, finding and asking for help from others was not always easy. Sometimes the mothers needed to bring their sick children to their place of employment because they had to work.

"When it's an emergency [like] when my children become sick, somebody calls me to pick up my child because she is sick, while I am working. Sometimes I ask my friend to pick up my child, but there are times that even my friend can't do that for me due to some unavoidable reasons. At such times, I just bring my children to my workplace. That is, I have my children mingle with guests who visited the *** association. I give my daughter Tylenol and if her fever goes down, then I tell her to just lie down without moving a lot or to stay in a room nearby [to my office]. So, because the *** association is a helping agency, my colleagues understand and support me in that situation. So, that's the one thing. What am I going to do without such support? I can't take time off every time my children get sick. That's another thing." (Interview 103, p.10, #11-24)

Finding the right person to help with child care at the right time was challenging. In addition, asking somebody else to take care of the children was an added burden for the mothers who settled in a new area and did not know many people, let alone from whom she could seek help. Relying on help from others made them feel uncomfortable and burdened:

"I start work at 3:00, when school is over. Now, I am still working about 4 hours in the morning; after that, when my child's school is over, I start working. Since I start piano lessons after school is over, it is really hard to leave my child with somebody, really. I mean, in order to adjust to my schedule, I have to send my child with somebody else. Sometimes I leave him in a paid program or with somebody, um, I drop him off at someone's house. So, it is something that bothers me. I mean it is financially burdensome. But, it is more of a burden psychologically. Because I live as a single mom, I always receive helps from others; I got to do that. That is, first, although there are people who help me first, there are many more times that I need to ask them first, almost all the time –

in these cases and with such things, it is a big burden to me. Especially, it is really hard to do this with a personality like mine – somebody who hates to bother others, but feels it's okay to help others. I hate to cause anyone inconvenience or trouble." (Interview 115, p.37, #10-27)

When a mother's child needed special care, she experienced more difficulties in child rearing, including dealing with stressors related to the child's special condition. Mothers had to cope with their own fear, anxiety, or feelings of guilt that they might have caused the condition. One mother who had a daughter with health issues including an emotional disturbance was seriously thinking about quitting her job because her job required frequent business trips and that meant she was not able to be with her daughter:

"I'm afraid. I'm afraid that she might turn out wrong. So, then I might regret it later. Right now, even being apart from each other [my daughter and me] for eight years, it is really hard for me to make up for that. So my child's having hard times due to the lack of love and blah, blah, blah, so she's receiving counseling and struggling with not being able to adjust to society. I am afraid that it will continue like this. It [considering quitting working] is not because I'm tired of doing the job, like 'Ah, I'm going to quit my job and just take care of my child!' It's not that reason, but it's because I'm afraid that my child would blame me for it later or go the wrong way." (Interview 106, p.08, #16-25)

Being unable to protect children from my negative emotions

Sometimes mothers had difficulty protecting their children from their own negative emotions. Delay or failure to resolve practical problems created situations in which the mothers were not able to control their emotions. Negative emotions (i.e., frustration, anger, or fear) affected the way mothers communicated and interacted with their children; in extreme cases negative emotions were exhibited in the form of verbal aggression.

"The fear was projected to my children, not physically, but emotionally, even though that's not what I intended, but I got very upset and yelled at them, (...)Without knowing

[the reason], my children were scared when I yelled and told them to get out of there, such things. So, although it was not physically hurting them, during those 3 months, my fear affected my children in that way.” (Interview 103, p.03, #35-p.04, #04)

“And my children, even though I’m not really aware of it, since a man – their father – was around, I think I did not treat my children as like I felt. However, the worst thing nowadays is, because there is nobody to moderate [my attitude] sometime I do [treat them] as I feel like. I’m trying to control myself, but when I’m tired, I get short-tempered and they know it. (laughing) I thought my personality was not like that, but this was a totally different matter. So, it was hard for me when I realized I treated them like I felt. In my head I think I should not do this, but that’s actually what I do.” (Interview 109, p05, #30-38)

Maintaining the home was an added stressor in balancing working and childrearing.

Working consumed a considerable amount of time and energy and made their daily schedules quite hectic. Although mothers used to take care of housework before separating, doing housework caused mothers to be intensely emotional because it also drained her time and energy. They often could not maintain their previous standards for housework. They needed to make some changes in their standards and methods for keeping their homes running properly. This was likely to particularly bother those who enjoyed homemaking while married.

“Well, actually I am one of those who love to do housekeeping; like growing flowers and decorating the house with cute things; and I really like to have people over, feed them with great food—although I am not a good cook, I loved to invite people. But, the situation got worse and I couldn’t do it any more. (...) Whew, anyway, I put things to clean up aside. (laughing) I put them aside and tried to ignore them. However, one time, that is the thing – because it isn’t cleaned up, it doesn’t feel like I am resting at home actually, even though I take a rest at home. At home, in a corner, [it feels like] I have a lot of ‘homework’ to do. ‘I need to clean these things up, throw away unnecessary things.’ But I can’t bear to throw anything away. I attach meanings to small things (...) I keep almost everything. Such things also drain my energy.” (Interview 115, p.32, #09-p.33, #25)

“I get so easily short-tempered, which is hard for my children [to deal with]. [For example] I need to finish the laundry, get it out of the washer, and hang out the laundry

before I go out but I can't finish it in a way that I planned, then I get upset. My children notice it, and so do I." (Interview 109, p.17, #30-34)

Maintaining the house, especially making repairs, was challenging to mothers in different ways. Since maintenance work was usually taken care of by the husband, doing maintenance as a new task was quite stressful:

"I didn't do so [take care of everything] in the beginning, nor did I know what to do. I didn't even know how to replace fluorescent light bulbs. But, having a repairman was not easy. And, it's hard to let him know [what's broken]. (...) But, if something needs to be immediately repaired, for example, I found it was so frustrating when a light bulb was burnt out. Light bulbs were the first thing I encountered. (...) It's very stressful. Until I get it fixed, it drives me crazy, it's quite stressful. Every time I see the bulb(s), 'what should I do with this?'" (Interview 109, p.09, #12-31)

The mother's self-consciousness about the community's disrespectful attitudes toward them limited options for how to get the maintenance work done. When the mothers needed a man's expertise to maintain the house, it became more challenging and uncomfortable. It was not comfortable for some mothers, as single women, to have a male friend or repairman in their home. Mothers tried to avoid others' misunderstanding or derogatory gossip about having a man in their home:

"Also, personally, sometimes it is difficult living without a husband. Because... (...) when I need to fix something I can't. Then I have to have somebody look at it, but if somebody comes to my place where a single woman lives alone, then people say, 'well this woman lives by herself' and they look down on me, and they won't do their job thoroughly. There are these kinds of disadvantages... it's hard because of that." (Interview 101, p.05, #38-p.06, #10)

"There are so many things that men need to do in the practicalities of everyday life, such as moving, fixing electricity problem and broken parts of the house, and everything. In Korea, neighbors help each other out by fixing things, but it's all about money in America. We need to call technicians, and other people don't come to fix things. It does not look

right to call my church members to come in the house of a single woman, so everything's difficult. So this bothers me and makes it hard for me." (Interview 107, p.13, #18-26)

Maintaining the home was stressful especially during the family's initial transition. The mother's working created conditions under which the family needed to make considerable changes in their daily routine; mothers needed to figure out how to do housework while juggling multiple demands. Although house maintenance was not a frequently occurring task that mothers needed to manage, once it was required, it could be challenging both physically and psychologically. Having their natal families nearby was considerably helpful in managing household maintenance. Only a few single mothers had such help.

Being physically exhausted

Working per se was challenging both physically and emotionally for the former full-time mothers. Since they were working long hours and sometimes working on the weekends as well, single mothers did not have sufficient time to rest. This made it very hard for them to meet their children's needs:

"Sometimes, I got three jobs. Then physically, well...for now, I've gained some weight. But, at that time, really...when others see me as well, maybe because I built a shield against others, I looked like 'ready-to-fight.' My face was not sunny." (Interview 103, p.04, #39-p.05, #03)

"I don't want to go out any more. Before, working at a different shop, since I was able to utilize my time, I could clock off at work at 4:30 so I could come back no later than 5 o'clock and I could adjust my working hours if I have to take care of something. But such things are not allowed here. It [the schedule] is fixed. At that time, looking back now, I thought how come I could stop by *Puhan* market every day for grocery shopping. But now I don't want to go out on my day off. I don't even want to move an inch. However, my children have their eyes on those days, [and asked me] 'Mom, I have to go ABC.' ... Sometimes I want to scream something like 'Please leave me alone!'" (Interview 102, p.24, #14-24)

2. STRUGGLING TO MANAGE FINANCIAL ISSUES

Struggling to manage financial issues refers to a process in which single mothers tried to manage the family finances on limited income. Mothers' struggles included struggling to pay bills and being unable to support the children as other parents do. Although mothers were working hard to secure income, the initial family income was not likely to cover more than basic living expenses. Sometimes, even basic living expenses were not covered. Comparison with those who were better off reminded the mothers of their limited ability to respond to their children's needs or complaints about undesirable living conditions.

Struggling to Pay Bills

The family's limited income added to the mother's stress regarding childrearing. Most of the women had been full time homemakers before marital dissolution and were dependent on the father for managing the family finances; for such former full time mothers, financial issues were one of the hardest challenges to deal with:

"I think the shaded portion can be deleted here; however, the portion is a good example of fulfilling multiple roles] I mean, I need to fulfill mother role, father role: from my child's standpoint, I play the father role only 30%, 40%, indeed, because I am female. But, I need to act like father as well as like mother. Also, I have to work outside – really I feel like I have to play a double, triple, or quadruple roles (...) And, I think being responsible for family finance is the most difficult part. That is, it should have been very hard to fulfill only one; it is even hard for mothers to carry out only the mother's role, right? But, I have to do both part of this and part of that. It is really hard." (Interview 115, p.10, #04-p.11, #24)

"Because I didn't work for 14 years, 12 years, but all of a sudden I feel the burden that I had to be a house-head, at those times. Although it's obvious how much the minimum pay is, with it, I have to pay for rice, food, so that I have to work." (Interview 103, p.14, #32-35)

Making monthly payments for living expenses was the greatest financial challenge to the mothers. Such payments usually took the greatest share of the family's total income, even when some financial support was provided by ex-husbands and others. Living expenses that required monthly payments included rent or mortgage, fees for utilities, car insurance and maintenance expenses. Additionally, paying multiple bills on a single day was very distressing to mothers.

"It's financial problems. Payments. Something that is obviously necessary, not for a luxurious car or for a big house: house rent, electricity, food, the basics. So such things...but, (pause) it's not a lot, but just...(pause) it's just as much as that makes ends meet...honestly, my income can't make it. However, I receive child support, a little, not a lot (smile). But still, I'm below the guideline, that is, the poverty line." (Interview 103, p.07, #03-09)

"At the beginning, about two years, during the first two years, it was extremely hard to live even day by day. I felt like a mayfly that has just a one-day life. Pay for the insurance today then pay for the electricity tomorrow – it was really, really hard to live from day to day." (Interview 112, p.40, #18-21)

"As for the financial issues, when I have to pay something by the 15th or tenth 10th, or I must pay two bills by the 10th, but I don't have enough money. So, in that situation, what are you going to do? I must pay everything, in cases like these." (Interview 103, p.08, #08-11)

In the worst situations, after paying the monthly bills there was nothing left for essentials such as food and clothing. Inability to provide for their children made mothers sad.

"Because I was babysitting full time, for a month, so I was able to make quite a lot of money. So, I was able to cover all the payment with that money such as rent, electricity, water and such. Instead, I couldn't even think about buying food myself or something like that. It couldn't cover such expenses. At that time, I went to Food Bank. I cried a lot when I went there for the first time. Because I've not gone through a lot before, although I wasn't wealthy at all, I didn't really have hardships or significant deficits in my life – I just ate whatever I wanted to eat. But, all of a sudden, I went [to] a place like that, things that expired the day before, I mean having foods that expire today or tomorrow, or expired yesterday – I, as a mom, felt so awful to feed my child with that kind of food." (Interview 115, p.04, #20-33)

Being Unable to Support My Children as Other Parents Do

When mothers compared their living conditions with other families, especially two-parent families who were financially better off, that comparison often discouraged them and made them feel sorry for their relative lack of financial support for their children. The mothers' limited income did not allow them to provide for anything except the basic living expenses. Mothers could not afford the things their children wanted or wished for. These items included popular toys, going on a vacation or buying a car for an adolescent child.

"The most difficult thing for me now... as I told you before, the hardest thing is, my child is going to be in 11th grade and driving soon, things like that. As my children grow up, there are things I can't give them. Even though I am able to live on it now, my income, being somewhat limited, is just enough for living expenses... that's it, 'money for survival' (...) so that problem and that my children are growing up, these things are the hardest. And, hmm... (long pause) I think that's it. My children, the first one is going to be in 11th grade. A while ago she said, 'Mom, my friend so-and-so got a car. His father bought it for him.' He graduated this year. During moments like that, I can't say a word. I can tell [what she's thinking] by her expression. Because children her age usually learn to drive. So... I said to her, 'Well, you are going to have a car someday. Hold on to that hope!' But, she didn't respond. That breaks my heart." (Interview 102, p.10, #15-p.11, #04)

"Well, when he was in 3rd grade, he started realizing such things. When he went to his friend's home, they had something like X-box, games like Wii by Sony, with all its new accessories, iPad; the child [her son's friend] had an iPhone – he started using it when he became a 3rd grader; his father had an iPhone – something like that. Such things catch his eyes because my kid is a boy. He becomes interested in such things. Then I explain [the reason why I didn't buy it] 'You're still too young [to have such things]' and he says he gets it. (...) he wishes he could have them, even if they're not his, they're mom's. Such wishes. As for TV, [he wants to have] a TV set with a big screen. Yeah. Those things. He started comparing those things nowadays. And, on the other hand, another family went to Disneyland for vacation – had even been there a few times. When he was younger the situation would have permitted us to be there. But, when we were living with Dad, we didn't go there because he was too young. But, after the situation turned out this way, we can't afford it. We didn't [although we could] at that time; we can't at this time." (Interview 115, p.15, #11-p.16, #03)

3. LIVING MONTH BY MONTH

Living month by month refers to the mothers' actual strategy to manage their financial challenges on limited budgets that barely covered the basic costs of living. It was predominantly adopted by mothers who never worked during the marriage and their salaries became the main sources of income. Mothers who did not discuss living month by month were those who were continuously self-supporting.

In living month-by-month, single mothers were trying to make monthly payments with limited income and keep the expenses and available funds in balance each month; they juggled multiple financial challenges within a month-long time frame. Living month by month involved multiple actions including: 1) reducing living expenses; 2) benefitting from public assistance; and 3) having no plans ahead (saving whatever was left or living in the present).

Reducing living expenses

Reducing living expenses refers to a process in which the mothers changed their consumption patterns for the purpose of purchasing daily necessities and controlling the family's extra expenditures. Reducing living expenses was achieved through multiple strategies including: 1) changing where to shop and what to buy (e.g., buying goods on sale only), 2) cutting back on children's requests (e.g., not going to the movies), 3) receiving used goods from families and friends, 4) delaying purchases of goods as long as possible, and 5) fixing broken things at the last minute. While employing these strategies, mothers were spending every dollar with extra caution and encouraged their children not to waste money. The following quotes provide additional support and understanding of these processes:

“The thing is, my children have become accustomed to certain things, [for example] they don’t buy things unless it’s red-tagged. They became accustomed in such ways.” (Interview 109, p.14, #31-p.15, #01)

“It was just ‘zero’ after such things [=monthly payments of rent, utilities, and such] were paid. So, anything else like, buying foods or clothes – I’d never even thought about that. Somehow, I received handed-down clothes for my child, even shoes. By doing that, receiving such things from here and there, it was covered in that way.” (Interview 115, p.17, #18-21)

“We are trying to cut down our expenses to less than what we used to spend in Korea, which limits more and more what she can spend as well; her requests keep getting cut back by me, for example, in the past if we wanted to watch a movie we just went to a movie theater, but now we would not go out to a movie, if possible. ‘Watch it at home’ or ‘download it and watch it’ I would tell her. So that is one thing. Those things keep getting cut back and she now can see it herself; because she watches Mom hesitating to buy things that she [=Mom] used to buy freely or buying them after delaying the purchase a few times.” (Interview 108, p.03, #28-p.4, #01)

In spite of such concerted effort, mothers encountered occasions where they could not pay monthly bills because they ran short of funds from time to time. They needed to put off paying bills until they had funds available; sometimes, mothers resorted to giving up on making a payment.

“Sometimes, I fell behind more than months, with electricity payments before. It still happens from time to time, but compared to those times, I got to be able to pay such outstanding bills more quickly nowadays.” (Interview 115, p.29, #25-29)

“I, however, gave up on it, expecting to mess up my credit. But, I heard that apparently, if I screwed my credit up, it would be a significant disadvantage to raise my children, so I held on to that as long as I could. Therefore, I had hardest times not because of my husband, nor my children, but because of money – when I lost my credit. Huh... at that time, really, I would spring up from the bed. Once at that time, after the crisis was over, after I gave up on my credit, ‘Well, nothing happened even though I gave it up. It was nothing,’ so I became a bit bold, and more peaceful.” (Interview 109, p.13, #20-28)

Benefitting from public assistance

In situations in which the mother could not meet the shortfalls, benefitting from public assistance was chosen as an option to manage. For some mothers, accepting public assistance involved losing pride. This may have accounted for some mothers' choices to accept public assistance as the last resort. However, public assistance, such as Food Stamps or Food Banks, was cited as helpful by the mothers to get over a temporary crisis, including when their income became unsteady and decreased or until they were able to increase their income by working more jobs or hours.

“At first, I didn’t consider getting Food Stamps. I strove to live by myself. And, as you just said, I was like that. ‘It will be the last thing I’d accept...’ Because of others’ prejudice and something like that, I was like that, but in 2008 when the economy was so bad, I had such a hard time. Manicures... it’s good work in the summer, but it’s a seasonal business. It’s popular in spring and summer, but in other times, how can I say that... it’s not really what I expected... (...) Even now, when I see a long line at the grocery store, I still hesitate to take it out. That’s how I feel. Even so, it really helps. I can use it to buy ingredients for side dishes.” (Interview 102, p.05, #26-p.06, #09)

Having no plans ahead

Living month-by-month also meant that most mothers lived in the condition of having no plans ahead. Saving money or planning family finances for the future was not an option for them. Furthermore, long-term planning for family finances was too stressful for the mothers and there were very few practical answers to anticipate future financial needs or conditions, e.g., children’s college education or discontinuation of child support. Mothers were aware of having no future plans and engaged in either saving whatever was left or possible or focusing on living in the present.

“I have no plan. I just live day by day. I just live each day that has been given to me.”
(Interview 102, p.01, #30-32)

“It was a difficult situation, but when I faced it, I came to get through it somehow like, in this way or that. I don’t think I’ve ever had a plan. It wasn’t possible to have one, even if I wanted to do so. It was just, I just sought and did whatever I could do to resolve it. Yeah. That’s how I’ve lived.” (Interview 115, p.06, #17-21)

Saving whatever was left refers to a process in which the mother tried to keep the remaining money, after all living expenses were paid, for possible urgent needs. These savings were small and set aside for emergencies such as car repairs, rather than for long-term savings. In contrast, living in the present refers to a process by which the mother tried to stay focused on the current needs, especially her children’s needs, rather than saving money for future use.

“I wish to buy whatever I want, to eat out at my convenience, to buy my children anything they want, but if I spend the money in that way, it’s [going to be] terrible, but fortunately, what I learned from my mother is, not wasting money, such things, wasting no money. Also, the consumption, some people cannot control over their unusual desire to buy something, but I’m good at controlling myself. So, besides main payments, whether it’s one cent, or \$100, if any left, I would save it and make something up with it when needed, and...in such a way...then it’s the most difficult, the most. Practical problems.” (Interview 103, p.07, #10-19)

“Actually now, I don’t think about one year later, or two years later. Just ‘right now,’ ‘Let’s live in the present’ – this is how I live. Thinking about one year later, five years later just drove me crazy. ‘What should I do?’ Practically, I can’t even figure out the numbers and it’s impossible to live within my budget. So, ‘Well, tomorrow will take care of itself. Think about it later. Now, just turn the corner one by one.’ It seems easier to live with this thought. But, you know, I can’t avoid planning the future forever, but I just decided not to worry about ‘What am I going to do when [my children] go to college?’ in advance. It’s too tough for me to think about it. So now, if I have some extra money in a certain situation then [I would ask my children] ‘What did you say you need?’ at the moment, rather than say ‘We should save the money,’ and I would buy something affordable for my children at the moment with the extra money, even though I shouldn’t have done that. By living this way, I’m getting by one way or another. Then it’s less difficult. In the past, I was looking too much further into the future and having hard times

to plan it such as ‘I should save money...’ but now I’m doing in that way.” (Interview 109, p.16, #09-27)

4. RAISING CHILDREN WITHOUT THE FATHER

Raising children without the father refers to a process in which single mothers were taking on the responsibility to raise their children as a solo parent. Even though the former spouses did not engage in childrearing to a large degree, the father’s physical presence in the family was perceived as at least psychologically supportive for the mothers in childrearing. Raising children by themselves left single mothers in stress and with doubt about their decision-making related to childrearing issues. Raising children without the father involved in three major challenges: dealing with guilt feelings for the children’s loss of father; realizing the need for a father; and having nobody with whom to discuss childrearing.

Dealing with guilt feelings for the children’s loss of father

The mothers’ concerns regarding raising children as a sole parent were primarily associated with the children’s loss of a father and the suffering that resulted from the family’s separation. Generally, mothers felt guilty about or sorry for their children for the loss of their father, their suffering due to a lower standard of living, and the lack of sufficient support. Guilt feelings were the most difficult for mothers to deal with; they made the mothers feel small in front of their children and could remain unresolved for a long time.

“So do I [I also feel guilty]. Because I committed a sin to a degree, to my child. It has nothing to do with his choice. Both of us decided and he lost his dad; anyway, I initiated the process and broke up with Dad. Then it means that I committed a sin to my child.” (Interview 113, p.34, #27-31)

“I feel sorry, actually. [I feel so sorry] that he had to go through all of these situations due to what his parents did, not because of his choice—I think I will feel so sorry for that as long as I live; until I die.” (Interview 115, p.31, #10-12)

“The biggest is the guilt feeling that I couldn’t give her a normal family and it’s the hardest thing that I can’t overcome those feelings. Always [being seized] by a sense of guilt... I am a sinner whenever I am with my child and I am... yes. Because of that, my child as well, um... does not seem to be growing up to be a bright and happy child (laughs).” (Interview 106, p.06, #33-38)

Guilt feelings were likely to increase mothers’ concerns for their children. The more the mothers felt guilty about their decision to separate the family, the more they were concerned about the long-term impact of family separation or how the children’s mental well-being was affected. Repetitive discussion about such concerns showed how mothers were preoccupied with these concerns. A mother of a three-year-old son repeatedly spoke of her concerns regarding how to foster her son’s understanding about the family separation as he grows up:

“My biggest concern is, when my child comes to fully speak later, how I can explain this situation and if my child can understand how much I care about him.” (Interview 113, p.20, #25-28)

Mothers did not think that they would be able to release these feelings completely in their lifetime. Instead, the mothers were hoping that their children could understand the situation (family separation) so that the children could live their lives well; and could recognize the mothers’ hard work to raise their children well by themselves. Such hopes also led the women to do their best as mothers, live their lives to the fullest, hoping their children could have more positive than negative memories.

“However, on the other hand, since it already happened, I hope he could just admit it, not take a wrong way because of it. Although it wasn’t a situation that my child wanted, nor did I expect to happen in my life; even though I wasn’t able to just accept it either, but I can live my life to the fullest when I accept it.” (Interview 115, p.31, #13-19)

“I wish to be such a parent to my child. I don’t know if I can do as great a job to my child as my mom did to me, but I just want to do so. I am really happy and proud because I am my mom’s daughter. I want that to happen to my child. I hope he can feel like ‘although there were some times I felt lonely because dad was not with me, I am so happy because I have my mom.’ I want to raise my child in that way.” (Interview 113, p.32, #23-29)

“So for the hope, for my family first, my children, in every stage of their growth, when they grow more, I hope they can see those times like ‘even though dad was not with us, we, with mom and my younger or older sisters, were so happy.’” (Interview 103, p.18, #34-37)

Realizing the need for a father

Actual issues associated with the father’s absence were of great concern to mothers.

There were moments in which single mothers realized most the need for a father for their children, especially when the mothers were having issues related to discipline or puberty.

Father-related issues in childrearing had been raised differently in families of sons and those of daughters in terms of when and how it became most serious.

Having a son was the condition under which the mothers realized the father’s absence the most. Raising a son without a father’s presence resulted in increased worry and fear and decreased confidence in decision-making for mothers.

“I think I can financially support my child; if I can’t I will ask my parents to help me with supporting my child. However, as he grows up, I often think about whether it would’ve been better if my child was a daughter because of his dad’ absence. I do think about it a lot even now. I have a son, but I don’t have brothers; so I’m so scared and have a lot of fear about raising my son.” (Interview 113, p.14,#30-p.15, #02)

“My son, recently, it feels like he’s in his pre-pre-puberty or pre-puberty; he started talking about the deficits he has due to his dad’s absence. I mean, he’d never bother me by expressing his needs in harsh ways. He never gave me a hard time because of that; he always tells me what he needs in a pleasant way, but anyway he expresses that he needs it. So I tell him ‘okay, let’s do this,’ but I’m afraid and uncomfortable.” (Interview 115, p.12, #09-16)

Single mothers with a son had two major issues regarding the absence of the father. The father’s absence became obvious even when their sons were young, when the mothers had to discipline their sons:

“My child is not an obedient one. It would be good if he is like a typical American boy who is calm and docile, but if I brought him with me at a place like here, we couldn’t have talked even for five minutes.(...) He is as smart as a fox, not a boy you can easily manage. So I feel so sorry about that like, ‘Ah, if he had a bit strong dad, daddy who can be his model, the dad could have trained him in that aspect.’ He goes to see his dad these days. Go and just spend time to play with the overindulging father. See dad’s face and play together – that’s it, that’s what just dad does for him. His father is not somebody who can be his model (...) I hope to have a good model of a strong father, somebody who can discipline him. (...) That’s the greatest hardship I have these days.” (Interview 112, p.24, #07-p.25, #03)

“When he turned 4 years old, he started acting up, not listening to me. So, I thought he would need a father, when he was 4 years old. [I thought] ‘It is hard for me to handle him, even he is only 4 years old now.’ So like, ‘It would be great if he has father.’ If there were two parents, one could strictly discipline him and the other could soothe him or something like that, but because I have to do this and that, do everything by myself, it makes things really difficult.” (Interview 111, p.10, #09-15)

Some mothers had problems with their ex-husbands in disciplining their children. The father had a totally different parenting style, of which the mother did not approve. Worrying about the negative impacts of discordant parenting styles on their children added to the mothers’ intense emotions in childrearing. Although it was an issue for only a few mothers, this difference in parenting styles could be more serious than other issues in childrearing because it was ongoing

and required the father's collaboration, which was not under her control. One participant's story illustrates this problem:

"Beside what he did in the past, his current functioning, responsibility as well as any expectations for those in the future, as his dad – all of these are 'zero.' (...) So, things like he can't give anything good for my child drive me crazy. If it was all, that would be great. But, he's insisting things ridiculous or unacceptable, breaking the rules I established. He's ruining my principles through which I taught my child, making exceptions, and pushing me to the extreme situations – situations in which I had to be a mean mother. [For example] Tomorrow was the day school started, but today, because he met the son for a long time, he brought my child to a water park and played together there till 9 p.m., since 10 in the morning. Common sense doesn't work for him. I said 'Come back home till 7,' but he had him call me and ask me 'Mom, may I play here a little more?' Finally I had to say 'no.' I told it to him [Dad] twice. He's always like that. He makes the situation like that and pushes me to the extreme circumstance that I cannot avoid forcing something. He always makes such circumstances. (...) Actually that's the biggest [challenge]. I mean, if it happened in Korea, it could put to an end by saying like 'You such a bastard! You will never see him again!' But, it's not possible in the U.S. [Father's] visitation is set up and father can see his child even if he's not supporting the child. That's the most, actually the biggest problem to me, bigger than financial issues or anything else." (Interview 112, p.36, #22-p.37, #20)

When their sons were reaching puberty, mothers' struggles increased in intensity because they realized their limitations to help their sons.

"What I feel sorry about for my children is... uh... fathers are a [protective] fence [for their children] in a way that mothers can't be. Daughters might be okay with this. We can talk... but... I did not go out with many guys before so I don't know much about the psychology of men or what men pursue. I hardly know a thing about that stuff. My ex-husband was the first man I dated and married. Of course, I had male friends from church, from middle school and high school, but I never discussed these kinds of things with them. We just chatted while we volunteered at church... um... Since I don't especially remember having any deep conversations... Since I didn't know anything about those things... I have no grasp of what my son is thinking, what he is supposed to do. I do remember what I was doing at his age. But, because I have no idea on what boys are thinking and doing, I cannot move him at all. I cannot handle him. Only thing I can do is say, 'Did you eat?' or 'I love you,' and then give him money if he needs it, give him a ride if he wants to go somewhere... that's all... So... those are the things that, as his mother, I had to provide but couldn't." (Interview 101, p.06, #30-p.7, #10)

In contrast, those who had one or more daughters were likely to have fewer issues with the absence of the father. However, mothers also realized the need for the father's presence when raising a daughter during puberty. Those who already had challenges in their relationships with the daughters were more likely to experience difficult times in interacting with their daughters during puberty.

"I hadn't really thought about it like this, but when she goes to a home that has a father, my friend's house or that of an acquaintance through church, my child, she cannot get used to it. Then I think to myself 'Ah, it's a big trouble because she doesn't have a father figure'... Because, my child is now 11 years old, she just started puberty. She often says 'what good is a husband,' she just wants to make money, have a child or two and live with them like Mom. When she says things like that, honestly, I really like it [=living without husband]. (...) But I cannot tell my child that [it's good]. Because [I'm afraid] what if it becomes a handicap to my child." (Interview 106, p.06, #38-p.7, #13)

"It is still hard for me [to maintain good relationship with my daughter] because it goes between well and bad. My child seems to have harder time [to be with me only] than being with both mother and father. I heard that there is a time that the father is more important than the mother for the daughter. So, I need to fulfill the father role as well, but I am not actually good at just fulfilling the mother role. I guess that is why she is having hard time." (Interview 110, p.10, #08-12)

Having nobody with whom to discuss childrearing

Raising children by themselves was noticeably challenging for single mothers because they had nobody nearby with whom to discuss child rearing issues when they needed to and because they were the only ones to shoulder full responsibility for final decisions on everything and for the attendant consequences. Mothers perceived that raising children together was ideal and wished that they had somebody available on whom they could rely for assistance in childrearing:

“By myself – well, when I look around, I often hear that even in a family with both parents living together, the mother brings up the children alone anyway. I don’t know because I have no such experiences. Um... and whenever I am talking about this, [people say] ‘everyone is the same to be anxious about their children. It’s not because you are a single mom.’ But, they have somebody to talk to, always, next to them. For me, I have to make a call to somebody to do so. [I have to call] Ms.*** or my counselor. Those things.” (Interview 106, p.04, #14-21)

“When something happens, I mean, I have nobody to discuss. That is, somebody with whom I can discuss about things such as about my child in depth; whomever I talk to outside, I need to decide everything. Yeah. I have to decide, I have to take the responsibility, and I have to break through [everything].” (Interview 115, p.46, #20-31)

“I found that I was not the only one who was going through such problems when I heard stories from others, indeed. So, I know that, but it can’t make any difference. But honestly, it could be easier if two went through it, right? Because every child goes through their puberty, it would be easier if the couple, with the father present, went through it together. That’s the thing, right? If my heart gets hurt then I can talk to [the spouse]. If I have trouble, the other can help, right? One parent comforts and the other parent can be strict. There are different ways to handle the child [if the couple goes through it]. It’s difficult in many ways for single mothers, including issues related to the child’s education. What’s good education? One side can strictly discipline a child while the other gives love and comfort – it should be that way, right? It should not be either disciplining strictly or giving love only. But [a single mother] can’t do both of them. That’s how it is. That’s the thing.” (Interview 107, p.36, #29-p.37, #09)

5. FILLING IN THE FATHER’S ABSENCE

Filling in for the father’s absence was one of the single mothers’ responses to raising children without their father and refers to actions taken by single mothers for the purpose of addressing their sons’ needs for a father. It was a dominant response among mothers who had a son. Mothers tried to carry out what an ordinary father usually does with his son and provided support, including assisting their sons going through puberty. Learning from others’ stories,

addressing his developmental needs, looking for a good dad (meaning remarriage), and helping him with his psychological struggle were the sub-processes of filling in the father's absence.

Learning from Others' Stories

Regardless of the children's age, learning from others' stories was a common action taken by the mothers of sons. Other mothers' experiences of raising one or more sons were valuable sources of information about what would happen as their sons grew up and what and how they needed to prepare for possible issues in the future:

"I always ask to other mothers, ask about their children, how they are doing. Since my child is so special and unique, I heard many stories about other children. When mothers meet, we ask each other every day about their children, how they are doing." (Interview 107, p.27, #34-p.28, #02)

"In the church I attend now, [I became close to new people;] a mother who became single and married again. Another one is still single and her children all grew up and attend universities. So, most of them are those who have "been there." So I got a lot of advice from them. I mean I need to play the mother role and father role as well for my child. (...) They help me a lot in such situations, because they'd gone through a lot that I haven't experienced yet. However, things don't always work in the way they told me. My situations are different and my child's personality is also different. But, listening to their stories, there are many things that are helpful for me." (Interview 115, p.09, #34-p.10, #12)

Addressing His Developmental Needs

In cases in which the sons were babies or young boys at the time of physical separation, the mothers' focus was geared toward the sons' developmental needs. Addressing physical needs included: having him be with older male friends and adults (boys older than their sons or male adults); playing men's things together; searching for affordable programs for extra-curricular

activities; and looking for a good dad. The focus in the actions was to provide experiences that the sons were supposed to have with dads.

By having the son with older male friends and adults and playing men's things together, the mothers tried to supplement their sons' proper development. Mothers tried to spend as much time as possible practicing sports together or doing activities that required physical strength.

Having close friends who had one or more sons older than their own sons was a condition that facilitated this process.

"Because my child is a son and it is good for him to do soccer or sports, I am trying to give him such opportunities. Although I'm not good at it, [I'm] trying to do such things together, for example, practicing to kick the ball or anything like sports." (Interview 111, p.12, #07-10)

"His friend's father brings both of them a lot. Sometimes the mother and the father bring him with them. They are the family I came to stay close this year. And, my son is not a shy boy, fortunately, even it's not his own dad, he, with his friend together, plays with the father. And, the father just takes it. The father takes my child to some playgrounds; does exercise together a lot. I used to leave my son with female teachers before when he's taking lessons of something. But, now he's growing up, I try to have him with male teachers; with older male friends at church. And, there is a young guy who is older than my son and started college this year. He is doing very nice to my son and takes care of him a lot; and spends time together. Even if he's not going to do a special thing, I just try to have him with boys like his older brothers, even when my child is going to watch a movie. That's how I am doing." (Interview 115, p.13, #07-25)

Since the family's income barely covered basic living expenses, children of low-income single mothers did not have many opportunities to participate in paid programs, such as summer camps, soccer classes, or music lessons. When situations permitted, the mothers did a thorough search for the information regarding such programs for free or an affordable price and let their sons participate in these activities as much as possible.

“Only now, since my income increased a little bit, I was able to let my son learn swimming. And, soccer. Instead, I was searching for programs that were very, very cheap. With his friend’s mother – there are some inexpensive programs that teach soccer and cost \$79 per year. You can find it if you do a thorough search, you can find such programs in the States. Something that I can afford without any financial support from others. In such programs, volunteers teach soccer. Something like that. Look for such things and let him join the program. Instead, we can’t do that a lot because I can’t always take him around. Swimming, soccer, something like that. It becomes possible only this year, after he is in his 3rd year. He couldn’t do anything before. Just attended school and that was it. But, boys need to do such things when they are young.” (Interview 115, p.17, #22-34)

Looking for a good dad

Looking for a good dad was an action taken by some mothers who were trying to fill in for the father’s absence by remarriage – to have a new father for the son. Particularly when her son reached the age of preschool, disciplining issues became prominent; thus, mothers considered finding a new dad who could control their son’s behavior better than they could. Especially mothers who did not approve of their ex-husbands as good role models for their sons were likely to look for somebody who could be good father figures for their sons, rather than good candidates as husbands.

“So, because I wanted to give him a dad, I was looking for somebody who could do what I couldn’t do for him... And, my child, always, from mom’s standpoint, it shouldn’t have been a problem if my child was a daughter, but he was a son, I realized that he needed father a lot.” (Interview 111, p.03, #15-19)

Helping His Psychological Struggle

Mothers of sons who were reaching puberty were likely to take different actions to compensate for the father’s absence. Mothers also realized their own limitations in helping their sons with the struggles of puberty and their lack of knowledge about developmental issues

unique to makes. In an attempt to fill in for the father's absence, mothers engaged in three major actions: maintaining good father-child relationships; distracting his [the son's] attention; and finding a male mentor for him.

Maintaining good father-child relationship was attempted by not speaking ill of the father; not disclosing the actual reason for the break-up; and encouraging getting together with the father. The following account provides further elaboration:

"At first, he [=the second son] complained to me saying things like "why did we have move when all [my] friends were there?" and such. And so, at first, I couldn't tell [him] the story. Because...I had to consider their father's image, and so I told him that I would tell him the reason later and just wrapped up the conversation." (Interview 104, p.01, #34-38)

"Although I hated my ex-husband and got divorced, I believed that my children need their father. If my children wanted to see their father, then I gave them a ride to their father's place; or if he wanted to pick them up, then I let him do so. Without fail I sent his birthday present via my children, for the ex-mother-in-law too, as if my children bought them. By doing so, I wanted to keep their good relationship with their father." (Interview 101, p.08, #06-12)

Distracting his attention was one mother's indirect approach to her son's struggle. By distracting his attention from the lack of a father, the mother tried to help her son go through puberty. She tried to provide as many distractions as possible:

"It seems they feel his absence at certain moments. So, for instance, he used to take the children to the mall a lot when he was off, but we don't go anymore, because of our financial situation, there's no occasion to go to the mall. Listening to them talking about such thing sometimes, I try not to touch that subject. I don't want to know about it either because I don't have an answer, (...) my son used to receive counseling from her a couple of times because his father's character was so strong. But, he said he didn't want to tell his secret to anybody. So, now I try to use faith; I just try to have him involved in various activities at church and set up multiple occasions for him to get together with his friends." (Interview 109, p.06, #03-18)

Finding a male mentor was another strategy mothers used to provide their sons with practical and psychological support that they could not offer. It was similar to looking for a good dad for her son; it was different because the mentor was not going to be his new father. The mentor would be functioning like an older brother. Mothers found it extremely difficult to find such mentors.

“I was looking for [somebody who could help my son], I did. I mean I was looking for somebody who could do so [could be a father figure and mentor for him] but well, there’s nobody [to fulfill that role]. Because, I found someone and linked them together, the older boy, who was a freshman, hurt [emotionally] my son again. So, after then my son closed his mind and does not open to anybody. After then it was harder to find someone to help him. Even at church, he would not [open his mind to others]. After that, he shut his mind completely.” (Interview 107, p.33, #26-32)

In the cases where mothers only had a daughter or daughters, it was not obvious if daughters were having a hard time due to the lack of a father. Mothers articulated their clear recognition of the sons’ needs for having a father, but did not discuss the lack of a father-daughter relationship. The mother’s concern about the lack of a father role was more about the potential impact on the daughter related to future relationships with men. The following illustrates the role of the father for girls:

“Because [she] hasn’t had a Dad since [she] was young, it’s ridiculous that I play the father role [for her] now. And, there are no good memories about the father. So, in all honesty, I grew up in a pretty well-off family. But, even so, I do not feel that my father did that much. Besides making money. It, on the other hand, it was something that helped us [=my natal family] not have hard times, that is, it enabled us to be well-off. However, it did not really make a big difference for me whether I had a father or not, honestly. So, I myself, don’t have a strong belief that ‘a child should have a father.’ So, I live without [distinguishing] ‘father role’ and ‘mother role’. And, whenever my child met her dad from time to time, the memories [with Dad] are very bad, so there was no need for a dad. So seemingly, my child comes to think that she can live by herself raising children without

the husband when she grows up. Huh huh. That's really... Do I need to fix this or leave it as is? This is my dilemma." (Interview 106, p.07, #33- p.08, #9)

"Since I majored in psychology, I am worried about the lack of a good role model of a 'father' for my daughter. When my child has a relationship, creates her own family later, it is not problematic right now, but I'm afraid such a problem will arise." (Interview 108, p.09, #22-26)

6. RE-ORGANIZING FAMILY LIFESTYLE

Re-organizing family lifestyle refers to adopting a process in which mothers changed their ways to manage housework and household maintenance. Re-organizing family lifestyle involved three major processes: making things simple; sharing housework; and doing it myself. Re-organizing family lifestyle was necessary for the mothers' successful integration of working and motherhood; it also helped mothers avoid and protect their children from unnecessary intense emotional reactions associated with doing housework.

Making Things Simple

Making things simple refers to a process through which the mothers adjusted their ways of maintaining their homes. This included changing or lowering their standards for housekeeping and housework, thus enabling them to save their time and energy and lower their stress. The following examples are illustrative of this simplification.

"Really, I don't want to cook any more. (laughing) If someone else cooks for me or buys me something, it is the best meal for me. In the past, I used to search the Internet, search websites to look for delicious foods to feed my child. But now, why bother doing like that? It is not necessary. All you eat comes out the same. (laughing) So, 'live simple.' It was so uncomfortable to eat out before. It didn't matter at all when we were better off before, but in times like this, when the situation got worse and we don't have money, eating out – even we order just \$1 food, eating out itself [felt not right]; it was also because I was self-conscious. I thought it was too luxurious for myself, but eating out can

be economical, because I need to pay for electricity, ingredients anyway [to cook]. So, [I made up my mind to] 'Live a simple life, live it uncomplicatedly.' I try to live like that. But, my house becomes so dirty." (Interview 115, p.34, #17-31)

"I just do everything, using machinery a lot. I use the dishwasher; I use an automated vacuum cleaner. After I realized that it wasn't good to my child at all to get upset while doing the housework, I just do it relying on that vacuum cleaner. And just, in that way, then, I do the housework roughly. I try not to tie myself down to that." (Interview 106, p.15, #24-29)

Along with changed standards for housekeeping, mothers also needed the children's cooperation to deal with these demands efficiently. Sharing housework with children was another strategy adopted by the mothers to manage housekeeping demands.

Sharing Housework with Children

Sharing housework with children is a process in which the mothers carried out necessary housework for their families with support from their children. Mothers assigned various tasks to their children, ranging from simple tasks (e.g., folding the laundry, vacuuming or cooking rice) to assuming responsibility for caring for younger siblings. Since housework was often shared with children before separating, the way of sharing housework needed to be changed in terms of the amount and level of precision in doing it. Thus, standards were also adjusted.

"I used to give her allowance for her cleaning the bathroom [before] (laughing). And, here, I added on few more things on to her list, such as laundry and doing this and that day by day, in this way." (Interview 108, p.08, #05-08)

"It's not going to be perfect, is it? (laughing) Anyway, they have their parts to help their mother. Just their parts are more finely divided and need to be fulfilled with more precision than when their father was there." (Interview 109, p.17, #4-7)

Gender and age of children matter in sharing housework in terms of what and how much to share. Younger children also helped mothers with housework by doing their assigned part, but their activities were often perceived as part of education, rather than sharing the housework. Older children, especially daughters, were likely to share more housework and responsibilities for child care.

Doing It Myself: From Big Deal to Nothing

Doing it myself is one of the strategies that the mothers employed to do the maintenance work. By learning how to do the maintenance work that they never did before, the mothers realized that many of the tasks were doable and as a result their confidence in managing the maintenance tasks grew. Things that were relatively simple and needed immediate repair were likely to be done through the process of doing it myself. Acquaintances, friends, employees at repair shops and Internet websites were the sources from which mothers were able to get the help needed to do some maintenance tasks by themselves:

“In my case, I take care of everything. I didn’t in the beginning, nor did I know what to do. (...) Light bulbs were the first thing I encountered. There were two fluorescent light bulbs and I remembered watching one of them [be] replaced so I tried it but dropped one and broke it at that time. So, I thought ‘Ah, this is how it [=life without a husband] is going to be!’ I just bought [what I needed] and did it myself. As for things I didn’t know how to fix, then I asked and learned how to do it from somebody who knows. Still there are a lot of things needed to be repaired, but I do spend money to fix something if necessary and I do it myself if I can. This is how I deal with such issues – if I couldn’t do it, if something’s broken, I would order goods or parts on-line, via a website (...) But once I did it, then I could do it. It was nothing, wasn’t it? In the past, it was a really ‘big deal’ to me, [for example] an oil change seemed to be a huge challenge to me, but once I was there, it was so funny because it’s really nothing, but he [my husband] made such a big deal of doing it for me.” (Interview 109, p.09, #29-36)

Being sensitive to others' misunderstanding in the community was a condition under which the mothers did maintenance themselves. However, if the family needed a man's expertise to get things done, the mothers were not able to do these tasks by themselves. In such situations, help from close friends could be of significant help. The mothers became very cautious when seeking a man's help in order to avoid unnecessary and unpleasant misunderstandings within the community about their requests for assistance.

"I was about to call a handyman, but I hated to let a stranger in. So I went to Home Depot and asked them how to do it and they gave me detailed instructions. So I bought new ones and did it myself." (Interview 109, p.10, #01-03)

"Also, around here, there's a couple, whom I think God sent to accompany me. The husband is a doctor. Even so, if my doorknob is broken, he fixes it. If I buy TV or a stand that needs assembly, he does it for me. If the grass is long, he mows it... God gave me such a nice couple." (Interview 101, p.08, #35-39)

"When a married man helped me, I came to think about it in his wife's shoes. So, in that situation, I should ask him if his wife knows he's helping me; and tell him I will let her know. If I needed to ask a husband to help, I would pay for the work to the wife. I am that much careful, but it's unavoidable [to get misunderstood]." (Interview 110, p.11, #22-27)

Mothers' Emotional Responses to Struggling Between Father Role and Mother Role

Struggling between working and childrearing was accompanied by overwhelming loneliness and sadness. They were carrying out both all by themselves. Even though they received help and support, mothers were the only ones who made decisions, planned, carried out decisions and took full responsibility for the entire process and its consequences.

"So, now I have to deal with everything here and now by myself. I don't have my own family here, now do I? Because of such circumstances, sometimes, my loneliness is just beyond expression... it's huge. Of course, as far as religion goes, God is with me and because He is with me I am not really alone, but even so, loneliness is huge for me

because I am a human being. So I really envy the people (women) who have their own families nearby. They can turn to their families whenever they need to... whenever they need to, can't they? Life is so hard for me though because I have to do everything myself, handle everything myself." (Interview 102, p.02, #20-30)

"The reality that I have to go through such hard times all by myself. It's worst for about one year, since then I feel much better now. Still, however, sometimes I feel...so sad (smile), and difficult." (Interview 103, p.11, #11-14)

When the mothers could not find solutions for practical issues, such situations exceeded their tolerance and pushed them into extremely negative emotions. Such intense emotions were expressed as 'want to go crazy' or 'wish to die':

"Also, even if you have much support from others, helping is just helping, not taking responsibility. So, I can't be upset if my friend can't help me, I can't blame the person. Such emotional stuff, when I'm in a desperate need, but nobody can help me due to some reasons, I think ill of them and feel sad. Such things, emotionally, I know I should understand them, but sometimes, I feel like they seem so burdened about me because I feel so sad, and don't want to keep in touch with them. It's also hard to go through and overcome such things. Also, seriously, if I have a problem today and I wish to quit my job tomorrow. Or when I feel so weary I wish I could start over, sending my children [to my ex-husband], wish to go back to Korea, wish to continue studying. Or, if I can't help anything, then I wish I could die. I thought that I wanted to die so many times. But, I can't. (...) It is an expression of my feelings that I'm having such extremely hard times, which makes me even think of dying, that is, the maximum of how tough it is for me – it doesn't mean that I'm going to die right now. I want to die, but I'm withstanding on the very last of my strength, and that's why it's extremely hard for me to endure, but I can't share that [with a doctor]. And, even if I cry with my children, I can't cry [all the time], not working." (Interview 103, p.10, #25- p.11, #10)

Conditions that affected the mother's struggle between father role and mother role

Temporary or chronic health issues made the mothers' struggles more challenging as they needed to rely on others for greater help; their loneliness and sadness become greater. In

addition, others' illness experience triggered an alarm that they needed to have alternatives for their children in case of an emergency:

"The thing is, when I was approaching menopause, I had such a hard time with migraines. When I was suffering from a migraine, he used to go out to eat with the children at the time. When it comes to rides, my friends used to do it [for me] but, if I had pain on Saturday or Sunday when he was home, he used to do things such as eating out, but now, even if I'm sick, how to put this, I can't lie down. (...) All of a sudden, a friend of mine around me became so sick that she lost her memory. So [we] talked about such things for a few hours. Listening to such stories, I realized that although my children definitely need their mother, I should make sure there's somebody else who will take care of my children besides me, and make that explicit; and I think about such matters a lot. And, uh, it's really hard. But, even before [the divorce], I handled that many rides by myself, so there's no sudden additional burden actually. But, when I'm sick [it's hard]." (Interview 109, p.05, #10-29)

For mothers who had health issues, including menopause, fulfilling multiple roles was particularly challenging. Having chronic conditions were often related to chronic fatigue and a decrease in physical strength and ability to earn income. This made mothers less confident in raising their children; under such conditions, childrearing while working felt even more burdensome.

"What's difficult is, at the beginning I was getting by with my children, I felt like, until just a few months ago, until last year... 'Well, it's bearable.' I... recently I became so sick a few months ago that I was in the hospital for a week. I think I was totally exhausted mentally and physically. Then these days... I didn't work for three months and started working from this past August, but I'm so tired these days. Physically, and so on. On the one hand, my two children... I should take care of them, what do you call it?, as a head of the family, although I have to take care of my children in every way as their mother, until the time that they can stand on their own, I feel so tired physically as well as in heart nowadays." (Interview 102, p.01, #11-26)

In a situation where the mothers needed to work as well as take actions for prevention or treatment for illness, it was not easy to receive health care unless they were insured. Lack of time

and energy due to extensive working hours and having no insurance coverage contributed to delays in seeking timely treatment.

“I am suffering from a lot of symptoms after quitting hormone therapy for menopause; I lost weight a lot, always tired, my tonsils got swollen; and I can’t raise my right arm due to excruciating pain. So I can’t lie on side. Because I didn’t have a specific diagnosis about those symptoms, I can’t get treatment for that. If I want to get physical therapy, commuting for the therapy even gets it worse; go to the clinic, wait there – it’s hard. And, physically it’s demanding. I am exhausted because I have been working multiple things. Every part of my body is aching. I can ignore the pain while working, but feel it much more when I have no job.” (Interview 110, p.07, #27-34)

“After the divorce, after I got hired here as full time, then I came to have insurance. So, I can go to hospital and go to dentist. Then health problems, problems that I couldn’t take care of before, came out. Such as problems on my thyroid, osteoporosis, and many others, including my teeth. As for the teeth, they are in so bad condition that if I don’t pay a very careful attention to it, then I have to have them pulled out. Such a thing. Because it’s actually serious problems, it’s hard for me.” (Interview 103, p.13, #06-13)

Family support was most helpful for women in fulfilling both the father and mother roles.

One mother’s situation showed the significance of having family nearby in fulfilling multiple roles, which was in clear contrast with other mothers’ situations:

“In my case, both my mother and father are here, my siblings live in 10- minute distance from mine. Since we all had lived together up to recently, they used to help me, support me, and take care of me. I just, my children come home from school themselves, [their] grandpa takes care of them; my mom feeds them. Only [thing] I need to do now is going out and earn money from early in the morning till late at night. So, I prefer to be here because it’s safe and better. It’s because my parents are here with me. So, I think my situation is quite different from that of other mothers.” (Interview 114, p.02, #22-31)

SUMMARY OF THE STAGE OF STRUGGLING

The stage of struggling was a period in which the mothers’ endeavors to integrate fulfilling the fathers’ tasks into the mother role took place. As a sole provider and parent,

mothers were taking on new roles previously filled by fathers while continuing with their roles as mothers. Since the mothers' ultimate goal was raising the children well all by themselves, the stage of struggling was characterized by mothers' persistent attempts to retain their mother roles despite the multitude of barriers to integrating working and childrearing.

Depending on the mother's previous level of self-sufficiency, pressing issues for mothers varied: for the former full-time mothers, working and dealing with financial issues were the most pressing; for those who were already the providers for their families, raising children without their fathers became increasingly challenging as children grew up. In general, integration of working into motherhood was likely to be more challenging for mothers who did not work outside the home prior to separation or divorce, whereas those who had worked before becoming single had already experienced integration of working and childrearing.

Being the sole individual to take the lead and responsibility for family survival was the major condition under which single mothers' struggle to fulfill multiple roles became so challenging. Since resolving one demand was closely related to managing another, unresolved practical issues made the mother emotionally intense; having to address emotional issues delayed the women's ability to attend to their children's needs. Having natal families nearby, especially parents, was the most helpful condition under which mothers were able to navigate demanding situations with more ease.

Practical Transition: Stabilizing

After going through the stages of assuring family survival and struggling between father role and mother role, the mothers were approaching the stage of stabilizing in their practical

transition. New ways of operating their new families that were identified and adopted during the previous stages were maintained during the stage of stabilizing. Those who reached the stage of stabilizing exhibited two major features by: becoming assertive and capable in handling problems alone and doing their best as mothers. These two features can also be seen as ultimate outcome of the women's struggles and subsequent actions to re-create their new lives of single-mother families.

1. BEING ASSERTIVE AND CAPABLE IN HANDLING PROBLEMS ALONE

Being assertive and capable in handling problems alone refers to the mothers' state of gaining confidence in managing the family and relational problems by themselves over time. They were likely to view living as a single mother doable or getting better; they believed that they would continue to face problems, but they would find solutions.

“At the beginning, I didn't know what to do; didn't know where to start. I was like that at that time, but it feels like it is getting better one by one. It is getting better than three years ago; it is better one month later than one month before.” (Interview 115, p.01, #05-08)

“After the first two, three years passed, it felt better a little bit and it's been four years, almost five years now. I escaped from home with my son when my son was 4 months old. Run out of there when he was 4 months old and now he is five years and 4 months. After three years passed, I felt like I could live by myself. Other problems such as external environment or something like that, I felt comfortable to handle them.” (Interview 112, p.41, #02-08)

“Anyway, in life, in my opinion, what matters is not whether you have problems or not, it's not important, usually we focus on the fact of having problems and think like ‘there's a problem, I have the problem, what am I going to do?’. But the important [thing] is, how to resolve it. That is my big lesson from my divorce experience. Getting divorced is a big deal for me, but the conclusion is, because I divorced, I was divorced, how I live, how well I live my life as a single mom – I think it is [what is] important.” (Interview 103, p.20, #19-26)

When the mothers had successful experiences in resolving various issues, such positive experiences helped the mothers gain increased confidence and positive sense of self as well. Such positive sense of self was often expressed as ‘becoming strong’: the mothers felt that they became strong from what they had been going through. Hardship, from their standpoint, made them stronger.

2. DOING MY BEST AS A MOTHER

Doing my best as a mother was the actual strategy employed by single mothers to fulfill both the father and mother roles in changed living circumstances. To achieve this, single mothers took actions of: putting motherhood before the self; planning ahead; seeking information on childrearing; and engaging in a new network or community for the children.

Putting motherhood before the self

Putting motherhood before the self refers to a process by which the mother prioritized her children above everything else, including her own needs or wants. Even though there were times where mothers were not able to do this, their lives and mindsets revolved around their children. Even as mothers struggled to juggle working and childrearing, managing their own lives often occupied low priority. Putting motherhood before the self consists of six strategies: making decisions for children; giving up what I (the mother) want; investing everything for my children; planning ahead; seeking information on childrearing; and engaging in a new network or community for the children.

Making Decisions for Children refers to a process through which the mothers chose what was best for their children even if the decision was not favorable to themselves. Such

decision-making meant that life was rearranged according to the children's needs and wishes. In contrast, during married life, priorities revolved around what the father wanted.

"I didn't tell the details to my children because I didn't want to hurt them. And, I didn't speak ill of him to my children because it might have made them hate him. 'Still, Dad loves you,' and I just wanted to tell them good things about their Dad. So, I didn't tell them much of the details about their father... about what he did. I didn't want our beloved children to hate others, especially their father. But, instead, the children thought that I insisted on the divorce and so we got divorced." (Interview 101, p.07, #17-24)

"Then I moved in my children's grandmother's house. House of my husband's mother, that is, my mother-in-law's, because there's nobody for me to turn to. Because...thinking of my anger...I hated my mother-in-law and our relationship, but thinking of my children, it would be better than living in a shelter." (Interview 103, p.03, #10-14)

"Even the father wasn't able to play that role, the family always revolved around him when we had him. Because my way of thinking is the mindset of Koreans, father-centered... (...) Because he was the center, but he isn't here, the energy [that used to go to the husband] goes to my children... My energy is focused on my children, after my children became my [first] priority. Even so, it also has a good aspect. Because with my children, what they want, in the past, we had to adjust to what the father wanted, but now [I am focused on] what my children want." (Interview103, p.17, #14-26)

Giving Up What I Want Limited time, budget, and energy created many situations where mothers needed to make choices between what they wanted and what their children wanted. The mothers usually resolved situations by giving up what they wanted for now or possibly in the future. The mothers could not give up either working or raising their children.

"My church holds service on Sunday, Wednesday, and Saturday. Since I cannot attend the Wednesday service, which starts at seven on Wednesday, I hate to miss worship service. In addition, on Wednesday, more customers come (laughs). On Wednesday, thinking of Wednesday service, I left the shop at after 7:30. Arriving at seven...picked up my car and arrived a little passed 8. I thought I could listen to the sermon if I went to church right away. I wished to go, but I couldn't because of my kids. I had to go home because of my children." (Interview 102, p.23, #20-28)

“As I told you before, I want to work as well as take courses, and have children, in such a situation, if you don’t have children, you can easily make a decision. As for work, I can reduce the hours, or increase due to tuition, but if you have children and if you increase working hours or take courses, whatever changes you make have a huge impact on your child care. So, in conclusion, you have to choose for survival and give up your own [=what you want] if you have children, otherwise it is easy for you to make decisions about and take up challenges in your life. That’s how it is.” (Interview 103, p.22, #29-38)

Investing Everything for My Children involved the mothers’ allocation of disproportional amount of money and time to their children. The mothers’ goal was to: support the children’s well-being and growth as much as they could and not let the children feel a lack of anything, as much as possible. Putting their own needs aside, single mothers tried to support anything that they thought was necessary for their children’s well-being:

“I tried so hard to raise my child so he would not feel he had any deficits. I tried to let him do everything he wanted to do. I couldn’t invest to myself, but I only invested on my child with everything.” (Interview 107, p.22, #27-29)

“Money – when I was studying *** in the university, I heard that how much money you earn was not important; what matters most was how you spend the money. Likewise, I need to spend money sparingly; if I spend money as much as I want like others do I will never save money. But, [I] try to control myself on consumption, spend money sparingly, and [spend money on] something that is really needed. Buy something that is necessary for my child first then spend money on what I really need when it is really necessary. For my child, because I am rearing a son, I need to save large sum of money just in case something happens to my child.” (Interview 113, p.30, #05-13)

Although long work hours and physical exhaustion presented challenges, mothers tried to spend time as much time as possible with their children. Mothers of young children were especially aware of the importance of spending more time with their children since children were growing fast. One mother’s story was a good example:

“For me, the most important is time to spend with my child. [In order to do so] I have to decide my priority, prioritize things. Serving church is also important, but time to be with

my child, I think, is *very* limited, which [should I do now or] I will never have even [the time] I wish to, as my child grows; because my child is going to be outside the home more and more (chuckling). So, I am trying to do so as much as I can, otherwise I won't have time with my child." (Interview 115, p.29, #07-14)

Planning Ahead is the mothers' actions of mapping out plans for their children.

Generally, the plans were about the children's education and how to facilitate their academic success. The important condition that allowed this to happen was achieving financial stability. In the absence of financial stability, it was very hard to think about the children's future.

"I want to provide anything necessary for his study, [including] good school, as many as I can, which is one of the things that I put my effort on from now. (...) I mean, what I can do for him is only such things. And, I am not making money by cheating others, so I want my child to feel like, 'my mom is working so hard and supporting me like this.' Good school, good environment – I will prepare such an environment in which my child can grow well in advance, before he is going to fall into unhealthy thoughts. And, difficult thing is, uhm, you know, opportunities to serve others. As I see, [other parents] send their children to countries for volunteering, like Africa or underdeveloped countries, paying for it. Go there and build a dam, dig the soil, something like that. I will give my child such opportunities. By doing such things, he will not be selfish – also, I might spoil him. So, [I want him to] practice sharing with others from now on – I want my child to be such a person." (Interview 113, p.18, #01-17)

Seeking Information on Childrearing Since single mothers had no one with whom to share or discuss childrearing they were trying to gather information that could assist them to anticipate or resolve their children's issues. Major sources of information included other single mothers' experiences, books or TV programs on childrearing, parenting seminars, and doctors or counselors who had expertise in pediatrics. Such information seeking was most likely to be carried out when they encountered concrete issues in relation to their children, such as puberty-related struggles:

“He’s my biggest concern now, since he entered high school, so it is him now. But, as I was attending a parenting seminar – I did my homework diligently. I should put my effort [to help him] as well, not just pushing my child, right? So, I had been there and I found out almost all parents would go through it at least once in their children’s adolescence. It wasn’t just a big deal for me, and it comforted me little, but I still need to deal with it.” (Interview 107, p.34, #22-31)

Engaging in a New Network or Community for the Children was the mothers’ way to provide better opportunities for the children’s socialization through maintaining relationships with the parents of their potential friends. Since the mother was often tied to working, the family’s life was confined within the mother-children relationship. To avoid the negative impact of limited exposure to social interaction on children’s development, mothers tried to mingle with other mothers whose children could be friends with theirs. This was particularly important for mothers who had a young child or children and was often achieved by attending Korean churches.

"Of course, I have friends, but rather than [stay close to] my friends, because I have a child, I tried to stay close with people who have children with his age. We used to go to see them once a week so that their children and mine could spend time together. And, one of the mothers called me a big sister and we got along well with each other. Because my younger sister wasn't with me, I thought of her as my younger sister. We used to get together like that during weekends. And, we participated in church activities. (...) I intentionally took my child to gatherings like that to socialize with people. I did that for my son. During Thanksgiving, we join the Thanksgiving party at the church, if any. Also, if an organization holds a meeting, we go there. Rather than being by ourselves, we attend a meeting or party for me and my child, no matter what, to get together with people. During the holidays, we didn't try to deal with loneliness by ourselves, but we looked for different events. We tried, so we got over with loneliness well." (Interview 107, p.39, #02-21)

“Without a Christian church community it’s impossible to live with a child. I receive a lot of help [from the community] and so it’s like that with my child’s hanging out [with friends] as well. School life is not enough for my child [to help her socialize]. I started going to church because of my child.” (Interview 106, p.11, #06-10)

SUMMARY OF THE PRACTICAL TRANSITION

Practical transition was the processes through which the mothers were making substantial transition to their new positions of the head of household and single-parenthood (see Figure 1). After separating took place, mothers engaged in the stage of assuring family survival. Assuring a place to live and income were the major tasks during this stage; in most cases, these tasks were likely to be done within the first one to two years of the transition. Assuring family survival was achieved through very complex and non-linear processes, which were influenced by various conditions including having natal families nearby, receiving financial support from the former spouse, children's age at the time of physical separation and the mothers' backgrounds including English fluency, education and working experience in the U.S.

Next, mothers were engaging in processes to maintain the living conditions secured during the assuring stage. During this stage, single mothers were struggling to integrate tasks that were conceptualized as the father's role into motherhood; integration of working and childrearing of the former full-time mothers was more challenging than for previously self-sufficient mothers. For those who were self-sufficient during marriage, childrearing issues were likely to take priority. Regardless of their degrees of self-sufficiency, more limitations and conditions under which the mothers were not able to fulfill the mother's role were found during this stage. Taking care of housework and household maintenance work in new ways helped mothers to reduce intense emotions usually associated with such tasks. The second stage of struggling in practical transition was likely to overlap in part with the first stage of assuring, which depended on how quickly single mothers could achieve financial stability.

The third stage of stabilizing can be characterized by having confidence in maintaining the family and resolving practical issues as well as the mothers' endeavors to maximize their availability for and capability to support their children within their physically and psychologically demanding daily lives as working single mothers. They prioritized their children above all demands and tried to fulfill tasks usually done by fathers for their sons. This stage might also overlap with the prior stages; stabilizing would happen and last three to four and a half years after becoming single.

Psychological Transitions: Becoming Strong

Single mothers went through major psychological transitions that consist of two parts: the mother's psychological restoration and growth of the self and the psychological strategies needed to deal with discriminatory treatment toward her by others in the community; see the right column in Figure 1. Unlike the practical transition, tasks in psychological transition were so closely intertwined with each other in a complex way, it was difficult to distinguish stages. Thus psychological transitions will be discussed as a linear process with no distinctive stages except for their turning point.

DURING THE MARRIAGE: BURYING OR LOSING THE SELF

Burying the self

Some mothers' reflections on their married lives are helpful to understand their psychological transition to being working single mothers. Some of the interviewed mothers' lives during their marriage can be characterized as *burying* the self. Burying the self is a process by which a married woman prioritized and abandoned herself to meet the needs of her spouse

and the entire family first. The women took their sacrifice for granted to support their husband and for the sake of entire family; they ignored their own needs and desires and strove to adjust themselves to meet the spouse's needs. Going through the process of separation or divorce, some mothers perceived that their sacrificing endeavors to maintain the family were not recognized or rewarded because their marriage ended due to separation or divorce.

“At that time, I was too occupied by the idea that I should live well with the husband. Working outside, my life [before marriage] wasn't really difficult. Really my family was well off but – I don't know, maybe it's because I am the oldest daughter – because I felt a strong responsibility to keep the marriage secure, I emphasized it saying to myself 'I should obey my husband,' because he is 7 years older than me; I held such beliefs so firmly that I tried so hard [to listen to him]... So, I struggled a lot after coming to the U.S. For the first time in my whole life, although my face broke out, I gained weight a lot, or my clothes were worn out, rather than thinking to buy new, I went through those times with the idea that 'This is only temporary. I should encourage him in order to live a better life within our budget.' I used to comfort myself saying 'it's going to be okay after a while – he has his own property, we have to help each other in these hard times.' I had such a submissive mindset, but faced this thing [divorce].” (Interview 109, p.15, #19-34)

“There were a lot of things that required me to abandon myself and, I just naively believed that if I adjusted to my husband, to my in-law families, to my in-law parents whatever happened, then happiness would come. 'They will recognize that how much I sacrificed for them, won't they?' 'Happiness should come, right?' 'Because I am working hard, trusting him like this much, he will protect me.' Well, it didn't turn out that way.” (Interview 115, p.41, #15-21)

Losing the self

On the other hand, single mothers were put in a situation where they came to doubt their perception and trust in self-concept and lost confidence due to an abusive relationship with their spouse. Whereas burying the self was an intended or conscious action, losing the self was the psychological consequence of a painful marriage relationship. Almost half of the interviewed mothers had been emotionally abused by their spouse and sometimes by the mother-in-law

during their marriage: the relationship with the spouse was oppressive and distorted the women's self-image, which was often not recognized by the mothers until they got out of the abusive relationship by physical separation or divorce:

“People say I look good (smile), after the divorce. It was a bit helpful because, before the divorce, I was always trying to read the other's mind, always thought like I had to get recognized by that person – that is, my children's father – then I could recognize myself, but not right now, and I hear lots of comments from others, which are totally opposite to what I heard from my ex-husband, so I realized that ‘wow, that's who I am, that was who I am, I'm quite a good person’...also, because we were in an intimate relationship as a couple, attractiveness as a woman...from others’, as well as from my own standpoint, my self-esteem was poor.” (Interview 103, p.05, #27-36)

“There's things like this. I've never called anybody while living with my husband. If I was talking too long on the phone, he's forcing me to hang up and must say something like, ‘what the heck are you talking that long about?’ And, he used to say like, ‘you're so~’—for example, my husband told me to put this things here, right side all the time. However, for me, I used to put those at left side for 30 years in my life. You know, it doesn't matter if you put those at right or left side; it's not illegal, nothing will happen even if you put those at left. But, I made a mistake to put those on left side habitually, once out of 10 times. Then my husband insisted like I ignored what he's saying and I didn't pay attention to him. And, I told him that why would I live together with somebody I could ignore? I did not have no reason to ignore you because you are my husband. But, he said I did. So, because he's always telling me like that about such things, I was like ‘well, am I that much problematic?’ I came to think myself like that. So, while living with my husband, I noticed so many times that I felt so little and unconfident in an aspect and I was getting weird in personality-wise. I was getting unconfident more and more.” (Interview 113, p.41, #13-33)

DECIDING TO GO AGAINST SOCIAL NORMS

There are multiple reasons immigrant Korean mothers choose to become single: abusive relationships with the spouse, severe domestic violence, repetitive marital infidelity by the spouse, the spouse's abrogation of responsibilities as the head of household, the spouse's gambling addiction, or a combination of reasons. Two thirds of the mothers initiated the

separation or divorce. Although they were aware that their decision to break up the family would not be socially sanctioned by the Korean community, they decided to act anyway. That action was the starting point of going against social norms. While it provided freedom from painful relationships, mothers' action to go against social norms caused mothers to carry two major devastating psychological burdens: being neglected or treated with derision in the community and fighting with herself to rise above her feelings of failure in life and thereby regain her confidence.

Deciding to break up

A few mothers provided descriptions of how they reached the decision of breaking up with their spouse. Although their actions of breaking up or going against social norms were not welcomed by the community, from the single mothers' standpoint, they had a reason and their decision to break up was unavoidable and reasonable. Also, as mothers, they also felt it was better for their children because as part of a couple they did not exert a positive influence on their children in that they were arguing or disapproving each other all the time. The idea of 'unhappy mothers cannot raise their children well' supported their decision. Therefore, others' loose talk, such as "just put up with it!" was not acceptable and hurt their feelings a lot.

"And, looking back, the key point that made me decide [to divorce] was, Since I was not happy, always anxious and uncomfortable about something related to my husband, not pleasant at all, or upset, I wasn't able to give a warm hug to my baby. Because my mind was not peaceful. So, I thought 'Ah, such impact goes to my child.' So, that's how it is. Rather [than] living in a family in which the parents are arguing and yelling [at] each other all the time to the child, I decided that it would be better to live apart. Not having good influence [on my child] (...) I thought that it would be much better to live apart and see each other sometime, rather than to keep living together." (Interview 113, p.23, #10-24)

"I really hate people who talk carelessly about something when it's none of their business. You should be careful whenever you say something, no matter how small, 'Just deal with it!' What would you do if you were in the same situation? You should think as if you were in that person's shoes. That's how I think [of] it, too. Those couples who don't divorce have certain problems between them. You [the interviewer] might not know because you never married, but there are problems. So, if you don't have the courage to divorce, you cannot. And, for me, it is better to live together if possible. But, I don't think getting divorced is bad. We hated each other, we really, really hated each other so much that was just too painful to keep living together. Then, I thought rather than hating each other, we should go our own separate ways. It's not good at all if my children see their parents arguing all the time. It was better not to show my children. So, it would be good if other people took the time to think, 'How hard and painful it must have been for that person to decide to do that,' and not spit out careless comments. A single word like that can make a person feel intimidated. A word can be the difference between life and death. Rather than saying 'Just put up with it,' just patting my shoulder and saying 'Hang in there!' is the most pleasant and encouraging thing to hear." (Interview 102, p.09, #09-30)

POST-DISSOLUTION: GETTING LOST AND ISOLATED

Getting lost and isolated refers to the mother's response to physical separation by which she became psychologically traumatized. After the decision to break up was made, the actual process of separation or divorce was carried out and married mothers became physically separated from their former spouses. Loss of life goal or meaning and overwhelming negative emotions toward herself and the spouse were combined with practical burdens of taking on all the responsibilities of family survival alone. The mother's self-esteem was damaged further due to becoming single. In addition to such psychological and emotional burdens, discriminatory treatment by people in the community further inhibited the mother's ability to endure. Mothers in this period were likely to be socially inactive and psychologically withdrawn. This period was perceived as the hardest period, personally and socially; through their religious beliefs and seeking help, mothers were able to release stress and pent up emotions.

Getting lost – Losing life goals

Getting lost refers to the mother's psychological collapse due to the loss of life goal or direction; it is also a common response of single mothers immediately after becoming a single mother. They were lost in that they were not able to accept that it happened in their lives, what to do, or where to turn to and what to live for. Since most of the mothers were full-time mothers who devoted themselves to maintaining the family by supporting and sacrificing for the husband, losing the marriage also took their life goal away. One mother's story showed her significant loss of life goal:

"I dreamed of my life as a missionary and thus valued marriage and the family. So, I devoted to my family for one year, but the object of my devotion turned out [to be] an addicted gambler. And, I brought more than 50 thousand dollars from Korea. That money, my life's savings – we bought two apartments with that money – but somehow we got to let it go in less than a year. All the situations turned out a life that I never wanted to hold. It was not a life that deserved my devotion. I couldn't stand it anymore. So, after running out of [the] home, 'What am I doing? What was that?' Losing my life goal was huge to me, it was the hardest. (...) Actually, it was harder [than suffering from poverty] to live day by day without knowing what I live for and why." (Interview 112, p.16, #11-29)

Accompanied emotional responses to the event of becoming single include: feeling angry, depressed, empty and sad; resentment toward ex-spouse; feeling injustice or a sense of being victimized; or feeling a sense of absurdity about the situation. In particular, those who did not initiate the process of separation or divorce were more likely to struggle to get over their negative emotional reactions to it.

"Meanwhile, for about more than one year, emotionally I had such a hard time to put up with the feelings of anger, injustice, and so on. Of course, I [was] concerned much about how to survive, but at that time, because my family stayed at my mother-in-law's house, actually I didn't have to spend huge money for living expenses. Emotionally it was really

tough to overcome such things [anger and feeling of injustice].” (Interview 103, p.04, #06-12)

“For me, my husband initiated the filing, but the same thing had already happened three years ago. At that time, emotionally it was really hard (...) I mean it hurts, in any condition, a foreign guy knocked on the door, gave me an envelope and when I opened it, I found the filing documents in it. It was like a story in a U.S movie. At that time I couldn’t understand the situation at all.” (Interview 109, p.02, #01-15)

When a serious health problem was associated with the stress of the divorce, the mother experienced the worst case of emotional crisis. The additional burden of poor health triggered extreme negative reactions all at once; in such a situation, negative pent up emotions added to the mother’s burden of dealing with the disease process. Although it was only one incident among the mothers in the current study, a story of one participant showed how much she and her child suffered from such an emotional crisis:

“I was diagnosed with cancer in 2008. But, back then, they told me that the cancer developed because of my child’s father, uterine cancer, according to the doctor’s diagnosis. It was really hard. Because, if you talk with people who are divorced, the destination is always there: Because of this one thing, my whole life has been ruined, just like this. I really hate that. But, whenever a problem occurs, and I trace back to its origin, it always comes from there. In 2008, it [=my hatred and such feelings] reached the zenith at that time, then... uh... I thought about dying, and I think *Choi Jin Sil*¹ committed suicide at that time. *Choi Jin Sil* gave me a lot of hope [because she was] raising two children as a single mom. Really, I thought she was my hope, but one day all of a sudden she was gone leaving those two children behind. So, at that time it was very difficult (...) Also, my child was going through difficult times. And, I didn’t go to Korea to have the surgery, but had it here, because I had to continue to go to work.” (Interview 106, p.19, #01-21)

In addition to the mother’s psychological and emotional struggles, mothers were also often paralyzed by fear of failure to survive during the initial transition period, throughout which

¹ *Choi Jin Sil* was a popular actress in Korea. She was married to a baseball player, had two children and then got divorced after a while.

a multitude of practical and psychological distress was threatening the mothers in a great degree. It was also a stage where the mother was too occupied with her own struggles and was not able to promptly respond to her children's needs or pay attention to what her children were going through.

Staying away from people

Staying away from people refers to the mother's intended isolation of herself from people. The purpose of staying away from people was to avoid undesired disclosure of their status and thereby getting hurt or feeling bad from social encounters with people. Being single by divorce or separation was perceived as something publicly embarrassing and related to failure in life. Such self-consciousness, sometimes combined with practical issues, made the women socially inactive, which served as a significant barrier to overcoming negativity and moving forward. Emotional struggles related to being single and the subsequent isolation was likely to reach its peak during the first one to two years after becoming a single mother:

“Even if you have so much money and problems are resolved, you still feel that it's unfair, emotionally, and the fact that I'm a single mom, in addition, thinking that I was divorced, it feels like embarrassing outside, due to such things psychologically, so, really, I don't want to associate with people. I avoid people. Avoiding people, I do so now. Except people I come to know naturally, I'm not really approaching people and saying hi, because I expect they will ask about my children's father, so I avoid it. Such things have nothing to do with how much money I have, because it's all about emotions.” (Interview 103, p.07, #26-35)

“When the situation got financially worse, it [=emotional difficulties] got worse, too. It was like a train, one affected another; affected the other and on and on. I mean, I wasn't able to straighten up my thoughts. This was tied with that; that was tied with another thing – it was like my heart was nothing but a hell. So, meanwhile, I wasn't able to be easy with my child; I got so easily upset with small things. And, I didn't want to mingle with people. Really, for a while, it lasted for the first 1 to 2 years. I didn't want to get to know brand-

new people, just stayed at home, avoided change to meet others as much as possible. It would have been better if I met a stranger. It was much harder to bump into someone who remembered my life living with husband, who knew who I was. It felt like I failed something, failed in something. Men would feel like that if they failed in business, but in my case I had that feeling [at that time]. It was so embarrassing for me to let it show and it hurt my pride a lot.” (Interview 115, p.26, #03-18)

Mothers had a damaged self-image during this stage of getting lost and isolated.

Mothers’ perception of the self or their families represented something incomplete, deficient, unhappy, unstable, or something about which they were not confident. If the mother was unable to recover from her damaged self-image, such negative self-concept was likely to last beyond the initial stage of transition. It also affected her relationships with others at work and in the community. Under these conditions, single mothers remained susceptible to others’ attitudes toward her or her family for a longer time than mothers who were able to reconstruct their new self-image.

“Sometimes, people say, ‘Just put up with him,’ and I hate it. Who wants to get divorced? What mother wants to bring up their children in broken family? It’s because it’s unavoidable. It is their situation from which they cannot escape that makes them decide to do it.” (Interview 102, p.09, #05-08)

“So to speak, there’s something missing, a missing part. It is like a wagon without one wheel that can’t move; being unable to roll itself, it’s just like that, in a gloomy way. It’s not what it should be.” (Interview 110, p.12, #22-25)

“Really, a family like this, I mean, it became handicapped, from a standpoint. It became a handicapped family.” (Interview 115, p.08, #11-12)

“Anyway, because I have a baby and am in a situation like this, my mom – she was so proud of me, but [after I divorced] whenever she thought about me, in her sleep, my mom needed to take some hormone because of me. Because she felt hot and suddenly cold – she got menopause so early, because of me. When she thought of me, in the past, I was a daughter she’s so proud of. [if someone asked about me] ‘What does your daughter do for a living?’ then [my mom answered] ‘Oh, she is an accountant working in America. She’s

doing good.’ But, if somebody asked if I got married, then she would be uncomfortable to answer she has a son-in-law, but has a grandson. So, I used to go to Korea once or twice a year, but I stop doing that.” (Interview 113, p.14, #15-26)

Recovery from damaged self-esteem was important in dealing with relational problems with others. If the mother’s self-esteem was restored, they were likely to build close (but not including romantic), relationships with others. Conversely, when they felt supported or loved, that helped restore their confidence, find the self, and enhance their ability to move forward. Once women entered that stage, external discrimination would not affect them as much as it did before. A few mothers called this phenomenon ‘self-healing.’

“In my case, it [divorce] happened after 10 years of marriage. Firstly, I wasn’t able to admit that I was put in that situation. And, I felt so much of shame. I felt anger at first and sense of shame – I felt so embarrassed. Yeah. It wasn’t my fault – of course, now I believe that any marital conflict is mutual responsibility, half and half. Each party is responsible for the half of the fault. I thought I was the only one who got badly hurt [at that time], but now I think he must’ve been hurt as much as I did. It was logically acceptable, but my heart, it was so – it was really hard to make it real from my head to my heart. I think it was the hardest thing to accept. And, because I felt shame so much myself relationships with others didn’t go well. If I became comfortable with from such things, people or things from outside would not be a big deal any longer. I’m getting much better with that than before.” (Interview 115, p.24, #17-31)

A TURNING POINT: GATHERING MYSELF UP FOR MY CHILDREN

Gathering myself up for my children refers to the mother’s psychological process of making up her mind to move forward for her children and to get out of the negative mindset, into which she was drifting in the previous stage of getting lost and isolated. The motivation that kept the mothers from drowning in too much negativity and made them go back out into the world

was their children. The children provided a sobering reminder that made the mothers make up their minds to put to an end to their psychological and social withdrawal.

“And as I told you before...my children, they are the major influence. If I don't have them, I would lie down, weep and wail, I would do like that. But, crawl out of bed, prepare their meals, go to work, and come back at night, suffer from insomnia, fall asleep at the dawn, and get up again – my life was like this. Even so, because of my children, I had to crawl out of the bed and cook meal for them, when my youngest daughter called me ‘mommy, mommy,’ then what could I do? I couldn't have gone crazy, nor take drugs. Then I had no choice. In my children's shoes... Once I can get up, then can go out. So, it's like if you can stand up, then can walk; if you can walk then you can run. Just like that.” (Interview 103, p.21, #12-23)

“I cried a lot and dealt with it so much. But, I also solved the problem through religion and studying. I had determination for myself. I had to dedicate my life for my child 100% until he goes to a college and gets married. I was the head of my family and had to earn money with a good background. What could I do in America? So, I studied to earn a degree and get a license. I spent the energy for that.” (Interview 107, p.38, #01-08)

“As my child grows up, he spoke to me at one point, like ‘mommy, mommy come here.’ As seeing my child growing, I realized ‘Ah, if I was having a vacant mind like this, I could become an incapable mother who couldn't do anything for my child when he needed.’ ‘What can I tell my child with pride?’ It has nothing to do with money. As my child is growing up and starts speaking, and if I asked him ‘Put this in a trash can’ then he would understand and do what I tell him. Such things made me alert and I made up [my] mind ‘I cannot live like this.’” (Interview 113, p.15, #34-p.16, #11)

How the children motivated their mothers was influenced by the children's age at the time the mother became single. Among single mothers whose children were in or earlier than pre-school age at the time of being single, children were not merely the object of their responsibility: their children were their meaning and goal in life and the most powerful driving force for the mothers to move forward. Young children who were growing fast had been the power that encouraged single mothers to fulfill their responsibilities, bearing all the unfavorable conditions.

“[I am] Not having big challenges...just every single day is a challenge to me. It is a challenge to me, and...I don't have a special, big challenge. Just every day is the challenge, day by day. But, living a day well, when my children grew up, they should grow up well, so only gazing on it, I accept the daily challenge, and try the best to live a day; try hard.” (Interview 103, p.18, #10-15)

“Single mothers are like that because they don't have a husband. The hope and love that was originally set toward a husband now focuses only on their children with greater multitudes. (...) The love should've been divided, but there's no one to share the love. So where could the mother pour out the love to? She pours out the love to their children. That's how it is. When other people see it, they would say that single mothers only have their children in mind and don't seem to think that other children are also important. But, they say such things without knowing well. It can only work that way. Without a husband, they pour out their love and expectation to their children.” (Interview 107, p.22, #29-p.23, #06)

“I became stronger than before. I mean, as for working, ‘we should live together. For keeping the space in which I live with my child, and fees that are necessary to maintain the space, such as electricity and such, [I need to work hard].’ (...) I can teach my child swimming if I want because I can earn more money now. Such things are my driving force. I need to be on the ball for my child, I promise to myself to be a mother who stays alert.” (Interview 115, p.29, #22-32)

Single mothers whose children were in primary school or older at the time of becoming single were likely to emphasize their responsibility to raise their children well as the sole parent. They were also likely to be relatively more acknowledging and caring about their needs. On the other hand, since their children grew up to be teenagers at the time of the study interview, the mothers expressed their hope to achieve the children's academic success. Children's academic success is an achievement that could be socially recognized and great reward for their endeavor to maintain the family and raise their children well all by themselves:

“I wish I could get rid of the ridiculous idea that I should succeed in rearing my children as a single mom as if to show others (laughing). [Because I'm] Struggling now, probably my children also feel burdened about it. Without even realizing it, [I tell him] ‘Study harder’ I've never done that before, such as pushing [him to study hard], because I got

married late and delivered him in my old age, I've hardly done that, except I did when getting upset at a moment, I just hoped he would grow to be healthy. But now, I want him to do well [at school]. I hope he will enter a prestigious university. It's been hard for me that I kept wishing it as if I wanted to get vicarious satisfaction through his success." (Interview 109, p.20, #37-p.21, #09)

FINDING MYSELF

Finding myself is a recovery process of the mothers' self: it involves the restoration of the self-esteem that the mother had before the marriage. It could also involve discovery of new aspects of the self that had been previously oppressed during the marriage due to an abusive relationship with the spouse. Although taking on new roles after becoming single was perceived as extremely challenging, it also provided opportunities to discover or regain a sense of self. Among those new roles, working outside the home was particularly encouraging in helping mothers find or regain a sense of self:

"It is really helpful when I get recognized or praised by others, I feel 'Ah, that's who I am.' Such things help me find myself. Even when I was told 'you are pretty.'... Actually I didn't hear such things from the one from whom I should hear, I always, I felt like I would never do anything and I...was not attractive at all something like that in many ways. Then from other people, I got praised like I am diligent, great at doing my job, and smart and so on...many things, such as I'm pretty or whatever, regarding anything, kind, nice, or something. Actually, I'm not that nice. I'm trying to be warm and friendly, but I'm not really super-outgoing. Anyway, such a small thing, [and] compliments." (Interview 103, p.05, #06-17)

"On the contrary, becoming single – of course it was really tough, but raising children, seeing myself becoming stronger, I feel like I am finding myself. What I want, what I want to do – now I can do music even more than before. My schedule becomes more tight and my situation doesn't allow it. But, somehow, conditions permit me to do music more. (...) I come to know more people who do music. In the past, I was just isolated within my husband's boundary, always tried to read his mind while playing music, had to come back home no later than curfew, and hardly get together with people, something like that. But now, ironically, one linked another, linked another, so I met a lot of musicians in this area, so that I could exchange information with them; and have more opportunities to play

music. So I just love it! (...) Foods, color, clothes, movies – such things don't matter to me at all. I don't care. But really, I realize that music is something that I cannot give up on. I don't need anything else." (Interview 115, p.43, #03-26)

Conditions that brought about such constructive influences on the mother's perception of self were: characteristics of the work (helping the needy at a non-profit organization); and earning income by doing what she had majored in and wanted to do. In such situations, positive working conditions provided opportunities to see the self from a different viewpoint and thereby find what had not recognized during the marriage. In essence, working helped mothers to find the self.

BECOMING STRONG

Becoming strong is the outcome of the psychological transition. It can be also seen as a process through which these women were developing a new sense of self. Such a positive sense of self was formed based on: successful experiences regarding resolving practical issues; and their comparison of sense of self before and after the marital dissolution or at the beginning and later stage of their transition:

"As I told you before, I feel like I'm getting stronger. The more hardships I get the more I rely on God, abandoning reliance on people (...) Of course, when I encounter problems, I am disappointed, my expectation is broken, and fall into despair, but it doesn't last long, I come to have a new hope on which I can stand, pray more, and stay more alert in face with hardships. So, from an aspect, I am grateful to God and that's why I have a lot to thank God. (...) As for difficulties, actually it would be the best if I do not have any hardship, but although it is hard to overcome, I believe that hardships cannot let me down; so, I consider them like a storm or lightning in rainy days that will pass over, with ease. However, the moment I go through them is not easy at all." (Interview 112, p.27, #13-p.28, #18)

In general, those who had not yet reached the stable stage did not reflect or discuss much about themselves; rather, they encouraged themselves through comparison to others who were worse off. In contrast, single mothers who found themselves becoming strong engaged in frequent reflection and introspection, through which they became more aware of how much they had changed throughout the transition. Through introspection, single mothers tried to understand what happened in their lives and how much they changed.

“I mean if I were who I was I would be worried about something for a month, but now I would grumble about it for just one day, like ‘My goodness, my goodness... It’s so annoying’ and let it go. And then I need to do next thing. Otherwise, if I kept it in mind like ‘Whew’ or ‘That person did that to me’ for one week, two weeks then I couldn’t do anything. Thinking about my personality, I would cancel everything and couldn’t do anything else until it got resolved. Recently, I can manage things that were supposed to get me sick for 10 days in the past for just three days; I would bear the anger for three days then stand up and do what I need to do. (...) I can forget things very quickly. I don’t have room for such useless things. No energy either. So, that’s what becoming strong means in my case.” (Interview 115, p.49, #32-p.50, #09)

“During the divorce process, what I learned most is, I became a bit stronger. In order to survive, I became persistent, stronger. Although I am who I am, my inborn character doesn’t change, but consciously I pretend that I’m strong, and enduring. Doing such things, after all, is important if you can resolve problems when you face them in your life, not if you divorced, or you’re a single mom. I don’t think whether you can accept and resolve problems when facing them depends on your status of being a single mom or not: that is, you can’t do well because you’re a single mom, or you can do better because you are not a single mom. I think, it’s just, the person’s values, attitude toward life [which are what really matters]. So, it’s just, at the moment you have a problem, whether you accept it or not; not the matter of single moms are doing better or worse, or non-single moms are doing better. Just because those who are not single moms don’t have the same problems as I do, they are just not likely to have all the responsibilities by themselves...Even though I were not a single mom, I would have had difficulties in my life. Also, if I were the type of person who would not accept [problems], even if I were not a single mom, then my life could have been twisted due to any issue. That’s how I am.” (Interview 103, p.14, #01-21)

Increased confidence in handling practical and psychological turmoil was likely to be the primary outcome of “fighting with myself.” Single mothers who became stronger were able to put some psychological distance between the discouraging issues and the self so that they would not be as overwhelmed by these issues as they were in the early transition stage. For these mothers the amount of time to get out of negativity became shorter and thereby resumed moving forward for a shorter time.

How Religious Beliefs Work for Single Mothers

Religious beliefs of single mothers were frequently intertwined with their lives across all stages. Twelve out of fifteen participating mothers were Protestant; two were Catholic; one mother identified herself as Christian as well as Buddhist; and only one mother did not have any religious belief. Although the extent to which single mothers relied on their religious beliefs varied, ten out of twelve benefited from their religious beliefs in four major ways: 1) getting comfort; 2) finding hope and security in that God will take care of their lives; 3) finding meaning out of hardships and setting up a new life goal; and 4) having a spiritual and psychological anchor in which they could sustain the core of the self and what they believe is right.

Psychological Transition: Settling in with a New Supportive Network

Psychological transition also involves processes by which the mothers found ways to handle social discrimination and survive within the ethnic community. Their status of being husbandless women put them into a situation in which they encountered social stigma and discriminatory treatment and derision (being neglected and treated with derision). Along with the gradual recovery of self-image, mothers were likely to step up and speak up to deal with

relational problems. In order to protect herself and her children from unnecessary, undeserved derision, the mother engaged in processes of: adjusting distance from people; making myself heard; changing mindset; building new relationships; and letting go of old relationships. Finally, the families were settling in with a new supportive network as the ultimate outcome of this transition (see Figure 1).

BEING NEGLECTED AND TREATED WITH DERISION

Other people's discriminatory treatment of single mothers in Korean communities put them in the state of getting isolated. Since the mothers needed to interact with Koreans in private or public (e.g., at work), they encountered others' reactions to their status of being a single mother. Other Koreans reacted in particular ways to the women's actions of going against the social norms: breaking up the family and being 'husbandless.' Socio-cultural disapproval of being a husbandless woman appears to be the underlying mechanism of such discriminatory treatment. Others' discriminatory attitudes, overt or covert, were likely to stereotype single mothers, which often caused their sense of getting left out:

"And wherever I go, like a church or an organization, I get neglected and brought into derision because of not having a husband. No matter how well I'm educated or not. Actually I received Ph.D., my familial background and everything is great, in fact. The only thing is that I don't have a husband. But, I still get neglected. The fact itself of not having a husband makes others neglect me and other single women. It's such huge suffering. Getting neglected and brought into derision in anywhere I go. So, I get alone. Koreans do that and so do others. Women of married couple don't want to hang out with lone women. They leave me out, you know. Even though I have open mind and want to approach them, they don't want it. They want to be in their circle, and even they speak to me, they don't fully open their mind. But, actually the other person can notice such things [their behaviors with reserve], you know, because we are human. Such pain. Such mental sufferings." (Interview 107, p.13, #27-p.14, #11)

“Well, I was put in that situation while I was attending a church and it was divided exactly [into] two types. ‘A-ha, this is how it is!’ I realized it in an agonizing way. (...) But, there were people who didn’t change and helped us, [whereas] there were parents who were not even comfortable to let their children play with my child because of that. Such things, that is to say, at that time, because I got deeply hurt as well, I felt like people were treating me as if I was a patient with infectious diseases, such as AIDS, at that time. Even though the church had a lot of 1.5 generation Korean members, ironically, it could’ve been better if people talked to me straightforward. But, they were nice in front of me, but in behind... So it was really painful, I felt like I was left out. I cried a lot due to such things at that time.” (Interview 115, p.08, #09-23)

Mothers felt marginalized and rejected by others. Others’ discriminatory treatment, combined with the mothers’ intentional self-isolation due to their damaged self-worth, caused mothers to become devastated and socially withdrawn. During the first one to two years after becoming single, mothers were susceptible to being treated with derision by others.

“And, you might not notice this – when the single parent mingles with married parents? Everyone talks to each other without any boundaries, but when I talk with the husbands? Then there are such uncomfortable glances; they are very offensive and very unpleasant. I didn’t want to tolerate that so I withdrew [from the organization], even though I loved the gatherings so much.” (Interview 106, p.16, #35- p.17, #01)

“She was also a single mom working together with me, when she saw me from her standpoint...I assumed that she could understand me more, what I feel. But she didn’t, even I got deeply hurt by her. So, I, of course, I’m technically terrible with doing nails, sometimes customers complain because of me, I am sorry, feel so sorry, but she’s telling me off so badly before my face. Because of her, I got stressed a lot... (...) while she didn’t do that toward others, she treated me disrespectfully scolding me like ‘you were so terrible’ in front of me, even [though] she’s been through what I’m going through... I think it was huge to me. So, I’ve got a social phobia. ‘Well, it’s not what I think.’ And, once my body was sick then my mind got weaker. Then I was so afraid to get out there. I have to survive, but I’m not so strong, I’m so afraid of people, afraid of the world out there.” (Interview 102, p.20, #31-38, p.21, #16-20)

Although a few mothers decided to stay away from people or the community in order not to be hurt or affected by others’ reactions, other mothers decided to take action to protect

themselves and their children; they figured out how to protect the family from undeserved derision and live within the community. By 'setting the line' (meaning setting boundaries), they were able to live without being too affected by others in the Korean community with whom they needed to be associated for survival.

ADJUSTING DISTANCE FROM PEOPLE

Adjusting distance from people is the mother's later response to being neglected or treated with derision. While staying away from people was their reserved reactive process, adjusting distance from people was a more active process to protect herself and her children from undeserved derision. Adjusting distance from people consists of three inter-related actions: setting the line; assessing people; and applying different attitudes either of distancing or being open.

Setting the line is the process by which the mother sets her norms and boundaries for treating people regarding what and how much she needed to adapt to protect her family from being too affected by careless treatment by others. Not disclosing personal information, including her status of being a single mother, was the mother's primary strategy; in cases where people in the community knew her status, not disclosing too much about her personal situation.

"I never disclose my personal information. About my situation – this is the thing that should not be disclosed to anybody here, in the U.S. Do not disclose about yourself. Do not tell people about yourself; especially the university you graduated and such. Since I was trained too much about such things and I know I'm going to get hurt if I do that, so absolutely '**No comment**' [about those things]. I would tell things within a certain line, but would not disclose more than that. By doing so, I can protect myself and my children as well. So that's why I don't tell any more than that. I mean, I indeed have *the line*. I mean, within the line, especially because I am an accompanist in my church, I am like a fish on a cutting board that you will never know when it can be chopped up. I am on the board. So

I'm always careful – I never fail to keep the line. I never do more than that. So, my children also know that why mommy is doing so.” (Interview 114, p.08, #25-34)

Assessing people is a process through which the mother categorized people into two groups: those with whom she felt she could share her feelings and those from whom she felt she needed to maintain some distance. Mothers were careful in selecting people with whom they could get close. Some mothers intentionally excluded certain groups of people, including: married men, those who used to gossip a lot about others or engage in loose talk, or members of the same church that her family attended. Based on the results of assessing people, mothers would be *applying different attitudes* toward each group by either being open or distancing.

“When I talk to people, I try not to talk too much about ‘useless’ things, especially within church. Or, even outside [of the church], you know, when people were just talking nonsense. Of course, I could do something like that with those who I am close to, deaconesses close to me. But, with deacons in particular, or with those who are not really close to me – people I cannot open my heart, women who I do not open my heart – I try to treat them in a way like, a businesslike manner in a sense? Not too much [open] I try to keep some distance between me and them and speak only something necessary. Once I realized that I need to act that way, I’m trying to be on the ball all the time.” (Interview 115, p.48, #09-19)

“People I am close to are all I got to know through music. Otherwise, well, I hardly involve with people I came to know through church. If possible, I am trying not to relate to church-related people, because I have a lot for people to gossip about. I don’t want to lay myself open to gossip. That is church. Others, those who I naturally got to know are people who do music-related work, such as members of a choir. Also, in my daughter’s case, she doesn’t have any Korean friend. All of hers are others than Korean. So, there are a few families that I keep in touch with the parents.” (Interview 114, p.09, #10-18)

MAKING MYSELF HEARD

Making myself heard is the mother’s action to speak up about her feelings or opinions, especially when she felt she or her children was at a disadvantage. When being offended by

others' derision or careless talk, mothers expressed their feelings or opinions by directly speaking with others. By doing so, mothers were able not to keep angers or hurts pent up inside and not let others disapprove them in any chance. Also, making herself heard was perceived as necessary to protect themselves from undesired distress as well as to protect their children from being disadvantaged because they were children of single mothers.

"Meanwhile, people who know me start to tell me 'you should work.' I hated to hear that words. Needless to say, you could imagine how stressed out the person must've been. I had to take care of two children, but was not working at the moment. So, I told them 'Please don't tell me a word until I find a job.' 'I'm already stressed out. Please don't ask me about it until I tell you something. I will tell you immediately after I find one.' They said, 'Got it.' (Interview 102, p.21, #32-38)

"In the past, I could not express my opinions even though I was in disadvantageous position. But now, for myself and for my child as well, I have to speak up. Because, uh, to prevent my child from suffering from disadvantage because of me. I mean, I don't know how to put this. From a standpoint, there's people who look down on me because I am alone [=do not have husband] on the quiet. That is, there exist such people, really, who have me in derision. Although they are not many, I notice such things within church. Regardless of that the person is great or not, if she has a husband they don't treat her like that. However, if the person does not have husband, like me, even though I am a leader for certain activities, I sense such things. It might not be intended, but there are things like that on the quiet. So in such a situation, if I am a person who always hangs back and hesitates to speak up they would look down upon my child as well." (Interview 115, p.47, #08-22)

Dealing with the consequences of going against social norms was one of the hardest demands during the initial period of transition, especially for those who had frequent interactions with Koreans, in ethnic religious communities in particular. Conditions under which mothers needed to struggle more with such emotional issues were: living in the area for a long time and active involvement in a Korean church. One participant articulated such conditions in her story by comparing her situation to another single mother's situation:

“There are not many things happened yet that might let people know I divorced. Because it wasn’t that long that I lived here. It’s just about 2 years? Like ***, if you had lived one area for decades, then people should know everything about you, right? Because the community is so close-knit. Also, in case of ***, her mother was beautiful and socially active that engaged in so many activities – *** was a daughter of such a family. And, she’s also lived here for a long time. So, her situation was different from mine. I am not that much related. If my parents lived here and my mother attended a church and did many things there every day, then people would gossip [about] me like ‘Well, her daughter got divorced.’ But, there is almost nobody who knows I got divorced in this area.” (Interview 113, p.40, #11-21)

CHANGING MINDSET

Changing mindset is a process through which the mother altered her frame of reference in viewing others’ reactions; it occurred with or without the mother’s awareness. By reframing others’ disapproval or derision to difference or diversity, the single mothers were able to diminish the impact of derisive encounters, let go of negative emotions, and not be severely affected by others. Although it was not clear in what order changes toward others occurred, some mothers described that their mindset toward others had changed along with adopting new protective attitudes toward others. A mother’s story illuminates this process, including its extension to her perspective on life in general:

“[I] don’t get caught up with little things [any more]. In the past, if somebody was even badmouthing me it shocked and bothered me a lot. But, now I’m like ‘Well, a half of all the people in this world like me and the other half hate me. By doing so, [I can see things from that perspective] ‘It’s possible. That person may hate me.’ I mean, in the past, everybody must be fond of me. If [I found] someone didn’t like me, I was like ‘Why that person don’t like me? Did I do something wrong to that person?’ but now I see that everybody has different taste and it is not a matter of right or wrong or black or white, because everybody varies personalities. But, sometimes, I found that elderly disapproved that a person acted in a certain way. But, it was not wrong. I realized that it was not wrong. I also was one of such people. It was just the person differed from me in the way of thinking. If you take a deep look at it, there should be a good aspect that I don’t have.

So, the point is that I can take advantage of the good part that the person has. Learning such things is part of becoming strong to me.” (Interview 115, p.49, #03-24)

In the meantime, mothers were also gradually building new relationships with new people (other single moms in many cases), while letting go of old relationships. As a result, they settled into a new supportive group of people where they were able to get comfort and encouragement as well as practical help.

BUILDING NEW RELATIONSHIPS

Building new relationships is a process that single mothers engaged in by socializing with a new group of people after becoming a single mother. Building new relationships was an essential process for single mothers, especially those who moved into a new area, without the natal family nearby, and who were raising young children at the time of becoming a single mother as they needed others’ helps in order to deal with multiple demands concurrently. Once they joined a group or community, single mothers were likely to find supportive people and obtain various types of support from them.

“I feel sorry that I feel like I’m giving troubles to others. At first, when I didn’t know anybody there, not even a single person, it was really difficult, but I got close to people later, in church, then it was getting better later. But, it was really hard for me when I didn’t know anybody. After getting close to people, it was getting much better because people were trying to help me first.” (Interview 111, p.29, #25-31)

Socializing with a new group of people was the case for single mothers who stayed in the same area and in the same community where they belonged before. They were likely to socialize with a new group of people in the community. Their changed situation rendered a different point of view through which the mothers perceived themselves and others in the community. Single

mothers were likely to perceive that married mothers were 'different' from themselves and married women or couples would not care about or understand their families.

"In my case, unless I come to know somebody in a natural way, I would avoid people. And, [I] watch the person and if I find the person is similar to me in some ways, then I feel like this person and I may share some common things and feel some sympathy, after then I can approach the person. If the person mentions 'a happy family,' blah, blah; then that means they are different." (Interview 103, p.16, #06-12)

"Starting to work since August, I expected that I can call it a day at 7, but it never happened. They receive customers coming at 6:30. Then tidying up and cleaning, I usually leave at 7:30 or 7:40. (...) It's only my hope, and everybody has different thought; there's no reason for them to consider my situation, don't you think? Children of other ladies working there all grew up. It seems that they must've given birth to their children immediately after their marriages; all the children are college students, or went into the military service, something like that. Every child has their father, so, the women don't have any complaint about it." (Interview 102, p.23, #12-p.24, #07)

Mothers' conceptual distinctions of themselves from married people affected their selection of people with whom they would socialize. Generally, other single mothers were people that they got close to. From the mothers' perspective, their new relationships with other single mothers naturally occurred in that they could deeply understand each other; and they did not have to worry about disclosure of their status among them. In contrast, it was believed that non-single mothers' understanding about single-mother families was more likely to be superficial or limited that sometimes deeply hurt their feelings even though those people were trying to help single mothers.

"So, when I get to know people, I see them from a different perspective. And, I moved to another church. Changing churches – if I was who I was... I came to see myself a lot, in my case. In the past, while I lived with my husband together despite our relationship was not good, I didn't get close to those people either. I didn't do it on purpose, but just naturally, I didn't have many opportunities to meet those people. However, once I was in that situation, it reminds me of who I was, old memories. And, around me, without

realizing it, I wouldn't join in couple-based gatherings, but I get close to those who raise their children by themselves – because we can understand each other. And, my child gets close to those children as well. In the meantime, there are good people, I mean they are healthy families [=two-parent families], but we came to be close and they are caring about my child very much. Anyway, I notice such things a lot. Unless you were in the person's shoes, you couldn't understand the person. Even if you could understand, it wouldn't be deep understanding, understand superficially just from your own side. Some people were helping me when my living conditions changed 180 degrees, but their help even hurt my pride a lot and left a scar in my heart. I thought myself that I should not think of them like this, I should not complain, but there were people who helped me, making me miserable.” (Interview 115, p.09, #04-27)

“You know, single moms have nothing to bother. They don't have husband, so they talk about their children, job, love relationship, and such as much as we like. The relationship is actually closer, closer than their real brothers and sisters. Why? The mind is truly open. There's no secret. Some people stand on their pride, so they try to hide something even from their brothers and sisters. But, among single mothers, they don't need to because they are in the same status. That's why everything is open. When their mind is open and they get along well, they truly get real close to each other. This is a great part to be with them.” (Interview 107, p.28, #02-10)

Married people who newly socialized with single mothers, although there were not many, were those who were not judgmental about single mothers' status or behaviors and were really caring about her family, especially her children. Since single mothers' social interactions were likely to be organized around children, single mothers felt more comfortable being with and being more open toward people who they perceived were caring toward their children. Single mothers were likely to feel secure about their relationship with such people, who were perceived as unconditionally supportive and willing to be available when needed, so that the mothers could build mutual trust and respect with them and feel comfortable to open up about their feelings:

“There are also people I don't need to [put some distance between], people that I can show my weakness; people I can feel secure with. Regardless of male or female, deacon or deaconess. I can tell them things that I'm struggling with. I already sense that instinctively. ‘Ah, they are people who would be keep distance if I do so. If I open my

mind then they would open. I can notice that when I meet people. So, that is one of the things that I became strong with.” (Interview 115, p.48, #20-30)

The workplace could be a source of such supportive people. Apparently, single mothers were likely to experience a substantial reduction in social interactions due to time limitations since they started working. In other words, single mothers were spending most of their time at the workplace with coworkers. However, only one mother found supportive people through her workplace, while others built such relationships through church communities. Characteristic of the mother’s occupation was the condition to enable such relationships between the mother and her coworkers.

“I have good friends and, through my workplace, people...because the organization I’m working for is aiming to help people, people have a variety of stories. It comforts me. [There are] colleagues and such...those with more experiences, a person who is also an elder [in a church] and one of my coworkers. Sometimes, my colleagues soothe me a lot.” (Interview 103, p.04, #12-18)

LETTING GO OF OLD RELATIONSHIPS

Letting go of old relationships refers to the mother’s intentional exclusion of certain groups of people after becoming single. Examples of such people included the mother’s old friends who were judgmental about her divorce or separation or acquaintances who had known them as married women. One mother’s story provided an example of keeping old friends in her network. Her close friends remained the same in her social network because they were supportive and had known why she ended up getting a divorce, which was not common among study participants. In contrast, another participant explained why she came to grow apart from her close friends living in the U.S.

“The one who got married lives in San Diego—a friend of mine from high school. She tries to help me a lot, trying to take care of me. But, her way of thinking is so different [from mine]. She is a housewife who dedicates herself to her children and husband. And, she believes that she has to put up with anything and keep the marriage for her children regardless of whatever may happen. Well, everyone is like that, [I mean] marriage is not always good. Nevertheless, in the worst case, which are the worst even from my standpoint, she believes that she needs to tolerate it for her children. Even if her husband cheats on her or something like that, for her children, she believes that she should not break the family. So, I do not visit her often. Because in her heart, she has an idea like this: ‘Ah, the family without the dad,’ she thinks that it won’t be good to show her children such families. So, her relationship with me is good, but when she sees my child and me together, ‘that family is not a normal family’ – she tells this to her children. So, I got hurt a lot from this. But, I think I’m lucky to live in the U.S. because if I were in Korea, not in the U.S., I would have heard such things tens or hundred thousand times. It’s because my friend immigrated to the U.S. after she grew up [in Korea], with her husband. It is difficult during those times. And, those things. Even though she and I were very close, [since] we are in different circumstances. And, when I meet with friends who are single, they find children bothersome. So, I have become distant from my childhood friends, relationship-wise.” (Interview 106, p.10, #02-26)

Since the majority of mothers came to the United States, leaving their natal families and old friends behind in Korea, their childhood friends or people with whom they had been friends before their marriage were mostly not included in their social networks. In addition, mothers were not likely to consider people with whom they became close during their marriage as significant. Therefore, excluding close and old relationships, even though the number was small, was likely to make the women feel more isolated.

SETTLING IN WITH A NEW SUPPORT NETWORK

Settling in with a new support network refers to the last stage in which immigrant Korean single mothers gained stability in their relational transition. During the initial and acute period of their transition, single mothers were more likely to be the dependent recipient of help from others; engaging in building connections to the community, whether intended or not, was

important for them because help from people, especially non-family members in the community, was essential to managing multiple demands.

In the later stages of relational transition, gaining relational security with supportive people was significantly helpful for some mothers to achieve their psychological stability. With a new support network some of them were able to move on to another stage, which was possibly the most stable stage throughout the transition. In this stage, the mothers were not merely receiving help from others, but they could also help others. Exchanging help made them more comfortable because it was perceived as placing themselves at an equal position with people who provided help to them. Mothers in this stage showed confidence in maintaining family and resolving practical issues by mobilizing resources out of the network.

“Help each other, take care of each other, or they ask me and I ask them – this is what a social life would be, but it was hard for me to do that. It was like, ‘feeling uncomfortable to ask a favor.’ But this year, one of my son’s friends, whose parents run a business separately and although they have two older sons – my son’s friend is at the same age of my son – they have occasions to ask somebody to babysit the youngest. So, sometime they babysit my son with their son and sometimes I do. So helping each other like this, since this summer, I am doing well this way.” (Interview 115, p.37, #28-p.38, #07)

What could single mothers gain from her new supportive relationships?

Getting practical help: Single mothers were able to obtain practical help when needed from the supportive people in their social network, including giving rides or picking up children, taking care of children when they were sick, assistance with house maintenance and such. It was critical for the mother to take care of multiple demands at the same time. Since the majority of the mothers did not have their natal families nearby, single mothers needed to be dependent on

help from others; thus, it felt difficult and uncomfortable for them to ask for others' help every time they needed help.

However, once they found supportive people and became close to them, it was easier to accept their help; such people seem to be considerate of the mothers' situation and feelings that they would even offer help first. Whereas single mothers felt ignored, sometimes when they received help they sensed that the person helping them was looking down on them and they did not have such discouraging experiences with those who they identified were supportive and caring. Although it happened to only one participant, the repetitive experience of being put down in relation to seeking help from others resulted in one mother put at the margin of the community and made her stay alone.

Getting advice on childrearing and care for children: Single mothers of young children had lots of worries and doubts about rearing children alone. Other single mothers who had 'been there' were a good source of advice on parenting and what might be expected in the future. Although not all the advice or vicarious experience they could gather from other single mothers was applicable to their own cases, the mothers recognized it as helpful to raising their children, and in particular in raising their sons.

Becoming healed by people: Usually, those who provided practical help also comforted and soothed the mothers. Single mothers were suffering from psychological isolation and damage to their self-image or pride. Also, they perceived that they were not understood or cared about by others. However, if the mother was able to have somebody psychologically to rely on, then that was likely to facilitate her progress toward a stable stage. A person or a few people who

newly entered into the mother's network became a shoulder to cry on: their sympathy, support, and availability alleviated the mothers' distress and assisted them in gaining psychological stability and security. Psychological support was generally more appreciated than practical help.

"The hurt you got by people seems to be healed by others. Because I met a lot of good people, [I get healed] within such an atmosphere." (Interview 103, p.05, #03-05)

"The leader of my cell group in church, who is a woman, used to give me some money with a letter, not a big money all at once, but once in a while, she used to give me some money, like \$20 or something with a letter. Although it was not much money, it was very touching. When I had hard times, or felt so tired, she wrote a letter and prayed for me. When I felt her warm heart. It was really great. I mean, it's really great to have a person whom I can call and ask to pray for me without any hesitation. That is, I have a person who is willing to accept me whenever I feel weary and don't need to worry about if the person feels burdened if I call. Since she knows everything about me, I feel completely comfortable with her. It is really great." (Interview 111, p.44, #26-p.45, #04)

SUMMARY OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TRANSITION

The loss of marriage had two different psychological impacts on the women's lives as working single mothers. Since they suffered from emotionally and physically abusive relationships, their distorted or oppressed sense of self was given opportunities to be restored by the loss of marriage. However, the loss of the marriage also resulted in significant social stigma and discrimination in the ethnic community due to their status as husbandless women. The women's internalization of such social values and their actual experience with their community's discrimination added the women's psychological burden and made them socially withdrawn.

Throughout the entire transition, children of single mothers were the most powerful motivator that enabled the mothers to progress across stages with very few resources and support for the families. By reinforcing their identity as a mother, the women were able to revitalize

themselves and make necessary changes in re-creating their families. In addition, successful experiences during their practical transition provided opportunities for them to develop a positive sense of self, which was also important to take active actions to make progress in their relational transition.

The relational transition involved making substantial changes in three major areas: first, in the norms and boundaries regarding disclosure of their status and distance from people; second, in their mindset to see others' discriminatory reactions; and the primary groups that they socialize with, those who are not judgmental about their status and behaviors. As the consequence of the transition, new supportive relationships were found and a new support network built for the family. Eventually the family was settling in with the new support network at the last stage of stabilizing.

Stabilizing as the Last Stage of the Entire Transition

Stabilizing refers to a process through which single mothers gained confidence and stability, both practically and psychologically, in their current situation. It was also the most stable phase in the women's entire transition of re-creation. With a few exceptions, stabilizing was more likely to happen among those who had been a single mother for three to five years and had no additional acute crisis such as health issues or unemployment.

Stabilizing involves five major components: being assertive and capable in handling problems alone; being content with the current life; having supportive relationships; having positive sense of self; and forgiving the person, that is, the former spouse. These components include ultimate outcomes in each aspect of their psychological and practical struggles after

becoming single mothers: being assertive and capable in handling problems alone was the outcome of the practical transition; having positive sense in their psychological growth; and having supportive relationships in their relational transition. Those three components are discussed earlier in this chapter. Additionally, being content with the current life and forgiving the person (the former spouse) were part of the stage of stabilizing which will be described in the following.

BEING CONTENT WITH THE CURRENT LIFE

Being content with the current life is the mother's positive evaluation on her current life situation. Those who became strong throughout the transition frequently expressed a positive outlook on life. Immediately after becoming single, mothers' expression of positive emotions was more likely to be a consequence of being released from an abusive relationship with the spouse. However, in later stages, a positive outlook on life as a single mother resulted from gaining confidence and stability. They considered themselves or their lives with their children as happy, peaceful, stable, and safe and they were proud of themselves about what they had achieved, even though they faced a multitude of challenges. In addition, such positive outlooks were not merely the mothers' own perspectives. They also received favorable comments from others who observed them over time and recognized positive changes.

"Just now like this, living like this without having other big problems – I just used to live like this and I feel sorry to say this but, I just, I feel sense of stability. I feel sorry [for my son] to call it 'sense of stability.' Also it seems like contradictory when I say 'stability,' but I live a stable life like this." (Interview 115, p.21, #09-13)

“So, from the very moment emotionally, what-so-called ‘depression,’ it is way beyond of just ‘depression.’ You are just becoming mad. And, you have anxiety and fear and the like. Also, looking back on purpose, especially for 3 months, I had been standing at the edge of a cliff. Truly, I do want to describe it as the ‘Edge of a cliff,’ in a word. Standing at the edge of a cliff for three months, emotionally, and so did I in reality, and looking back, I am safe now, at the edge.” (Interview 103, p.01, #12-19)

“My child starts kinder today. I am so thrilled. But, this child has been in day care since he was 7 months old because I had to work, so that he’s so familiar with rules. He attended pre-kinder for 2 years. So, he’s so familiar with school life. To him, he just moved to a new school. Right after he arrived he put down his backpack, found papers for coloring and started doing that and said ‘Bye, Mom!’ Other mothers seemed so amazed – it was not surprising to me though – I was really grateful. ‘Wow, my son grew up that much!’ because I raised him all by myself! I was full of gratitude in this morning. I am so thankful, so thankful.” (Interview 112, p.04, #27-p.05, #05)

FORGIVING THE PERSON

Forgiving the person is a process through which single mothers stopped blaming their former spouses for all the hardships they had suffered and subsequently cut the painful psychological connection between ‘self’ and the former spouse. By releasing themselves from the vicious circle of negativity by forgiving, single mothers were more likely to become psychologically stable.

“In my case, I just met a person who couldn’t be compatible with. I see it that way. Because he is a precious son in his family. I decided to put it that way, in a positive way. It was not the case that I gave a birth to my child because I was raped or something. Isn’t it? I could explain it in that way [=met incompatible person] at an important moment. I mean, regarding the matter of being a single mother or a person, what really matters is how the mother lives the life with what standard of thoughts.” (Interview 113, p. 31, #08-15)

“Looking back on my life, what I realized is that my life was ruined not because I lived with my husband. I must have had certain genes inside, I was not able to manage my life really well, but I gained almost 40 pounds after coming to the U.S. and my face broke out. (...) In the past, I was like ‘Everything happened because of him. He is the one to blame. Because I’ve been through a lot, I gained so much weight and went through a lot.’ Now,

however, rather I say to myself ‘At last, because my mom is overweight, I might have such genes in my body. Let’s put it that way.’” (Interview 109, p.15, #15-p.16, #10)

Processes Working Across Stages

There were two processes that functioned across stages and layers of transitions: fighting with myself and letting things out (see the middle column in the Figure 1). Even though mothers were able to redefine themselves and derive motivation from their children, negative emotions and practical issues continued to threaten their progress. Throughout the transition to being a working single mother, they needed to mount a sustained effort to guard against regression in their psychological and practical transitions. The two processes functioning across stages served the purpose.

FIGHTING WITH MYSELF

Fighting with myself is an intended process of redirecting the mother’s mindset to positive thoughts and what she believes is right. The purpose of this process is to let go of or stay away from activities and thoughts that get in the way of moving forward, and instead to focus on living the best life possible given the situation. Fighting with myself was carried out by practicing two major actions: admitting the situation and forcing myself to fixate on positive thoughts.

“From my experiences, you have to overcome it yourself. There is a period to rely on the counselor. But, when that time passes? After a certain amount of time passes, then you should fight with yourself again. I think I passed that stage very well.” (Interview 106, p.18, #26-29)

Admitting the situation: Fighting with myself usually began with the single mother admitting what had happened in her life. Marital dissolutions and subsequent challenges in practical transitions including a sharp decline in their standard of living were not anticipated; thus it was hard for them to admit to their current situation. However, once they admitted it, the mothers could take up their daily challenges and seek the best solutions for her situation:

“Although it [=the divorce] wasn’t a situation that my child wanted, nor did I expect to happen in my life; even though I wasn’t able to just accept it, I can live my life to the fullest when I accept it. Really, that’s how it is. When I were in such a situation I would go into negativity. Or, just accept it and follow ways that I can do better in a positive way. I think all the [single] mothers are wondering between those two. However, even if I live my life in such a way [=positive way], once a hardship comes, such as relational or financial problems, then I could go in negative ways. In the past, it took a long time to get back to the positive situation. But, I think now it’s getting faster over time. I still have a long way to go, but I feel like I am getting back more quickly, getting back to my pace for a shorter time. By doing that I won’t miss the next thing to do. If I am drown[ing] into the negativity, there’s nothing I can get.” (Interview 115, p.31, #15-32)

“For my children, I should not, but I do want to go crazy, sometimes. Especially when I’m scared. But, like I’ve endured for 3 years, lived 3 years, [and I think] if others go striding or go by car, but I have to crawl, then I will accept that way of going by crawling as my way of life... Something like that, which I think enables me to hang in there.” (Interview 103, p.05, #21-26)

Forcing myself to fixate on positive thoughts is a process in which mothers made repetitive attempts to view and think about things in positive ways. Since hardships in life kept coming, single mothers needed to keep practicing positive thinking and not to keep focusing on what they do not have or cannot do. The mothers’ determination to achieve this goal, along with their children’s encouragement helped them to keep up this practice.

“In the past – whenever I think about it, I feel so sad. [I realized that] If I stick to what I don’t have, what I can’t have, and what I can’t do, that will make me more miserable. So, I changed my thought completely. If I am satisfied with and grateful for what I have, what I can do well, and what I’m doing great then everything changes. I mean, I’m pushing

myself to think positively myself. I was like that a little bit in Korea, but after coming here, I strove to control myself in that way. By doing so I can be happy and pleased. Otherwise, things will go to be the worst case. Then it will also affect my children. So, focus on what I can do – I’m really grateful that somebody hired me that I can be paid for playing piano, being a paid accompanist. There are a lot of people who play piano much more than I do. When I think about that, I’m really grateful for that. And, my children also keep encouraging me a lot when I’m depressed like, ‘Mom, you’re better off than others. You’re doing good.’ We’re encouraging each other. So, such things are great motivation for me and became a firm basis on which I could overcome hardships.”
(Interview 114, p.12, #02-19)

The mother’s religious beliefs were also was a source of strength for such fighting. Faith in God provided meaning for the hardships, strength for endurance, and helped her to calm down or stay calm and to keep her mind off of the distressing issues.

“Actually, issues like this are not easy to solve, things that ordinary people can easily overcome. For me, what I’m very grateful for is, despite all the hardships, I have my Lord who enables me to stand upright, not fall down, gives me ability to judge things, and supports and leads me to take right ways although it is hard to follow. Literally, that is what is called ‘God’s grace’ to me. [I’m grateful for that] I can live day by day in that way – well, nobody knows when I will fall down. I don’t know either and I pray not to. This is a way that you cannot take without faith in God. I mean, it came up to my mind when I was thinking about what the difficulties were in my case. I think this is it. Keep my faith. It means not only to keep my religious beliefs, but also to protect myself from this world, protect my mind, my family, and my child. If I couldn’t protect, my child would collapse or I would – in the middle of hardships that shake us. That’s why it is God’s grace to me. Really. By His grace, I can endure and not fall into despair.”
(Interview 112, p.31, #20-p.32, #04)

Although only a few mothers articulated it, fighting with myself was the most important process that helped the mother move into a stable stage as part of her psychological transition. It was also a process that operated between stages and transitions. By repeating the process of fighting with myself, the single mother was able to: not go deeply into negativity; not be as

easily affected by others' derision or maltreatment; make constructive decisions or choices; and to quickly return to a productive life.

LETTING THINGS OUT

Letting things out was the process by which single mothers attempted to release emotions or distress that was pent up; the main purpose of letting things out was to become light-hearted and psychologically stable. Four strategies to vent pent-up feelings worked well for single mothers: 1) crying alone; 2) relying on faith in God; 3) seeking professional help; and 4) giving myself a break.

Crying alone was the most frequently used means to let things out during the initial, psychologically unstable stage in the transition. Mothers were likely to do it when they were alone: crying at night when their children were asleep; when watching sad movies or TV dramas; or looking for a place where her children would not see her crying such as outside of the home. During the immediate period of becoming single two conditions would increase the mothers' tendency of dealing with such burdens by themselves, rather than sharing their feelings with others: staying in the stage when they were likely to be socially inactive and withdrawn; and not having sustained access to their natal families or people with whom they could share their experiences.

"I got to realize [the situation], how should I put this, things were so 'absurd'? The absurdity was very... but because I was living in the same space as my daughter, how shall I put this? It was very hard to express or release such emotions. So it was a bit [hard], but since I had a lot of free time, I watched TV dramas a lot, on-line. I think I did it for a few months... I did so about two to three months? So watching TV dramas, I cried a lot (Smiling). (...) I cried a lot watching TV dramas at home – of course I didn't do those things on purpose or by verbally expressing this or that. While watching TV dramas anyways, about... I think those things lasted for about six months after moving here. If I

saw a sad part, even if it was just a little bit sad, I would cry a lot and tears would stream down.” (Interview 108, p.05, #34-p.6, #02)

“The best means is attend worship at dawn and cry there when you have hard time. That’s the only choice. Talking to people can’t help anything; it is nothing but something for them to gossip about. So the best solution is cry as much as you like. Or, go to Snoqualmie Falls and cry to your heart’s content.” (Interview 114, p.09, #32-p.10, #02)

“It was so hard because I couldn’t disclose it to anybody; nor could I freely talk about it. I soaked my pillow with my tears every day, like David [in the Bible] soaked his bed with his tears. I was like that.” (Interview 107, p.44, #22-25)

Relying on faith in God was also helpful for many throughout the entire transition.

Relying on faith in God was practiced in three ways: participating in religious activities, reading the Bible, and praying to God. Religious activities include worship services, group Bible study, gatherings for prayer and such. Religious activities helped the mothers calm themselves and provided opportunities to be distant from devastating ideas and emotions. For example, one mother elaborated how her faith in God helped her regain stability: attending worship services in the Catholic church helped her regain her sense of self and to stay calm and strong so that she would not be affected by others’ attitudes or stressful life issues.

“And, [when it comes to] things that can’t be let off, for me, my religious belief helped me a lot. So, I didn’t stay still at home all the time after [the divorce] and went to gatherings for prayers and church almost every day. By doing so, I didn’t fall into fruitless ideas and I listened to useful sayings a lot – it was not bad. (...) anyway, I’ve been through such processes.” (Interview 109, p.11, #21-28)

“Such psychological shocks [were resolved through] studying theology. After the divorce, the only places for me were school, church, and my home. Nothing else I could choose. After my child went to school in the morning, I went to school, too. Then I picked up my child from school and came home to feed him dinner and take care of him. When the night came, I used to pray. That’s how I resolved it. I cried a lot and thought by myself. I was alone. I worked hard with church programs. There were many classes for domestic violence by women. They were problematic, right? I learned how to treat the sequella from those classes. I learned those materials, received counseling, studying about

children's education, and involved in Bible studies. Because my life was so hectic, I resolved the hardship through religion, so to speak. If there was no religion for me, there would be no me. Anything could've happened to me. Ha, ha, like going mentally ill or something like that. But, with the power of faith I endured all things with happiness, had patience in my mind, and led myself to victory." (Interview 107, p.38, #08-26)

By reading the Bible and praying to God, mothers found hope and security that God was with them and would guide and protect them now and in the future.

"I find hope in reading the Bible. God is even counting hairs on my head! He wouldn't leave me like this. He would not abandon me. That's it." (Interview 102, p.11, #25-27)

"My favorite words in the Bible are in Corinthians. 'By the grace of God I am what I am.' So, before I knew it, when somebody praised me, 'Wow, I'm so proud of you,' then I feel like I am becoming arrogant. After that I realize, 'Well, no. I was able to survive not because of me but because of God's grace.'" (Interview 102, p.12, #18-23)

"When I face challenges such as having troubles in relationships with coworkers, or having a hard time due to my son, and feeling pressure on financial issues? Immediately, I pray. To God. Then God gives me strength and if I focus on God, the problem disappears." (Interview 101, p.04, #19-23)

However, in case of joining the church community for utilitarian purposes—for finding practical help and a community for the children, religion was not really helpful for psychological stability.

Seeking professional help refers to the mothers' active involvement in finding and receiving professional help for their struggles to get over psychological and emotional struggles. Professional help included: seeing a counselor; attending a special seminar or classes for domestic violence victims; and reading books on such subjects. This mother's story illustrates how counseling worked for her:

"So now receiving counseling – I still do it – I'm really comfortable with it. Um, it might sound somewhat offensive [to the interviewer] but, the way I see it is, I pay a certain

amount for that, I have someone to listen to my story for certain amount of fees – I try to think of it easily like that. Because I can't tell my mom everything, because it breaks her heart. There's a limit to what I can tell my friends, too. So I have a person who listens to me when I get really, really upset is the counselor – the relationship turned out like that, after continuing for quite a long time." (Interview 106, p.18, #29-38)

Giving myself a break is a process by which single mothers allowed themselves to be away from reality for a moment: watching TV a lot, reading novels, and shopping were the actions described by the mothers. Actual or fictional stories about people provided opportunities to have vicarious satisfaction or a downward social comparison, which helped the mothers focus on what she had. Giving myself a break was performed with or without the mother's intention and was likely to happen for a short period of time, i.e., for the first 6 months to one year after becoming single.

"I think I have wishes to escape from reality. That is, it's impossible to correct now even if I knew the reason. (...) The other thing is spending too much time sitting in front of the computer and surfing the Internet. [I would look for] Something such as Harlequin romance novels on-line. In such novels, there's no sad endings; seeing such situations, although they have nothing to do with me and [I know] it's not real, but [by reading them] I could release some part [of my stress]. Therefore, by the way I've never told this to anybody, really (laughing). So, I went through those processes. (...) Even now from time to time, I read Harlequin romance. Reading it, I think 'well, I read this when I was really young, but it feels different reading it again.' While I'm reading such novels I could forget about it [=my life/reality] for a while. These days, too, it seems that I sit in front of computer for one to two hours a day. Sitting for two hours, maximum three hours, after putting my children to sleep, I usually surf the Web or see something [on-line]. But, I do not do email so much because I don't want to write about trivial detail. So, going through such processes, those issues have passed now. I don't know about other mothers, but that's what I've been through." (Interview 109, p.10, #29-p.11, #20)

"Before I came to meet you, I watched a TV program, which showed that ethnic Koreans from China came to Korea and settled down in *Karibong-dong*, which was the old *Kuro* industrial complex [in Seoul], in order to make money. It turned into a Chinatown. (...) Actually, a room is divided into smaller ones – so small you can barely lie down. Two floors are divided like an attic. So, they came there, earned money, and sent it to their

families in China. A reporter asked, 'Aren't you uncomfortable?' They said they were happy that they were able to send money to their families. They have their breakfast at work, provided by the company. They have lunch there, too, and then back to their places, paying additional 50,000 *wŏn*² for the meal. They cook and eat their dinner altogether there. However, they feel so happy eating the meal. Watching them, I thought, 'Well, I live in a place like a palace.' Looking at myself, once again, I came to think about all the complaints and dissatisfaction I have now. I realized that I should be thankful for this..." (Interview 102, p.13, #31-p.14, #13)

Summary

Single mothers came a long way to become confident and psychologically stable. Their transition to the life of a working single mother involved a complex and multilayered set of processes, each of which was closely intertwined and affected each other under various conditions. Although those processes were presented in a linear manner, actual trajectories that single mothers were following were not necessarily linear. Practical and psychological transitions were not necessarily achieved concurrently but managing both transitions together facilitated mothers' entry to the most stable phase in their transitions.

Psychologically, mothers were moving through different stages. Their loss of self-esteem began during the marriage; throughout the process of physical separation, the women's self-worth was damaged again. During the initial stages of practical transition, without having anyone to psychologically rely on, the women needed to carry out multiple tasks related to assuring family survival, including struggling between working and childrearing. At the same time they needed to deal with social disapproval and derision of their status related to being a single mother. During the initial stages of transition, religious beliefs were of significant help for the

² 50,000 *wŏn* is approximately \$45.00.

mothers to release negative emotional and psychological responses and stress accompanied by the transition.

Despite all the unfavorable conditions for single-mother families, mothers were strongly motivated by their new goal of raising their children well by themselves; their children were the most powerful driving force that enabled them to move forward throughout their transition to a new life as a single-mother family. In the meantime, mothers found new support networks in the community with whom they were comfortable sharing their feelings. Often their networks included other single mothers with or without a few married couples. Ultimately, mothers were approaching to gain psychological strength to get through everything by herself and practical stability with a new supportive network in the community.

During the first stage of assuring, mothers were heavily burdened by pressure to secure family survival as well as psychological and emotional struggles due to the loss of marriage. Mothers were trying to achieve major tasks of assuring a place to live and securing income (securing the basic living conditions); psychologically, they were socially withdrawn and suffering from a damaged sense of self as well as others' discrimination.

During the stage of struggling, the women were attempting to find a balance between father role and mother roles: to take the lead and responsibility to be a solo parent; and to get out of their negative emotions and social withdrawal. They were also finding and adopting strategies to protect the family from or fight against discrimination in the ethnic community. Children of the mothers highly motivated them to fulfill their responsibility to raise them well and to make progress.

When the women reached the stage of stabilizing, mothers felt confidence in handling practical issues and maximizing their ability to nurture their children and extract them from restricted living conditions. Mothers worked to restore or develop a positive sense of self, often expressed as ‘becoming strong.’ Women were able to settle in with a new support network with close interpersonal relationships and exchanged interpersonal support.

Chronologically, the initial stage of assuring seems to be completed the first one to two years after becoming single; the next stage of struggling was likely to overlap during the same period of time, but varied by how quickly the mothers completed the assuring tasks. Obviously, mothers who kept working before becoming single could pass over the assuring stage; their transition could be much shorter than for their counterparts of the former full-time mothers. Proximity to and support from the mother’s natal family was a significant factor in allowing mothers to fulfill multiple tasks and meet urgent needs with less difficulty. Health issues and episodes of unemployment were additional barriers to the mothers’ movement between stages. It seems to take three to five years for the mothers to reach the third stage of stabilizing. Having no significant changes or crisis in the family’s living conditions helped the mothers enter into the stabilizing stage in a shorter time.

CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter presents 1) a discussion of study findings, 2) methodological implications, 3) clinical implications, 4) implications for future research, and 5) limitations of the study. Results will be contrasted and compared to previous findings from the literature.

Discussion of Study Findings

The women's stories about transitioning to new lives as single-mother families illuminate the exacting nature and complexity of their multi-layered processes. The current study contributes in five areas to the body of knowledge of women's transition processes after marital dissolution, each of which is described next.

Comparison of the Findings with Models for Post-divorce Adjustment

Three theoretical or clinical models relevant to the women's divorce experiences are reviewed in order to distinguish major differences between women's transition process in the mainstream society and the Korean women's transition.

First, the model emerged from the data is similar with the Guttman's model (1993) in that both emphasize non-linearity and multi-dimensionality of the women's post-separating transitions; and the ultimate outcomes of the transition are personal growth and achievement of a strong and better sense of self. Guttman's psychosocial model involves four stages of deciding, separating, struggling and winning, in which people who are engaged in the divorce process might progress or regress. The first three stages correspond to the stages in this study including: deciding to go against social norms; separating; and struggling between the father role and the

mother role. The last stage of winning can be parallel to both doing my best as mother and becoming strong.

The model of living for the children is comparable with the model of divorcing and building a new life by Radford and colleagues' (1997). Radford et al. (1997) conducted in-depth interviews with ten divorced women to provide the women's subjective account for their divorce and its aftermath experiences. Their model involves four phases: emotional divorcing, making the decision, pulling apart, and moving beyond. The basic social process was building a new life. The similarity between the two models includes: building a new sense of self and setting boundaries as one of the women' coping strategies. Two models are different in two major points: the newly developed identity and the relationship with children. While the women in this study reinforced their maternal identity after marital dissolution, women in the Radford and colleagues' study developed a new identity as a single divorced woman. Also, their views on divorce process and its aftermath were couple-oriented, whereas the experiences of the women in this study were closely associated with their children.

Another comparable model is Whang's (2007) model of post-divorce adjustment. The author reconstructed theoretical models in the literature to account Korean divorced parents' adjustment and her model involves four stages: *i-hon junbi-gi* (the stage of preparation for divorce), *honran-gi* (the stage of confusion), *holo-sŏgi-gi* (the stage of standing on one's own), and *keukbok-gi* (the stage of overcoming). This model is similar to other models in that divorced parents can gain psychological growth and overall stability throughout their adjustment processes; it is also specifically similar to the model of this study because it incorporates the impact of social stigma and marginalization of divorced families into the stage of confusion.

In sum, comparison of the findings with other models for divorce and its aftermath adjustment revealed that the findings extended our understanding on the post-separating adjustment in two major aspects.

First, the study results not only support for those models but also provide further understanding of how these women make transitions to their new life of working single mothers. Although there is a large body of research on marital dissolution and post-dissolution adjustment, the mechanisms by which people make adjustment have been much less studied (Fasching, 2011; Gregson & Ceynar, 2009). The models in comparison acknowledge the complexity and multidimensionality of the post-divorce transitions but except four-phase staging, dimensions after legal separation were simplified and their sub-stages were not explained. The model of living for the children provides further accounts for the initial five years of transition processes and how these women move through stages and transitions are explained.

Study results also illuminate particular conditions that facilitated or hampered the women's transition into the life of a working single mother. The use of grounded theory research methodology was essential to identify these influential conditions that were uniquely influential at a certain stage as well as across stages. In contrast, previous studies using standardized questionnaires were unable to reveal these conditions. Identifying conditions under which certain actions occur is particularly useful to develop and design interventions to assist this particular group of families make smooth and healthy transitions.

Second, the major similarity among the models and the findings in this study is the importance of reconstructing or redefining a new identity in post-divorce adjustment, particularly for women (Baum, Rahave, & Sharon, 2005; Gregson and Ceynar, 2009). The major difference

between prior literature and the current findings is which new identities are reconstructed—redefining a new identity as a divorced individual or reinforcing the maternal identity. The Korean women's strong reinforcement of their identity as a mother has no precedent in prior research on divorced White women's adjustment.

Reinforcement of Maternal Identity

The study findings showed that these women reinforced their maternal identity throughout their transition processes. Their identity as a strong mother was different from their maternal identity during marriage because: they became a mother as well as a solo provider who needed to take on multiple roles and responsibilities to maintain the family; and it was combined with the identity of a wife who was submissive and had a distorted self-image. In this sense, identity of a strong mother was their newly developed identity after becoming a single mother.

Reasons for these women's strong emphasis on maternal identity can be primarily the cultural influence on their perception of self. Noh's (2001) argument provides persuasive explanation of this phenomenon. Her qualitative study with seven divorced Korean women revealed that choosing maternal identity was those women's strategy to resolve identity confusion and facilitate their post-divorce adjustment. Noh argued that Korean married women tend to hold two distinct identities as a wife and a mother. Marital conflicts or abuse create circumstances where they cannot hold the wife identity firmly any more. Under such conditions, maternal identity can be a ground on which they define themselves again. Thus, choosing maternal identity can be the most stable and practical choice for the women within a culture that emphasize and value mother ideology than identity as an individual for married women.

In the literature, the concept of role ambiguity attributed to divorced women's reconstruction of identity after divorce (Gregson et al., 2009). Marital dissolution creates ambiguous situations for divorced women in which their roles were undefined and their process of redefining their roles was left in private sphere without societal guidance or support. Socially undefined and unsupported process of redefining roles encourages them to take assertive positions to discover a new sense of self (Rahav & Baum, 2002).

Generally, the concept of role ambiguity can explain overall positive changes in the sense of self during the women's transitions. However, it seems to have limited ability to explain these women's emphasis of role of mothers because: the concept is based on changes in the sense of self as a wife; and these women resolved the ambiguity by reminding the maternal identity. They were struggling between the father role and the mother role because of overwhelming pressure of being responsible for family survival, rather than role ambiguity due to loss of identity as a wife.

Mourning or grieving a loss of marriage is an essential process for psychological termination of marriage, which can be the foundation of new sense of self (Baum, 2003; Fasching, 2011; Wallerstein et al., 1989). However, the process of mourning was not obvious in the stories of immigrant Korean single mothers. Reasons of this absence of mourning may be speculated in three ways: long term marital conflict or abusive relationship with the former spouse made these women terminate their marriage psychologically; as the majority of these women initiated the divorce, they might have grieved their loss of marriage before physical separation occurred (Amato & Previti, 2003); or because the process of grieving a loss of marriage is disenfranchised (Martic, 1989), it is hard to capture the process.

In sum, emphasis of maternal identity after marital dissolution is unique to these Korean women. Other concepts and processes pertinent to identity reconstruction in post-divorce adjustment have limited ability to explain these women's development of a new sense of self because most of them are couple-oriented; loss of identity as a spouse and its consequences in their transitions were not as predominant as they were in White middle-class women's experience of marital dissolutions and adjustment.

Detrimental Impact of Social Stigma and Prejudice on the Transition

Study findings reveal important external conditions under which the women's transitions were significantly disturbed. The women's experience of being neglected and treated with derision was striking. Although studies of White divorced women conducted in the 1990s and earlier in the United States mention social stigma being imposed on divorced women, (Radford et al., 1997; Sakraida, 2005), stigma appears to be less important in more recent studies. But social disapproval and prejudice of divorced individuals and their children continue to be important in studies of Korean women's adjustment after divorce in the U.S. and in Korea (Kim, Park, & Choi, 2010; Hwang, 2007; Lee & Bell-Scott, 2009; Yang, 1999). The current study's results substantiate the importance of social disapproval and prejudice but go beyond that to describe how women negotiate such unfavorable conditions in order to live within the community.

The findings suggest the existence of two contrasting views on divorce and divorced people in the ethnic community. Divorce as social change and subsequent ambivalence on the view on divorce in Korean society can be the broader social context to explain the phenomenon.

Kim et al. (2010) assert that sharp increase of divorce rate in Korea which started in 1990s added new positive values to social members' traditional views on divorce and family. As a result, two different value systems to view the divorce families exist concurrently within a society: acceptable structure of families and lifestyles versus. misconduct of characteristically flawed people. The authors see such social ambivalence on divorced people makes those involved more confused and embarrassed.

Social ambivalence can be applicable to the Korean community. The degree of social ambivalence on divorced women is likely to be greater in immigrant Korean community than in Korean society. For example, the Korean elderly who migrated to this country in 1970s or 80s are more likely to hold the traditional views on family and divorce which were prevailing in the society at that time. In contrast, those who immigrated more recently, like the women in this study, are more likely to be open and accepting of the decision to divorce and become single-parent families. Since ethnic Korean community is the place in which people who have diverse views on divorce socialize together, these women's involvement in the community make them be victimized by the greater gaps of social ambivalence on divorced people.

Other Conditions that Influence on Women's Adjustment after Marital Dissolution

Major challenges that the women in this study identified were not significantly different from those in the literature, such as financial hardships, parenting difficulties, dealing with psychological issues, and experiencing changes or loss in social contacts (Chang, 1998, 2003; Hetherington et al., 2002; Kim, 1998; Ricciuti, 1999). However, among the variables or factors that were identified to consistently predict the women's post-divorce, elapsed time after

becoming single (i.e., psychological adjustment would increase over time) and decider status (i.e., non-initiators are likely to exhibit the worst adjustment) did not have differential impact on the women's movement through their transition processes.

More specifically, the amount of elapsed time after becoming single did not predict the degree to which the mothers gained practical and psychological stability. Literature showed that most of the women who experienced separation or divorce were able to obtaining a new stability two to three years after separation or divorce (Amato, 2000; Hetherington, 1989). However, that 2-3 year time frame is not applicable to the women in the study except for the few participants who had been self-supporting since marriage. Instead, the Korean mothers needed more time to gain such stability in each layer of transitions. Also, the findings showed the evidence of regression in their transitions or being confined in one stage due to unexpected crisis. Thus, the amount of elapsed time has very limited ability to measure these women's positions in their transition processes.

Decider status did not make significant differences in these women's progress in post-separating transitions. Rather, these women's transition outcomes were more likely to depend upon post-divorce problems solving and critical life events. The non-initiators experienced more emotional hardships during immediate after becoming single (the stage of getting lost and isolated). However, the findings showed that they were successfully gaining positive sense of self, practical stability, and new supportive relationships. In contrast, a few initiators experienced repetitive health issues and unemployment; were more struggling to gain stability in practical and psychological transitions; and not yet approaching to the stable stage. Although initiators of the divorce process are known to have better outcomes after divorce than non-

initiators (Amato, 2000; Amato & Previti, 2003; Sakranda, 2005; Sweeny, 2002), it might not be applicable to these women.

Conclusively, when predictors identified by statistical analysis are contextualized in these women's transition processes, they are not likely to have similar predictive powers for their status of progress in the adjustment after marital dissolution. Their transitions to working single mothers are too complex and multi-layered to depict a few predictors for their level of adjustment.

Relations to the Resilience Model

Finally, the women's experience of becoming and living as a single mother can be resilience-provoking. Study findings showed that the women's pathways to become strong converge with multiple components of gaining resilience. Resilience is defined as the ability of people to withstand and rebound from adversity (Walsh, 2002), including spring or bouncing back from stress and disaster (Ahern, 2006). Resilience is also a dynamic process that results in positive adaptation in the face of significant adversity within embedded context (Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker, 2000). During the process, resilience may fortify or weaken. The resiliency process is a life-enriching model that suggests that stressors and change provide growth and stimulate resilient qualities or protective factors. Resilient individuals are known to have multiple personal resources, self-reliance or independence, a positive outlook, a strong sense of self, or humor (Richardson, 2002). Although not all the women in the study gained resilience, they experienced multiple aspects of resilience throughout their multilayered transitions. The mothers gained increased confidence and an increased sense of control in

resolving practical issues and maintaining the family during their practical transitions. Mothers found and maintained new supportive relationships with others through which they were able to mobilize resources. Mothers gained an awareness of their own strength throughout their transitions. Their transitions overall were a journey toward resilience.

In sum, findings provide further understanding of non-White women's experiences of marital dissolution, the transition, and their aftermath. Immigrant Korean women's subjective portrayal of their transitions provides further understanding of the processes occurring in different cultural contexts in the United States. Comparison of the findings with prior literature foregrounds: these women's strong emphasis of maternal identity; social stigma and prejudice on single mothers as significant barriers to these women's transitions; limited ability of predictors, concepts, or processes pertinent to non-Korean women's divorce adjustment to explain these women's transition experiences; and finally resilience-provoking nature of these women's transition experiences.

Particularly, the women's social status as immigrants, cultural influences on their perception and reconstruction of self, and the ethnic community's responses to these women and its consequences to the women are unique to these women. Each of these aspects has significant implications for research and clinical practice. Reinforcement of maternal identity and child-centered lives should be understood as the primary mechanism for these women to rise above their devastating experience with marital dissolution. Early intervention for successful transitions related to both psychological and practical stability, including the necessity of creating a supportive environment in the community, are pertinent to assisting these families gain resilience and confidence in maintaining their newly created family environment. Nursing

interventions need to be synchronized to the situations in which these women and their families reside.

Methodological Implications

Two major methodological challenges occurred during the study: recruitment and translation and verification processes. Each of these challenges is discussed next.

Challenges in Recruitment

Disclosing status as a single mother was an extremely sensitive issue among immigrant Korean women. This sensitivity resulted in recruitment difficulties. Recruitment difficulties were known from previous research (Lee et al., 2009). As a result, multiple recruitment methods and channels were planned and executed to invite participants into the study. The most effective recruitment method was recruiting through intermediaries.

Potential participants' aggressive refusal challenged the intermediaries. These negative experiences caused one intermediary to give up her role as an intermediary for the study. After learning about this experience, face-to-face meetings were held with the other intermediaries to acknowledge their efforts and altruistic commitment; discuss about possible reasons for the negative response; remind them not to force potential candidates to participate in the study; and to call if they had questions or concerns. No additional withdrawal of intermediaries occurred.

Given these difficulties with face-to-face invitations and the sensitivity of the issue of disclosure of single-mother status, a recommendation for future research includes recruitment of participants online. Online recruitment of participants who are socially vulnerable has three major advantages. First, potential participants can decide to participate in the study or not with

fewer conditions influencing their decision; they can contact the researcher directly to ask questions and raise concerns regarding participation and make their decision later. Second, the logistics of online recruitment do not require disclosure of the potential participants' status or contact information. It is particularly beneficial for participants like the women in this study, who are very cautious about disclosing their personal information to others. Third, the range of recruitment regions and characteristics of participants can be extended beyond the researcher's knowledge and expectations. For example, while recruiting participants for this study one woman identified herself as eligible for the study, but turned out to be ineligible. Nonetheless, she was willing to provide assistance for this research. Through her introduction, women in different regions were able to participate in the study.

Challenges in Translation and Verification

Translating and verifying interview data was labor-intensive. Sometimes word choice was an issue because: there were many expressions that could not be directly translated; and the words or phrases of choice in English could be a label of open (first-line) code and represent the content. Sometimes a precise translation could not be made, especially in the cases where phrasal verbs or idioms were used in storytelling. Thus, as a non-native English speaker, it took a large amount of time and energy to select words or expressions that could convey the meaning and nuance of these women's stories as closely as possible and did not distort or exaggerate them. The translation process went more quickly after the first several interviews were translated.

The next challenge was to find a competent translator who could verify the translation. Finding a qualified verifier was much more difficult than expected. There were surprising gaps

between the verifier's perceived level of fluency and the work verified by the verifier. Possible reasons could be generational and cultural gaps between the verifiers and the interview participants. What mattered most was not the age difference per se; it was the personal and cultural background they had in Korea and in the United States. Their background appeared to affect their ability to understand the participants' stories written in Korean. Multiple verifier candidates were interviewed and five verifiers were hired due to reasons, including poor performance, cost, and inability to meet deadlines. The most competent verifier was a bilingual Korean woman who lived in the U.S. during her childhood and moved to Korea as a teenager. Additionally, because she earned her Ph.D. by conducting a qualitative research in the U.S. she could understand the context in which the translation and its verification were necessary; her understanding made our communication easier and more efficient and she offered productive suggestions.

The major considerations and suggestions regarding translation include: improved screening for verifiers; encouraging the verifier's understanding of the verification process; and providing opportunities to increase understanding of transcripts written in Korean.

First, evaluating the verifier's fluency with a half-page paragraph written in Korean and its translation was helpful in making hiring decisions. Surprisingly, 1.5-generation bilingual Korean Americans' fluency in Korean varied more than expected and was sometimes significantly different from their perceived level of fluency. Having candidates for a verifier position review the prepared materials can be an opportunity to find their level of fluency in reading and understanding Korean.

Second, having enough time to discuss principles of verification with the verifier was helpful to save time and energy. When a verifier tried to correct every detail of the translation, such process resulted in too many assumptions and too many changes in orders o of sentences, which introduced the potential of threatening the reliability of the translated data. After two interviews were translated and verified by two different verifiers, it became apparent that each verifier had personal patterns of using language and that affected their verification work. After this experience, more sharing about expectations and the principles of verification resulted in significantly improved translations and an improved verification process.

Third, it was helpful to provide increased opportunities for the verifiers to understand the Korean text and seek clarification prior to verifying. This was facilitated by sending the Korean text first and asking verifiers to mark unknown words or phrases or passages that were not clear. E-mail exchanges for the purpose of clarification facilitated this process, with the resulting verification work being done faster and with more accuracy.

Clinical Implications

There are multiple clinical findings that derive from the current study: establishing links between these women and existing services; developing integrative programs and services that include multiple dimensions of their transitions; enhancing community awareness about discrimination toward these women and establishing supportive environments for them. Detailed suggestions for single mothers, their children, community leaders and members, and policymakers follow.

Effective and accessible links between these women and existing services and programs for single mothers should be established. Women in this study were struggling to seek information regarding practical transitions to employment, housing, or legal services or consultations mostly through other Koreans during the acute stage of assuring; many of them were also ignorant about where to turn and when as well as about what services were available. In the beginning, they dealt with anxiety and fear of failure to survive. Such lack of information of vulnerable Korean immigrant women was also found in another study (Lee et al., 2009). Since multiple sources of public and local assistance for single-parent families are established, these women should not be excluded from benefitting from such resources at the onset of transition. Since most of the women in this study did not have their family of origin or close friends nearby, awareness of resources and avenues for access will help them transition with less stress and in a less chaotic manner.

Programs and services to assist these women should incorporate multilayered transitional aspects. Dealing with each issue would not be sufficient or effective for these women because each layer of the transitions is closely affected by other transitions. Referring these women to multiple facilities or services for resolving every single issue will not be efficient to these women. Designing and referring these women to resources that can offer a coordinated, comprehensive assessment of their needs and eligibility for services would be ideal.

In addition, programs or services aimed at assisting these women should be synchronized to where each woman is in terms of her respective psychological or practical transitions. Decision on when to end the service should be carefully determined as each layer of transitions is

not always to be concurrently achieved. Support services may be required at numerous points along the transition continuum and for a longer time than the usual length of services.

Third, religious leaders and community members should be aware that these women are stigmatized by members of their own communities. Since ethnic church communities are the women's primary support for survival, enhancing environments within ethnic church communities is critical for successful assistance for these women and their families. Community members and single mothers may benefit from awareness training that educates about bias toward single mothers, healthy communication patterns and the negative impact of inappropriate or discouraging treatment. In the rest of this section, programs and services are suggested for these women and their children.

Services and Programs for Single Mothers

Psychological interventions to assist Korean single mothers to deal with their emotional challenges are needed. During the initial stage, practically and psychologically, single mothers experienced overwhelming simultaneous emotional and practical burdens. Thus, it is also the hardest time for their children as well. Since their time is consumed with working, interventions should be designed with consideration for tight and varying schedules. Focus of the interventions should include: 1) how to internally process the painful life event of marital dissolution; and 2) how to manage their emotions triggered by practical issues. Since the majority of the mothers choose to align with Korean communities and feel comfortable using Korean rather than English, collateral materials should be written in Korean and translated into English, if needed. Korean Christian counselors might be part of such services, but partnering

with particular Korean churches would not work for single mothers who do not want to expose their status.

Single mothers need organized support for job searching and enhancing their job-related qualifications. Although separation or divorce was a consequence of long-term marital conflicts, life after separation/divorce was not likely to be planned ahead. Mothers had to start their single-parent lives without enough preparation. Non-English-fluent former full-time mothers were the most vulnerable group. In addition, the value of mothers' educational level obtained in Korea was not equivalent to the same educational level in the U.S. and their previous working experiences in Korea were also not likely to be equally valued. Mothers should have the time and opportunity to review their work options and means to improve their qualifications. Successful stories of other single mothers may assist the mothers in choosing the trajectory that may work for their situation.

A list of available public and community assistance will enable mothers to gain appropriate assistance and thereby make smoother transitions during the first one to three years after becoming single. Unless the family stayed in shelters, it was not easy for them to identify what kind of support was available or the specific requirements for each type of support. Since the majority of public assistance is determined by family income, assistance provided by local services, such as non-profit organizations or volunteer-based services would be more helpful for mothers whose income falls slightly above the poverty line.

Single mothers need experts' advice in parenting. Parenting was particularly challenging to single mothers, especially for mothers of sons. Data revealed that mothers did not directly address their children's issues regarding family separation. Interventions aimed to assist single

mothers to deal with those issues are needed. Content of the interventions should include: general parenting education, differences in parenting between Korean culture and American culture, and education on single parenting such as how to discuss family separation with children. Such sessions should encourage participation of both parents. In the findings, discordance of parenting style between parents was an ongoing serious issue for these families. Joint efforts to raise children and create optimal environments for children should be encouraged.

Opportunities to take care of and promote their health should be provided, which should include wellness care or health education for preventing chronic health issues due to type of work. There were potential but significant threats to the mother's physical health under specific working conditions, especially among menial jobs that require specific postures and intensive use of certain parts of the body such as the hand, arm, and shoulder (e.g, nail shop, restaurants, delis, and such). Most of the single mothers did not have health insurance and even those who did have it had limited benefits for wellness care such as seeing a chiropractor. Therefore, interventions to promote health are necessary; specifically, materials that can be viewed at their convenience that focus on tips and strategies that can easily be incorporated into their hectic lives would likely be beneficial.

Programs for Children of Single Mothers

Children of single mothers need to have opportunities to discuss their family transition issues. The findings revealed that these children did not talk about their struggles with their mothers in order not to make them worry. Their struggles were not sufficiently addressed and they lacked opportunities to share their emotions and reduce their stress. Since mothers were

also struggling during the acute phases of the transition, it is not optimal for mothers to be the only resource for their children. Because it was not the focus of this study, how children were dealing with the issue of family separation was not known. However, children should be informed about professional help and how and where to access such support. The daughter of one participant sought counseling services at school and found them to be beneficial for dealing with issues related to family separation.

More opportunities for the children should be provided. The children of the mothers in this study were less likely to have opportunities to join in extracurricular activities that would aid in proper and balanced development. Financial constraints prevented these children from participating in extracurricular activities. Linking families to established programs or mobilizing community resources, such as free or low-cost programs run by volunteers would be helpful. Programs should be offered in locations accessible to children or they should include transportation services.

Community-level Interventions

As stated earlier, two different community-level programs will be beneficial for both single mothers and the community: programs to sensitize community members about discrimination against these women and to enhance communication among members. Also, new church programs should be tailored to incorporate the spiritual needs of single mothers

Mobilizing and integrating local resources are needed to assist these women. Data showed that these women established social networks with other single mothers in the community. By supporting such private networks to form a local safety net, single mothers can

be more systematically assisted. Empowering such networks for single mothers can provide one of the most efficient and accessible resources for single mothers and their children. Local safety nets would work well for those who are not eligible for public assistance; they can be a foundation upon which systems to respond to the families' urgent needs or emergencies can be built.

Suggestions for Policy Makers

Mothers whose income level and assets place them slightly over above the poverty line are not likely to benefit from public assistance for vulnerable families. There should be alternative systems to support these women before they fall into poverty. In addition, meeting the requirements for such benefit including multitude of paperwork and working hours is likely to add to these women's burden of fulfilling multiple roles to maintain the family. More flexibility in terms of the requirements for maintaining the benefit (e.g., submitting evidence of 40 hours of work or study per week) should be allowed to reduce these women's burdens.

Policymakers also need to consider the need for affordable health insurance coverage for these women, including more options for free or low-cost care. Considering their employment circumstances, health insurance coverage through employment is really difficult to get. Undiagnosed chronic conditions are not easy to get treated. Collaboration with local resources for health care should be expanded and extended coverage for well-ness care in health insurance for these mothers are needed.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of the study and its comparison with prior research helped to identify five major directions for future research: employing a life-course perspective; need to conduct research with more diverse groups of single mothers, including different age-cohorts and different backgrounds; studying children of single mothers or mother-child dyads; and need to study community members' experience of living and working with single mothers.

Life-course perspective needs to be applied to gain further understanding of these women's experiences. Most of the literature focuses on the acute stage of the first two to three years of transition. The findings suggest that reinforcement of maternal identity motivated these women during at least a 5-year transition period. Although they have clear boundaries between their sense of self and that of their children, there is still a possibility that these women might need to make another transition when their children grow up and form their own families. Research that employs longitudinal design perspective on single-mother families will enable us to gain further understanding of their experiences.

Different age-cohorts need to be studied. Since people in similar ages share cultural and societal norms, single mothers in different age groups might have different processes in their transitions. As Kim et al. (2010) pointed out, Korean society has experienced a sharp increase in the divorce rate with a steep increase in single-parent families since the 1990's. It implies that a younger generation of immigrant Korean single mothers may be more familiar with issues faced by single mothers and more supportive than their older counterparts.

Single mothers who have different backgrounds in terms of religion and self-sufficiency need to be studied. Women who are deeply engaged in different religious groups need to be studied. Since spiritual well-being has been identified as a significant facilitator of the women's psychological well-being, members in diverse religious groups or members in different ethnic churches in the same religion might present different findings than the women in this study. Additionally, those who have been self-supporting need to be studied separately because their transitions can be seen as an integration of single parenthood into working. It also needs to be studied how they change in terms of building a new identity according to transition.

Children of single mothers or mother-children dyads need to be studied. The findings showed that lack of communication and quality time with children concerned single mothers. Issues of family separation were not directly addressed between the mothers and their children. Since the primary cultural backgrounds of mothers and children are different, instructions and guidance based on American culture might not be working well for such families. Understanding both mothers' and children's transitions together will provide the detailed information necessary to develop programs for helping these women and their children.

Members and leaders in the ethnic community need to be invited to participate in research concerning these women. Further understanding of the communities in which single mother families were embedded is needed. Since community membership was a significant condition under which single mothers were able to address urgent needs, increasing mutual understanding would be helpful for single mothers and other people in their community. Hidden barriers and difficulties in communicating with and assisting these women and their children

need to be discovered; the findings will be necessary to design community-level interventions to assist these families.

Limitations of the Study

The current study was limited by: characteristics of the participants, recruitment methods, and the study design.

The participants of this study were predominantly Christian. Women who are deeply engaged in another religion might have different life experiences in relation to marital dissolution and its aftermath.

Also, all of the participants live on the West Coast of the country. Findings of the study showed that these women's transitions were significantly affected by responses of the communities in which they were embedded. As a result, these women's transition experiences and their social environment may differ from those of women in other regions of the country, such as Korean communities on the East Coast.

Relationships between participants and intermediaries might have affected the recruitment. Since the intermediaries for this study used their personal and church-based networks to identify potential candidates for this study, the quality of relationships between those two parties might have affected the participants' decision to participate in the study. Consequently, such relational characteristics of both participants and intermediaries might result in inviting a particular group of women to this study.

This research included only one informant of the family. Although the mother's experience was the focus of this research, including children of single mothers and thereby

exploring dynamics of the mother-child dyad in their family-level transition could have provided much deeper understanding of immigrant Korean single mother families. Since the mother's life revolved around her children, children's responses to the family separation and their subjective descriptions of the transition to single-mother families need to be explored.

Also, this research was dependent upon one-time and a single method of data collection. Since these women's transition experiences were dynamic and non-linear, research that employs prospective longitudinal design with mixed methods to collect data will contribute to achieving further understanding of these women's transitions, which might not have captured during the study interviews.

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Appendix A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Opening question

1. Could you tell me about your life since you became a single parent?
2. Please tell me about being a single parent in the United States and the issues you face now.
3. Let's discuss challenges related to your family now.

Additional questions (probes) if topics of interest have not been discussed

1. The participant's history of being a single parent if it is not brought up by questions such as: "how long have you been a single parent?" and "did it occur when you were in Korea or in the U.S.?"
2. The family's strengths and challenges the family faces, including information on social support including family members and public assistance if they have not been discussed.
3. If necessary, it will be clarified which time the participant is referring to, i.e., challenges that the family had in the past or present.

Appendix B: INTERVIEW GUIDE (SECOND VERSION)

Opening question (not changed)

1. Could you tell me about your life since you became a single parent?
2. Please tell me about being a single parent in the United States and the issues you face now.
3. Let's discuss challenges related to your family now.

Additional questions (probes) if topics of interest have not been discussed

1. Could you tell me about challenges you've been facing to raise children by yourself?

Could you tell me about your life as a mother before and after the divorce/separation?

(If needed)

Tell me about how you get daily activities done. Has it been different now?

Tell me about how your children contribute to getting daily activities done. Has it been different now?

*Could you tell me about how you and your children are doing after becoming a single-mother family?

* (If needed) Could you tell me more about how you resolved problems with your children?

2. Some mothers were talking about fulfilling 'father's role'. Could you tell me about it?

3. Listening to your stories, you seem to have emotional challenges. Could you tell me more about how you deal with them?

(If I do not hear anything about it)

What or who helped you so much to deal with it?

Could you tell me about how you handled those difficult times?

*When was the hardest moment for you emotionally?

* (If it is not brought up by the participant)

Other mothers told me that sometimes they had to fight against themselves. Could you tell me about that?

4. If the participant tells me about people who **DO** or **DO NOT** comfort/soothe or help her in what ever way,

“Could you tell me more about the people?

(if needed) Such as how you come to know them, what you would do with them and the like?”

If nothing related to ‘getting comfort’ is told, “other mothers told me how they got comfort. Could you tell me about that?”

5. Some mothers compare their lives before and after the divorce, do you? If so, can you talk about that?

6. Many mothers talked about their experiences of ‘working’. Could you tell me about how’s ‘working’ going on with you?

(if needed) How did you find the job? How many hours do you work in a day?

Appendix C: INTERVIEW GUIDE (THIRD VERSION)

Opening question (not changed)

1. Could you tell me about your life since you became a single parent?
2. Please tell me about being a single parent in the United States and the issues you face now.
3. Let's discuss challenges related to your family now.

Additional questions (probes) if topics of interest have not been discussed

1. Could you tell me about how your relationship with your children is going after becoming a single-mother family?

* (If needed) Could you tell me more about how you resolved problems with your children?

2. Some mothers were talking about filling in for the father's absence. Could you tell me about it?

3. When was the hardest moment for you after the divorce/separation?

Could you tell me about how you handled the difficult times?

(If clarification of "difficult times" needed) Some mothers told me that they went through hard times in terms of emotions.

*(If needed) What helped you to deal with it? Who helped you to deal with it? How did you get comforted?

* If nothing related to 'comfort' is told, "other mothers told me how they got comforted when they have hard times. Could you tell me about that?"

4. Other mothers told me that sometimes they had to fight against themselves. Could you tell me about that?

(If more description needed) Some mothers told me about the moments that they had to overcome their emotions caused by their own inner conflicts or others. Could you tell me about that?

*(If the participant did not discussed) How do you handle such moments?

5. Some mothers compare their lives before and after the divorce/separation, do you? If so, could you talk about that?

Looking back, have you ever had a chance to reflect what happened in your life? Could you talk about that?

6. Some mothers talked about their experiences of living without a husband. Could you tell me about that?

(Or) Some mothers talked about their experiences of missing physical intimacy. Could you tell me about that?

(Or) Some mothers talked about their experiences of living without a person whom they have the intimate relationship. Could you tell me about that?

Appendix D: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS (ENGLISH VERSION)

Participant No: _____ Date: _____

1. Age of yourself: _____ years

2. What level of school did you last complete? _____ years

_____ Grade _____

_____ High school diploma

_____ Some college

_____ Bachelor's degree

_____ Graduate or professional degree

3. Do you have religion? Yes _____ No _____

3.1 If yes, Christian _____ Catholic _____ Buddhist _____ Other _____

3.2 If yes, when did you become religious?

While you were in Korea _____ or After immigration _____

4. When you immigrated to the United States, you immigrated as a:

Child _____

Single Adult _____

Family with husband and child(ren) _____

Single-parent family with child(ren) _____

5. How long have you been in the U.S.? _____ years

6. Duration of being a single-mother _____ years _____ months

7. Reasons of becoming a single-mother

_____ Divorced _____ Separated

8. Are you treated for any medical condition(s) now? Yes _____ No _____

8.1 If yes, please specify your condition as you know:

9. Family income _____ dollars/year

10. Are you currently working? Yes _____ No _____

10.1 If yes, you work as:

part time _____ full time _____ run your own business _____ other _____

11. Does your family receive any public assistance now (such as food stamp)?

Yes _____ No _____

11.1 Does your family have other family members or friends who can help you when you need?

Please describe briefly about whom you turn to when you need help or support:

12. Number of children you live with now _____

13. Age and gender of your children:

First child (M/F) _____ years old

Second (M/F) _____ years old

Third (M/F) _____ years old

14. Is your child(ren) treated for any medical condition(s) now? Yes _____ No _____

14.1 If yes, please specify your condition as you know:

Appendix D-1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS (KOREAN VERSION)

연구참여자 번호: _____ 날짜: _____

1. 본인 연령: _____ 세

2. 최종 학력 (총 _____ 년)

_____ 중학교 졸업 이하

_____ 고등학교 졸업 (검정고시 포함)

_____ 전문 대학

_____ 학사 학위 소지 (대학 졸업)

_____ 대학원 이상 (professional degree 포함)

3. 종교가 있으십니까? 예 _____ 아니오 _____

3.1 (종교가 있으신 경우만 답해 주십시오)

기독교 _____ 카톨릭 _____ 불교 _____ 기타 _____

3.2 (종교가 있으신 경우만 답해 주십시오) 언제부터 신앙을 가지게 되셨습니까?

한국에 있을때부터 _____ 미국 이민 후 _____

4. 미국에 이민 오실 당시, 어떤 상태셨습니까?:

자녀 (1.5 세) _____

미혼 성인 _____

남편, 자녀와 함께 가족으로 이민 옴 _____

자녀가 있는 한부모 (single parent) _____

5. 미국에 사신지 얼마나 되셨습니까? _____ 년

6. 한부모가 되신지 얼마나 되셨습니까? _____ 년 _____ 개월

7. 어떤 사유로 한부모가 되셨습니까?

_____ 이혼 _____ 별거

8. 현재 치료 중인 건강 문제가 있으십니까? 예 _____ 아니오 _____

8.1 치료를 받고 있는 건강문제를 서술해 주십시오 (진단명, 혹은 알고 계시는 병명 그대로):

9. 가족 연수입: 연간 _____

10. 현재 일하고 계십니까? 예 _____ 아니오 _____

10.1 현재 일하고 계신 근무 조건은 어떤 것입니까?

시간제 (part time) _____ 정규직 (full time) _____ 자영업 _____ 기타 _____

11. 현재 정부로부터 나오는 보조 (예를 들어 food stamp)를 받고 계십니까?

예 _____ No _____

11.1 필요할 때 도움을 받을 수 있는 다른 가족들이 있으십니까? 필요한 경우 주로 도움을 받으시는 분에 대해 간단하게 써 주십시오 (예: 본인과의 관계, 받는 도움의 종류 등)

12. 현재 몇명의 자녀와 함께 살고 계십니까? _____명

13. 같이 살고 있는 자녀분들의 연령과 성별을 써 주십시오:

첫째 자녀: 남____/여____, _____ 세

둘째 자녀: 남____/여____, _____ 세

셋째 자녀: 남____/여____, _____ 세

14. 자녀분(들) 중 현재 건강 문제로 치료 받고 있는 자녀가 있습니까? 예 _____ 아니오 _____

14.1 치료 중인 자녀(들)의 건강문제를 간단히 써 주십시오 (진단명, 혹은 알고 계시는 병명 그대로):

Appendix E: A WRITTEN CONSENT (ENGLISH VERSION)

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

CONSENT FORM

The Life Experiences of Immigrant Korean Single-Mother Families in the United States:

A Grounded Theory Study

Researcher: Seieun Oh, RN, MSN, PhC
Doctoral student, School of Nursing
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195-7262
(206) 617-5771

Researchers' statement

I am asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When I have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." I will give you a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Once Korean families immigrate to the United States, they experience many socioeconomic challenges including marital disruption but there has been limited research to understand the challenges of immigrant Korean single-mother families. The purpose of this study is to gain greater understanding of the moving processes, issues, and related conditions that immigrant Korean single mothers encounter in maintaining their families in the U.S. Results of the current study will provide much needed information to guide the development of services to address issues for immigrant Korean single-mother families in the future.

STUDY PROCEDURES

You will be asked to participate in two one-hour audio-recorded interviews about you and your family's experiences in living as a single-mother family in the United States. The interview will take place in a time and place based on your convenience. The interviews will be conducted in the language of your choice (Korean or English).

During the first interview, you will be asked the following questions, “Could you tell me about your life since you became a single parent?”, “Please tell me about being a single parent in the United States and the issues you face now.”, and “Let’s discuss challenges related to your family now.” You may refuse to answer any question during the interview. The interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed under your permission for the purpose of remembering and analyzing carefully exactly what you told me. You may still participate in the study even if you choose not to be audio-recorded. You will also be asked to give permission to be contacted for additional interviews by me for follow-up if needed.

You may decide to take part in the second interview or not. You may change your decision at any time. If you agree to participate in the second interview, you will be contacted by phone in order to set up the time and place for the interview. During the second interview, you will be asked questions which I wanted to hear but missed in the first interview and/or a couple of new questions related to what you have told me. The second interview will last about one hour or less. It will also be audio-recorded and transcribed. You may still participate in the study even if you choose not to participate in the second interview. At the completion of each audio-recorded interview, you will be given about 24-48 hours to rethink what you have told me and to ask for deletions or additions.

You will also be asked to fill out a questionnaire which is composed of a set of questions about you and your child(ren) at the beginning of the first interview. The questions concern personal information including age, education, religion, socioeconomic status, the number and gender of your children in your family, history of becoming a single-mother family, length of stay in the U.S., immigration history, formal and informal support for your family from other family members, friends, or government, and health conditions. You may refuse to answer any item in the questionnaire you do not wish to answer.

In addition, you will be asked to have another meeting with me to review the findings of the study which will be based on all of the information that you and other mothers provide. You may decide not to participate in the review meeting. You may change your decision at any time. If you agree to have the meeting with me, you will be contacted by phone to set up the meeting after I gather and study thoroughly all of the information from you and other mothers together. In the review meeting, you will be asked if you agree or do not agree with a summary of the findings and why. You may still participate in the study even though you do not agree to participate in the review.

Participation in this study is voluntary and cost-free. You can say you do not want to participate at any time. Any public assistance you and your family receive will not be affected in any way by your decision to participate or not. Your participation in any activities in your churches, temples or any other group that you joined will not be affected by your decision to participate in the study or not.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Some of the questions I will ask you may make you feel uncomfortable temporarily. You may feel uncomfortable to talk about your personal or family-related experiences or feelings. There is some risk of emotional distress or discomfort as a result of personal and possibly sensitive questions. Such distress is usually short-lived, but if you want help in dealing with these feelings, I will readily work with you to refer you to appropriate resources which particularly serve Korean families. At any part of the interview, you may refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study.

BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

There are no direct and immediate benefits to you if you participate. The information you provide, however, will bring about further understanding of the challenges that immigrant Korean single-mother families encounter and the processes by which the family maintain their lives in the U.S. This information can help researchers, health care and other service providers, and policy makers decide how and when to help Korean mothers and their children like yours. Thereby the findings of this study will assist them to develop effective programs and services for the family as well as make decisions related to public assistance for single-mother families in the future.

OTHER INFORMATION

You may refuse to participate and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. All of the information you provide will be confidential. A number will be used to identify you and the researcher will be the only person who knows your actual identity. The audio-records will be transcribed by a transcriber who will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. During data analysis, transcribed data will be sent to research experts via e-mail in order to verify and confirm the accuracy of results. All information you provide, including your name and address, the audio-records and its transcripts will be kept strictly confidential. This consent form you sign will be stored apart from all of your data in a locked cabinet and destroyed five years following the end of the study. All other information will be held in my personal files for 5 years so that I can learn from and use them to help other health care workers and researchers and completely destroy them on the computer. The researcher will be the only person who has access to the records and will have permission for others to access the data for those 5 years. The results of the study will be reported as group and will not include any identifying information will not be used in any reports of this study. As a token to recognize the time and effort you have given to my study, you will be given 25-dollar gift certificate to a store of your choice, e.g., Fred Meyer, Target, Safeway, upon each completion of interviews and a review session.

I have provided an explanation of the above research study, and have encouraged the subject to ask questions. A copy of this consent form has been given to the subject.

Printed name of researcher

Signature

Date

Subject's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later about the research, I can ask the researcher listed above. If I have questions about my rights as a research subject, I can call the Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

I give my permission to be interviewed.

Printed name of subject

Signature of subject

Date

I give my permission to have my interview be audio-recorded.

Printed name of subject

Signature of subject

Date

I give my permission to be re-contacted to participate in a follow-up interview. I will learn details about the second interview and will be able, at that time, to decline participation.

Printed name of subject

Signature of subject

Date

Copies to: Researcher
 Subject

Appendix E-1: A WRITTEN CONSENT (KOREAN VERSION)

워싱턴 대학 동의서 한국 한부모 가정의 미국 이민 생활 경험: 근거 이론 연구

연구자: 오 세 은, 간호학 석사, 간호학 박사학위 수여 대상자
워싱턴 대학 간호학과 박사과정
시애틀, 워싱턴 98195-7262
(206) 617-5771

연구자 서술

귀하께 연구에 참여해 주시기를 요청합니다. 이 동의서의 목적은 본 연구에 대한 정보를 제공하고 귀하께서 연구에 참여하실지를 결정하는데 도움을 드리고자 함입니다. 이 동의서를 주의깊게 읽어주십시오. 연구의 목적, 연구 참여자로서 하게 될 일들, 연구 참여로 인해 생길 수 있는 가능한 이익과 위험성, 연구 참여자로서의 권리, 그 밖에 연구나 이 동의서에서 명확하지 않은 어떤 점에 대해서도 질문하실 수 있습니다. 연구자가 그 질문들에 모두 대답을 드린 후, 연구에 참여하실지 여부를 결정해 주십시오. 이 과정은 “informed consent”라고 합니다. 이 동의서의 복사본이 귀하께 제공될 것입니다.

연구 목적

미국에 이민 온 한국 가정들은 여러가지 사회경제적 문제를 경험하는 것으로 알려져있지만, 그 중에서도 어머니가 가장인 한부모 가정들의 경험을 파악하는 연구는 소수로 제한되어 있습니다. 이 연구의 목적은 그러한 가정들이 미국에서 살아가면서 겪는 여러가지 도전들과 그에 관련된 생활 환경조건들, 그러한 상황들을 극복해나가는 과정들을 더 깊이있게 이해하는 것입니다. 이 연구의 결과는 어머니가 가장인 한국 이민 한부모 가정들을 효과적으로 도울 수 있는 공적 서비스 개발에 필수적인 정보를 제공하게 될 것입니다.

연구 절차

귀하께서는 1 시간이 소요되는 면담(interview)에 2회 참여하게 되실 것입니다. 면담은 귀하와 귀하의 가족이 미국에서 한부모 가족으로 살아가는 삶의 경험에 대한 내용이 될 것입니다. 면담은 귀하가 편하신 시간과 장소에서 이루어질 것이며 한국어나 영어 중 귀하가 사용하기 편하신 언어로 진행될 것입니다.

첫번째 면담에서는 다음의 세 가지 질문들을 받게 되실 것입니다: “한부모가 되신 이후의 귀하의 삶에 대해서 말씀해주시겠습니까?”, “미국에서 한부모가 된다는 것, 그리고 한부모로서 현재 겪고 계신 도전들/어려운 점들에 대해서 말씀해주시시오”, “현재 귀하의 가정이 경험하고 있는 점들에 대해서 말씀해주시시오.” 면담 중 원치 않으시는 경우 질문에 답을 하지 않으셔도 됩니다. 귀하의 허락 하에서, 말씀해주신 내용을 정확하게 기억하고 면밀히 분석하기 위해서 면담 내용을 녹음하고 그대로 글로 옮기게 됩니다. 필요한 경우 한번 더 면담에 응해주실 수 있는지 제가 연락할 수 있도록 허락을 구할 것입니다.

두번째 면담에 참여하실지를 귀하가 결정하실 수 있습니다. 이미 하셨던 결정 역시 언제든지 바꾸실 수 있습니다. 두번째 면담에 참여하기로 결정하셨다면 제가 전화로 연락을 드려서 만날 시간과 장소를 정하겠습니다. 두번째 면담에서는 첫번째 면담에서 빠졌던 내용이나 첫번째 면담 내용 중에서 추가로 더 필요한 내용들에 대해 질문을 받게 되실 것입니다. 두번째 면담은 한시간 이내가 될 것이고, 역시 녹음되고 필사될 것입니다. 두번째 면담에 참여하지 않으셔도 연구에 참여하실 수 있습니다. 각 면담

후에는 24-48 시간 동안 면담 내용에 대해 다시 생각해 보시고, 추가하거나 혹은 삭제하고 싶은 내용을 연구자에게 알려주실 수 있습니다.

첫번째 면담 끝에 귀하와 귀하의 자녀에 대한 설문지를 작성해 주시도록 요청할 것입니다. 설문은 귀하와 자녀의 연령, 교육수준, 종교, 사회경제적 지위, 자녀의 수와 성별, 한부모 가정이 되신 경위, 미국 거주 기간, 이민 경위, 가족, 친지, 친구, 정부로부터 받는 도움과 그 형태, 그리고 건강 상태에 대한 내용입니다. 설문에 포함된 어떤 내용도 원치 않으실 경우 답하지 않으셔도 됩니다.

추가로, 연구의 최종 결과에 대해 연구자와 같이 살펴보는 만남을 요청받으실 것입니다. 참여 여부를 귀하가 결정하실 수 있고 언제든지 그 결정을 바꾸실 수도 있습니다. 참여에 동의하신다면 만남 시간과 장소는 전화 통화를 통해 결정될 것입니다. 귀하를 포함한 다른 한부모 어머니들이 주신 정보들을 종합하여 분석한 결과를 보여드리고 그 내용에 동의하시는지 아닌지, 그 이유는 무엇인지에 대해 여쭙볼 것입니다. 이 만남에 참여하지 않겠다고 결정하셔도 연구에 참여하실 수 있습니다.

연구 참여는 자발적이며 (강제가 아니며) 참가비가 들지 않습니다. 언제든지 연구 참여를 그만두실 수 있습니다. 연구에 참여하거나 참여하지 않는 것이 귀하와 귀하의 가족이 받는 어떤 공적 부조 (public assistance)에 영향을 미치지 않습니다. 또한 귀하가 참석하시는 교회나 절, 혹은 다른 어떤 기관에서 주관하는 활동들에도 영향을 미치지 않을 것입니다.

연구 참여로 야기될 수 있는 위험요소, 스트레스, 혹은 불편감

면담시 받게 되는 몇몇 질문들이 일시적으로 귀하를 불편하게 만들 수 있습니다. 귀하나 귀하의 가족과 관련된 경험이나 감정들을 이야기하시면서 불편한 느낌을 받으실 수도 있습니다. 개인적이고 민감한 질문들로 인해서 감정적으로 스트레스를 겪거나 불편한 느낌을 받으실 수도 있습니다. 그러한 스트레스들은 대개 짧은 기간 동안 발생하는 일시적인 것이지만, 그러한 감정들을 처리하는데 있어서 도움을 받고 싶으시다면 연구자가 한국 가정들을 위한 적절한 기관으로 의뢰해드릴 수 있습니다. 면담 중 원치 않으실 경우 어떤 질문에든 응답하지 않으셔도 되며 연구 참여 자체를 중단하실 수 있습니다.

연구참여로 인한 이익

연구 참여로 인해 귀하께 직접적으로 즉시 발생하는 이익은 없습니다. 그러나 귀하께서 제공하시는 정보들은 미국에서 살아가고 있는 여성 한부모 가족들의 삶의 도전과 경험들을 깊이 이해하도록 도와줄 것입니다. 연구 결과는 연구자, 보건의로 종사자, 다른 공적 서비스 관련자, 정책입안자들이 언제 어떻게 한국 여성 한부모 가장과 그 자녀들을 도울 수 있는지에 대한 정보를 제공함으로써 더욱 효과적인 서비스 개발과 정책 결정을 돕게 될 것입니다.

기타

귀하는 어떤 불이익없이 언제든지 본 연구의 참여를 거절하실 수 있고 참여를 중단하실 수 있습니다. 귀하가 제공하신 정보는 본 연구의 전체 과정동안 극비(confidential)로 취급될 것입니다. 귀하를 지칭하기 위해 숫자가 사용될 것이고 실제 귀하를 아는 사람은 연구자로 국한될 것입니다. 녹음된 면담

추후 면담을 위해 연구자가 본인에게 연락하는 것을 허락합니다. 본인은 두번째 (추후) 면담에 대한 자세한 설명을 들을 것이며, 언제든지 면담 참여를 취소할 수 있습니다.

참여자 성명

서명

날짜

동의서 사본: 연구자, 연구 참여자

Appendix F : CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FORM FOR TRANSLATION VERIFIER

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT FORM

The Life Experiences of Immigrant Korean Single-Mother Families in the United States:

A Grounded Theory Study

I have been explained the study by the researcher, Seieun Oh. I will not release any information about the patient's information. In addition, I will keep transcripts in a designated computer in a locked room during verification and will not copy or transfer them to other computer or portable devices.

Printed name of researcher

Signature of researcher

Date

Printed name of verifier

Signature of verifier

Date

Appendix G: CODE SHEET

CODE:

EXAMPLE:

Conditions under which the code occurs:

Conditions under which the code does not occur:

Comments and links to other possible codes:

VITA

Seieun Oh was born in Seoul, Republic of Korea. She earned her Bachelor and Master degrees in Nursing Science At the Seoul National University. In 2012 she earned a Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Washington in School of Nursing.