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Art Therapy as a Tool for Korean American Families:

A Literature Review

Capstone Thesis

Lesley University

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Specialization Art Therapy

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Abstract

This literature review aims to offer a comprehensive overview of attributes of Korean culture that make significant impacts on the family dynamic in the Korean immigrant households and to learn different types of art therapy that can help them. This literature review identifies specifically the struggles both first-generation Korean immigrant parents and second-generation Korean-American adolescents experience in order to understand where their conflicts come from. Later, different approaches of art therapy for the conflicts Korean immigrant households face are discussed. Data are collected from existing literature and videos by terms including art therapy for immigrants, family art therapy, Korean immigrant family, and art therapy for Korean, and they are critically analyzed through a cultural lens. The findings revealed that the major factor of the conflict between Korean parents and their second generation adolescent children is the distinct relation-oriented Korean culture and that different models and approaches can be applied to Korean immigrant families considering the unique culture.

Keywords: family art therapy, art therapy for immigrants, art therapy for Korean immigrants, Korean culture, narrative art therapy, Adlerian art therapy, Cognitive-Behavioral art therapy, mindfulness-based art therapy

Introduction

For decades, art therapy for immigrant populations has been an interest in the mental health field. Research shows the benefits of art therapy for immigrants' mental wellness (Linesch et al., 2014; Wertheim-Cahen, 1998; Apergi, 2014; Burruss et al., 2021; Go & Kim, 2017; Kwak & Chun, 2013; Lemzoudi, 2007; Termaat, 1997). However, there has been little discussion about use of art therapy with immigrant families and very little has been written specifically about art therapy in the Korean culture. This literature review examines how the integration of family art therapy can be advantageous for Korean immigrant families considering the cultural features. The goal of this literature review is to offer a better understanding about how family therapy and art interventions can intersect to provide benefits to such families by attempting to answer these two questions: How can family art therapy benefit Korean immigrant households? What art therapy approaches are effective and culturally sensitive to the Korean immigrant families?

This literature review explores Korean culture in order to understand the characteristics of Korean immigrant households. Along with the general cultural attributes, the mental health of first generation Korean parents and the second generation youths are individually examined for more exhaustive understanding, and then following subjects are presented; art therapy with immigrants and in family settings, effects of art therapy on immigrants' mental health and in family system, history of family art therapy and different art therapeutic approaches for family issues, and immigrants' difficulties respectively.

This literature review analyzed data from existing literature and videos. Data from literature were collected by terms such as family art therapy, art therapy for immigrants,

immigrants' mental health, and Korean-American mental health. Video materials were used to reflect on Korean culture.

The findings make several noteworthy contributions to help understand Korean immigrant families and how to use art therapy for them. The first finding indicates that art therapy can be a powerful tool for Korean immigrant families to help with self-expression withstanding the norm of Confucianism. The second major finding is that art therapy with Adlerian approach would be effective for Korean immigrant families considering their culture. Additionally, considerations of individual therapy with different art therapy theories are suggested.

Method

This literature review used current literature and videos as data. Data were collected by terms and subjects including immigrants in the U.S., Korean culture, Korean immigrant family, mental health of Korean immigrants and Korean-American adolescents, art therapy for immigrants, art therapy with Korean adolescents, and family art therapy.

Literature published before 2000 was excluded in order to analyze the most up-to-date research. Particularly, culture related information such as Korean culture itself and Korean immigrants' characteristics was selectively collected to reflect contemporary trends given that culture and societal norms change through time. The collected data were analyzed through a culturally critical lens.

Literature Review

Korean Immigrant Households

Hoshino (2007, as cited in Carter and McGoldrick's, 1999) states that "family problems occur as a result of a failure to overcome environmental stressors" (p. 37). It implies that culture

is an unavoidable external factor that can create family problems. Therefore, learning about traditional Korean values will be beneficial to understand Korean American family values and where the challenges come from.

Traditional Cultural Ideology

What is pivotal in Korean family culture is Confucianism. “Confucianism has been the most important philosophical, social, and ethical influence on family life in Korea” (Lee et al., 2015, p. 178) for centuries. Therefore, it is not uneasy to see that values of Confucianism still endure in Korean immigrant families. Confucianism embodies several different disciplines. One of the most influential disciplines alive in the Korean immigrant family is the respect towards elders and hierarchical parent-child relationship. This discipline helps navigate family member’s behavior and formulate a family system, yet is not always advantageous. Children are supposed to obey their parents beyond respect, and they are obligated to return parental love and care. They are expected to repay their parents for the sacrifice the parents have made for them. This concept, called filial piety, is pervasive in Korean family culture. Filial piety prescribes Korean children to fulfill the desires of their parents and explains why children’s success is considered parents’ glory rather than children’s own pride. This value oftentimes causes psychological burden and pressure to children, and conflicts between personal desire. Therefore, personal dilemmas arising from filial piety are inevitable for Korean-American children. Furthermore, filial piety was found to be one of the causes of intergenerational conflict between parents and children and family dysfunction further. In Kim & Cain’s (2008) study, intergenerational acculturation conflict between traditional Korean-American fathers and their adolescent children was discovered “as discord deriving from the established belief that “respect for elders” is fundamental to the Korean family system” (Kim et al., 2016, p. 2).

Another feature of Korean immigrant households is strong familism as addressed briefly above. There are two notions in familism. First of all, the family culture places an emphasis on the family cohesion and connectedness over independence as a healthy family relationship in Korean culture (Chun & MacDermid, 1997). Choi & Dancy (2009) noted Korean parents' expectation of their children to have a strong attachment to them; one mother in their study stated that "mothers and children should be real close, like they were in the womb" (Choi & Dancy, 2009, p. 207). It indicates Korean parents' expectation of closeness and connectedness with their offspring. Thus, developing intimate relationships with parents is perceived as a more important developmental task for children in Korean households than achieving individuation (Chun & MacDermid, 1997). Second, the family of origin is perceived as the most reliable support system for Koreans (Lee et al., 2015). However, Korean immigrants, parents in particular, had to leave their support system and resources behind and lose emotional connections. Consequently, they end up suffering from poor relationships and emotional symptoms which further can weaken their problem solving skills (Kerr, 2008).

These profound values on family culture strengthens the notion of saving face which is a crucial moral and ethical responsibility for Koreans and results in hindering Korean immigrants with mental health issues from accessing treatment by creating stigma, embarrassment, and sense of blame in their family as well as themselves.

Understanding Children in Korean Immigrant Households and Their Mental Health

Second-generation children in immigrant families can face a range of stressors including separation from family and friends, language barriers, cultural adjustment, exposure to trauma and violence, and uncertainty about their future, and the stressors bring another challenges in their life, such as acculturative stress, discrimination, intergenerational conflict, and difficulties

navigating multiple cultural identities. These stressors impact their mental health and can lead to psychological disorders by contributing to confusion, isolation, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and behavioral problems.

Choi et al. (2006) conducted a study with adolescents in diverse ethnic groups to examine ethnic differences in mental distress, social stress, and resources. They collected data from 316 adolescents living in Texas and categorized the data into four ethnic groups; African-American, European-American, Hispanic-American, and Asian-American. The study result found that Asian-Americans showed significantly higher levels in mental distress and social stress including family conflicts and lower levels of self-esteem than any other ethnic groups than any other ethnic groups. Choi et al (2006) and Cho & Bae (2005) also found that Asian-American adolescents exhibit higher somatic symptoms as an indicator of mental distress.

In addition, there are many pieces of literature that uncovered Korean-American adolescents' high rate of mental illness. For example, Yeh (2003) found that Korean-American adolescents marked significantly high scores on mental health symptoms such as depression, anxiety, hostility, and somatization. Furthermore, several study discovered the Korean-American adolescents' high level of depression and low level of self-esteem, coping, and mastery, and it indicates their acculturative stress (Choi et al., 2006; Yeh, 2003).

Acculturative stress refers to an emotional distress that occur when individuals experience difficulty adapting to a new culture or society. Park (2009) describes acculturative stress as "a normative transition for all immigrants" (p. 626). Acculturative stress can arise from a variety of factors from environmental and societal factors such as discrimination, unfamiliar social norms, and feelings of isolation, to personal factors such as individual's attitude toward acculturation (assimilation, integration, separation, or marginalization), language barrier,

personality and cognitive factors, and personal variables such as gender and age (Berry, 1997). Also, several studies found the acculturative stress can lead to feelings of confusion, frustration, and isolation, to mental illness (Choi et al., 2006; Yeh, 2003), and that the stress is “positively associated with anxiety, anger, depression, obsessive-compulsiveness, and suicidal ideation” (Choi & Dancy, 2009, p. 203). Moreover, Tummala-Narra (2016) states that immigrants of color experience higher levels of acculturative stress.

Finding relationship between Korean-American adolescents’ stress related to their acculturation experiences and mental health, depression and self-esteem in particular, Park (2009) investigated 260 Korean-American adolescents (133 female, 126 male) from 12 to 18 years old in southeastern states in the United States. The data analysis found significant correlation between acculturative stress, self-esteem, and depression. Indicators of depression showed a positive correlation with acculturative stress level, and acculturative stress level and self-esteem showed negative correlation same as indicators of depression and self-esteem.

In another study, Choi & Dancy (2009) examined causes of acculturative stress for Korean-American youths. They collected data from 20 Korean-American adolescents (10 female, 10 male) between 11 and 14 years old raised in the Chicago metropolitan area through in-depth individual interviews. Findings revealed that there are four main sources of acculturative stress for Korean-American adolescents including peer relationships, being treated differently or unfairly in an educational setting, pressure to excel academically and be successful, and strained parent-child relationships. It is remarkable that three out of the four main sources – peer relationships, pressure to excel academically and be successful, and strained parent-child relationships – of acculturative stress for Korean-American children are related to

family. It is obvious the strained parent-child relationships are family relevant, but what do the peer relationships and academic success pressure have to do with family?

First of all, the peer relationship was described by the youth participants that “it was hard for them[us] to relate to American friends and blend in because of cultural differences” (Choi & Dancy, 2009, p. 206) and that they often felt “left out” or “weird” among American friends (Choi & Dancy, 2009, p. 206). However, the notable report is that their social relationships were influenced by their parents as well who feel uncomfortable with different ethnic groups mostly due to a language barrier and different cultural norms. Participating parents reported that their children could not build diverse friendships because of them (Choi & Dancy, 2009). This report indicates how much parents have an influence on their children’s social relationships. According to ecological theory, “individual personal values and beliefs tend to mirror those espoused within individual microsystems (e.g., family) and macrosystems (e.g., cultural group)” (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, as cited in Kim et al., 2016, p. 3). It explains how Korean-American children in Korean immigrant families feel more connected to the same ethnic groups and their tendency to select Koreans for their social support.

Next, acculturative stress and pressure of academic success was revealed as one of most common yet most harmful stressors for Korean-American children in many different studies (Cho & Bae, 2005; Choi & Dancy, 2009; Song et al., 2015). Adolescents in the studies reported the reason they study hard is for their parents’ – not their own success or achievement – because family members’ success represents an individual’s success and pride in Korean culture. Cho & Bae’s (2005) study which examined 340 Korean-American adolescents from 10 to 22 in California metropolitan area found that education was one of the significant predictors of Korean-American adolescents’ emotional problems. They described educational success as “a

way of maintaining family continuity and family face” (Cho & Bae, 2005, p. 546). It denotes that educational success is associated with their family’s success and when considering their culture of strong familism, children are under the intense level of academic pressure to save their family’s face. However, this acculturative stressor of academic pressure needs to be addressed more thoroughly as it develops a fundamental mental health burden among Korean-American adolescents and their families and is often related with children’s anxiety and depression (Kim et al., 2016).

Besides these acculturative stressors, an identity crisis is a critical issue among second-generation children, in the adolescence period especially. An identity crisis is a common phenomenon arising when individuals feel conflicted about their cultural identity. Therefore, it is easy to understand that adolescences in immigrant households are more vulnerable to experiencing an identity crisis. Furthermore, adolescence is a critical stage in terms of identity establishment when considering their developmental milestones. Unlike adults, adolescents are more susceptible to external factors in developing their identity. Consequently, conflicting values occur more often to immigrant adolescents than the natives as they experience the changes in external factors such as the language, culture, and even food. Moreover, teenagers who experience the conflicts tend to have feelings of rejection and more often develop negative self-images (Malewska-Peyre, 1993). As a result, an identity crisis places immigrant youth at a higher risk of mental and psychological illness, and the impact of the identity crisis in adolescents can continue to midlife and jeopardize their future.

Understanding Parents in Korean Immigrant Households and Their Mental Health

Parents in Korean immigrant household experience an equally hard time as the second-generation children do. There are many factors that cause struggles to the parents.

First of all, different culture and value orientation would be the biggest challenges for the Korean parents who have fully developed their worldview, values, and moral systems. Korean culture is significantly relation-oriented whereas individualistic Western culture is the opposite. Korean culture places a lot of value on interdependence and harmony while an individualistic culture emphasizes independence and the representation of self. Korean culture is deemed to belong to collectivism in this sense. There are a few traits that follow the values of collectivism, but Korean culture is actually slightly different from typical collectivism. In a collective, individuals “are bound to one another through emotional predispositions, common interests and fate, as well as by mutually agreed upon social practices. Accordingly, the social bonds among members of a collective do not require close personal relationships” (Brewer & Chen, 2007, p. 135). However, social bonds, close personal relationship, and social connection are imperative for Koreans because they tend to define who they are in relation to others. Therefore, close involvement and inclusion of others are essential in their life (Yuh, 2016), and relationships of their social connections are instrumental in developing self-identity (Ahn, 2011). Moreover, they take a flexible attitude in relationships, and have an inclination to consider the flexible attitude and behaviors a manner or traits of a socially successful person. They have less resistance to change their attitude or stance in a social situation and are more responsive to social expectations if that helps maintain the social bonds and interpersonal relationships. Hopper (2015) supports that Koreans are prone to change in order to adapt to others in a relationship across different contexts. Also, Koreans are willing to sacrifice their own comfort and interests for the greater good of the relationship, and they are less self-assertive and more receptive to surrender or exercise restraint when there is a conflict.

This value system has several effects on Koreans. Firstly, it affects their identity formation. It is well articulated by one of trends which has been hugely popular in Korea, Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). As a personality typology, MBTI categorizes people based on the self-report questionnaire and helps them understand how they perceive the world and make decisions based on what category they belong. Korean people like to be categorized due to their lack of confidence about identifying themselves. Because Koreans are highly dependent on social relationships when it comes to a sense of self-identity, they have difficulties identifying the intrinsic core traits that are unchangeable and center themselves in life. Therefore, people are likely to depend on the tool which tells them about themselves rather than self-determine their own personality. This tendency hurts the parent-child relationship as Korean parents tend to identify themselves with their children due to the difficulties in recognizing their own identities without their children who they perceive as the closest person in their life. It also impacts how they build boundaries. Meanwhile in the U.S., where most people practice an individualistic culture and the self is at the center, people have less problem with setting limits and sustaining boundaries to protect and even nurture a relationship with the self, boundaries in a Korean culture are often blurred. It is not difficult to see Koreans who feel shame and even guilty about setting a clear boundary due to the value system and social expectations that commitment, loyalty, and a strong bond in a relationship are considered paramount. Setting a clear boundary even is sometimes considered disrespectful. These different culture and worldviews bring psychological distress to Korean parents in the process of adapting to new culture and building social relationships within and outside of the family system. They often struggle with managing or reconstructing their family system.

Second, many Korean first generation parents experience downward occupational mobility (Chang & Myers, 1997; Han et al., 2017). They experience “significant economic declines, with a trade of professional status in their home country for low paying, unskilled positions in the United States” (Chang & Myers, 1997, para. 13). In the 1970s, many Koreans immigrated to the U.S. with a comparatively higher educational level and upper socioeconomic status associated with white collar backgrounds. Before immigrating, they had more opportunities to travel out of their hometown country and be exposed to different cultures than others. Those environments allowed them to look outside and decide to move seeking a higher standard of living. However, the reality was that most of them had to turn to blue-collar jobs or labor-intensive small business mostly due to language barriers where their educational qualifications and socioeconomic status were disparaged. This shift in socioeconomic status results in shame, loss of face for themselves and their family, feelings of inadequacy, worthless, and powerless, and low self-esteem, which all possibly contribute to isolation and depression. The downward occupational mobility also can further lead to social anxiety disorder when the feelings of shame and stigma from loss of face and the sense of worthlessness exacerbate stress and make them isolated from society (Rohner et al., 1992).

Third, identity is an issue for the parents as well as the children in immigrant households. Identity development persists throughout one’s life as a lifelong task although adolescence is considered the most crucial period for. While second-generation children experience conflicts in their identity during immigrant process due to the environmental changes besides the nature of psychological development, parents also re-enter the journey of exploring and finding hidden-self-identity for reasons of different cultures, language barriers, and career challenges. How do these three factors impact on their identity?

First of all, cultural differences allow parents to realize and discover new aspects of themselves. A new environment, new setting, and new people oftentimes provide opportunities to see themselves from a different perspective. In that sense, parents are encouraged to find out new qualities of themselves while living in a different culture. This can be inspiring but also challenging and confusing them, because they need to invest more time and effort to reconcile their old values and beliefs, which have already been set up based on their native culture with those of their new home.

Second, a language barrier becomes more difficult for parents as compared to their children as younger people learn languages more quickly. Parents who do not speak the language of their new country fluently may feel isolated and struggle with self-expression. This language barrier can bring disconnection to the society and thus difficult times in their journey of identity discovery and post-internal. It also can result in creating a taxing expectation to the offspring by taking multiple roles such as a translator and a helper beyond their original role as a child.

Lastly, since a career is notably associated with one's identity, Korean immigrant parents' career change can affect their identity exploration. Relocation in their professional field and finding an employment in a new country can be extremely challenging, particularly if one's qualifications and experience are not recognized. This can lead to a loss of confidence and a questioning of one's identity and worth.

Effects of Art Therapy for Immigrants

Art therapy is a powerful tool to be utilized with immigrants to cope with the challenges of adapting to a new culture and dealing with the stressors that come with the transition. Linesch et al. (2014) suggest the value of using imagery for immigrants to explore their difficult

experiences. They discovered that using art helped immigrants reflect on their past lives, appreciate their abilities to deal with difficult situations, and express their fears. In the study, it is particularly significant that creative process of art making uncovers their abilities of reframing and meaning making while processing their deep fear which in turn improved self-esteem and positive emotions. Another advantage of art therapy with immigrants is that art transcends verbal barriers (Kerr, 2018; Lemzoudi, 2007). The dependency on verbal expression in art therapy is comparably much lower than traditional verbal therapy. The low dependency of verbal expression allows immigrants with a language barrier to express their complex emotions and internal status in a deeper level through different channel (Wertheim-Cahen, 1998). Through the creative process of art-making, individuals can express themselves in ways that may be difficult or impossible to articulate through words alone (Kerr, 2018). Additionally, Linesch et al. (2012) identify a benefit of utilizing art interventions to examine and gain insight into the challenges that acculturating immigrant families experience, and Apergi (2014) discovered the power of art therapy and theater to restore immigrant women's identity by providing the grounds for expansion.

Also, many researchers support the effects of art interventions on young immigrants. Burruss et al. (2021) found that arts based therapy interventions have the potential to improve immigrant children's mental wellness. Go & Kim (2017) and Kwak & Chun (2013) revealed the positive effect of art therapy on Chinese immigrant adolescents' adaptation to the new culture in South Korea. Lee (2013) endorsed therapeutic implications of flow experience in art therapy with Korean immigrant children in the U.S. that they reported increased sense of empowerment and ownership, enjoyment, safety, concentration, and motivation. Lemzoudi (2007) observed how art therapy intervention helps immigrant adolescents with the transition between two

different cultures in the acculturation process. Termaat (1997) indicated group art therapy enabled young immigrants to express their grief of losing their own culture and adjust to a new culture by receiving acceptance, support, and connection. Akthar & Lovell (2019) uncovered that art therapy provides a safe space where migrant children can heal and discover their new self and express themselves.

History of Family Art Therapy

There are several figures who contributed development of family art therapy. In this literature review, two of them will be discussed as the most important figures in the field. The first figure is Hanna Kwaitkowska, who is considered the “mother of family art therapy” (Kerr, 2008, p. 40). Art therapy with families developed with the advancement of family therapy theories during the past decades (Malchiodi, 2012). The development of family therapy began in the 1950s, and application of art therapy within the family structure was emerged by a pioneer of family art therapy, Hanna Kwiatkowska, in the 1960s. Hanna Kwiatkowska was a Polish psychologist and sculptor and the first student of Margaret Naumberg. She narrates in her article, *Family art therapy: Experiments with a new technique* (2001) that her work as an art therapist at the National Institute of Mental Health in the Section on Family Studies, where the main focus was on studying thought disorder in the families of schizophrenics, provided her with the opportunities to use art as a means of communication and self-expression within the family setting. According to her (1978), she accidentally developed the idea of using art therapy with the families by observing the positive results of sessions when family members of individuals with schizophrenia joined in. Although art therapy had already been used in group settings by other psychologists, it was first applied to the unique culture of the family setting by Kwiatkowska. Kwiatkowska (2001) recognizes the distinct difference between family art

therapy and the types of group art therapy that family art therapy deals with more than family's general maladjustment or common symptoms which are often observed in group setting. She states that each family group has their own thinking patterns, means of interaction, expression, interalliances, and defense systems, which were the natural outcomes of years of living together. Thus, family setting needs to be approached with a consideration that they have their special family culture, climate, and the psychodynamics.

Another figure is Shirley Riley. Kerr (2008) describes Riley as "one of the most expansive family art therapists in terms of her approach and theoretical base" (p. 51). Riley's approaches are evaluated as being "in the forefront of the necessary evolution of the practice of family art therapy" (Riley & Malchiodi, 1994, p. 8) and integrative of variety of family therapy theories. Riley also maintains the similar concept as Kwiatkowska when it comes to the focus in family art therapy; it is important to understand the family's pattern of behavior and communication in order to work with a family because what decides the results of family system is the organization of the system manifested through the patterns rather than a complete history of the family (Riley, 1990). As a result, she used family art therapy for herself to discover family patterns of interaction and behavior (Riley, 1990). She also illustrates the goal of treatment in a family therapy is "to help clients solve the problems that led them to seek therapy, to open clients to a broader perception of their lives, and to support a change in redundant, dysfunctional patterns of behavior" (Riley, 1990, para. 3). Riley sheds light on the value of art therapy that uses graphic representations to support cognitive reframing and behavioral change. In other words, she believed that family art therapy could reveal fresh perspectives on longstanding issues, allowing for new solutions and ideas to emerge, ultimately freeing families from being limited to a single course of action. Riley's focus in family art therapy was in a broad range

including social constructionism, narrative therapy, and solution-focused approaches. Riley (1990) approached her work from a systemic perspective, believing that it was crucial to take into account how a family functions as a whole rather than just looking at its individual components. She additionally points out the circular and multidetermined nature of feedback within the system that an event, behavior, or symptom influences not only the following events but also the original stimulus, rather than it being a linear process.

Collectively, Kwiatkowska and Riley are the two major figures in the field of family art therapy and various assessments and approaches in family art therapy have been affected by their ideologies and principles.

Effects of Art Therapy in Family Settings

Many professionals in the field of art therapy enumerate the benefits of art therapy in family settings. Firstly, in Steiner's (1994) book review of Linesch, art interventions are recognized as a means to support genuine communication between family members. Art is well known as a non-threatening means of communication. Therefore, using art interventions in family settings facilitate family members' affective self-expression in a less daunting way than verbal communication, and the profound self-disclosure can encourage emotional connection between members to be deeper. Secondly, Kerr (2008) found that art interventions in family therapy reduces defensiveness within the family dynamic. Creating art and communicating through art enables family members to lower the defense system and barriers of communication which have been built as a result of years of living together by placing them at the similar level of communication. As a result, they can expand their perspective on each family members, themselves, and the family system as a whole and understand the family problems better. Third, Malchiodi (2012) asserts that art allows equal opportunities for each generation in the family

through creating art. It is especially beneficial for young children who are less free to express their thoughts and emotions verbally in a precise manner. Art is an effective alternative of verbal expression and hence it empowers young children and frees them from the pressure of verbal expression and the generation hierarchy within the family dynamics. Finally, therapists also can find opportunities in using art interventions in family therapy. Kerr (2008) argues that art making helps to surface authentic family dynamic and communication patterns because it makes family members easily forget the presence of the therapist. Sutherland (2008) supports this argument by discovering that it is therefore difficult to deny the necessity of change in the family dynamic and the communication patterns to solve the problems of the dysfunctional family.

Theoretical Approaches and Techniques

As the emergence of family art therapy was inspired by the consequence of the advancement of family therapy, many of family therapy theories have been used as frameworks in family art therapy. Also, art techniques in family settings are developed by the art therapy professionals in response to the problems presented in treatment. This literature review addresses how art therapy can be incorporated with theories of family therapy and introduces some art interventions. The family therapy theories addressed in this literature review are known to rectify “old school” shortcomings, such as inattention paid to intersectionality and cultural aspects emerging during contemporary period after 1980s.

Narrative Therapy

A focus of narrative therapy is on “understanding how experience creates expectations and how expectations then shape experience through the creation of organizing stories” (Nichols & Schwartz, 1998, p. 397). Likewise, Goldenberg & Goldenberg (2004) note that narrative

therapists assist clients in perceiving life as having multiple perspectives and acknowledging different choices and opportunities available to them. Narrative therapy aligns with art therapy in that “art images also provide numerous stories, and a collection of images may serve as a collage representing the landscape of their [clients’] lives” (Hoshino & Cameron, 2007, p. 196).

According to Huss (2015), an art therapist’s role in narrative theory is to help clients transform the existing narrative to the most psychologically enabling form through art and words. Hoshino & Cameron (2007) affirm that therapist’s role in a narrative approach is to help clients externalize their problem, reauthor one’s life, employ therapeutic questions, and co-construct alternative stories and that creative art therapy can greatly help with externalizing, reauthoring, and co-constructing in particular. The externalizing, co-constructing, and reauthoring occur in a series; “Once the client can externalize the problem and view it as a separate entity, then the client can begin to redefine it, thereby reauthoring his or her life” (Hoshino & Cameron, 2007, p. 206). Therefore, externalization is a fundamental aspect in narrative art therapy as a beginning of the series.

Externalization provides a path to transform thoughts on the problems and behaviors into changeable part of oneself by separating their problems from self. Art therapy is an effective intervention to achieve externalization by helping the separation process. However, Carl (1997) states that “the act of drawing, however, does not mean that externalization has taken place” (p. 277). One of directives promoting the externalization in narrative art therapy is to ask clients to draw how their problems *look* to them (Hoshino & Cameron, 2007) instead of asking them to draw what their problem *is*. Narrative art therapy also helps them engage in externalizing conversations (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2004) in which they can assign new meanings to the problems. Putting their interpretations in it is enormously helpful because it allows “emotional

separation” (Hoshino & Cameron, 2007, p. 205), which is particularly challenging in family therapy considering the feature of family problem, tenaciousness. Other art directives aiding in reauthoring and co-constructing by finding alternative meanings in family is to have family members draw 1) the family’s past, present, and future, or 2) their ideal world. These directives are effective for externalizing family issues, reauthoring, and co-construct new meaning.

Adlerian Theory

Family has a significant meaning in Adlerian theory as Adlerian theory is grounded upon the understanding of the importance of family’s influence, such as birth order on the development of individual’s personality. Therefore, using Adlerian theory in family therapy would be more direct to the family issues. Also, Adlerian theory suggests that people are driven by a need to feel significant in the family social system and the sense of belonging and worthwhileness (Cherry, 2023). This theory emphasizes the human as a social being and all thoughts and behaviors cannot be understood without social context. Individuals are recognized as socially embedded organisms striving to improve quality of life while overcoming states of burden and unpleasantness in interpersonal relationship. Therefore, the goal of incorporating art activities with Adlerian approach is to develop an optimal sense of belonging and to increase an individual’s social interest (Dreikurs, 1976).

According to Adlerian theory, parents or grandparents have the most prominent influences on developing individual’s behavior, decision making, and life style within the family dynamic at large (Sutherland, 2011). In this sense, one art direction with Adlerian approach that can help to understand oneself and family’s life style pattern is to ask parents to reflect on the prevalent mood of their family of origin and draw the family atmosphere as they remember

(Sutherland, 2011). It will help not only parents understand themselves but also their children understand their parents which eventually comes to understanding of the family dynamic.

An Adlerian approach can be understood in the same context of systemic theory in that it places the emphasis on the social systems when it comes to individual's experience. From an Adlerian approach, suffering and difficulties in family are considered taking place in the social arena. Indeed, Alfred Adler pioneered a holistic approach to therapy integrating humanistic, cognitive, psychodynamic, and systematic perspectives as one of the first psychiatrists to use a systemic approach in psychotherapy, and he highlighted the complexities of family dynamics (Schuyler & Rasmussen, 2017). Art making in systemic theories works in two ways: art enables to show the organizing metaphors and symbols of the system as a symbolic medium, and it also plays as a tool for interactive process that allow people in conflict to sublimate anger into symbolic forms and to communicate their feelings to others without verbal arguments (Huss, 2015). One possible art intervention from this perspective is to draw family members in animals (Sutherland, 2011; Huss, 2015).

Mindfulness-Based Approach

In family therapy, mindfulness helps family members become aware of what is happening in the present moment without intention to interpret it. It is easy to get stuck in the stories family members have told themselves repeatedly over years without being mindful. Therefore, practicing mindfulness can benefit family members to stop maintaining the thought patterns that can aggravate the family conflicts and help them accept the issues as is. Moreover, Brody et al. (2018) propose that "a mindfulness-based family therapy program would support intrapersonal emotion regulation and interpersonal coregulation using awareness and acceptance

strategies of body and mind states” (p. 513 – 514). In other words, mindfulness-based approach in family therapy will help not only in the family holistic level but also in the individual level.

As the name suggests, mindfulness-based art therapy (MBAT) combines the philosophy of mindfulness within an art therapy setting. Mindfulness focuses on awareness of emotions and consciousness. Therefore, art therapy setting with mindfulness concept has clients engage in the creative process of making art as a way to explore their emotions and themselves in a mindful manner (Cuncic, 2021). Another center of mindfulness approach is focusing as MBAT is interchangeable with focusing-oriented art therapy, emphasizing focus as part of the experience (Rappaport, 2014). MBAT has been identified as an effective approach for anxiety-related disorders, depressive disorders, and stress-related issues. Also, some of psychological benefits of MBAT include improved quality of life, changes in brain patterns reflecting a calm, focused state of attention, increased emotional awareness, increased sense of control and insight regarding inner thoughts, ability to communicate abstract feelings, and increased self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-acceptance (Cuncic, 2021; Kim & Chang, 2022). Kim & Chang (2022) especially point out the effect of mindfulness approach that enables people to see things as is without judgments. Drawing a self-portrait in a mindful way – drawing as realistic as possible and be accepting of any flaws identified in the picture – can be an exercise in self-acceptance. Herring (2014) also shares some of the MBAT techniques that can be used in a clinical setting: exploring media/art materials, observing and describing a visual object/an auditory object, and observing and depicting emotions and mind-states.

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) has long been used to treat anxiety-related disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, schizoaffective,

personality disorders, etc. through interventions including psychoeducation, exposure, and cognitive challenging. When applied to families, the CBT approach examines the interactional dynamics of family members and the behavioral patterns of family members. The goal of CBT in family therapy is to help family members recognize cognitive distortions, restructure their core beliefs, and modify their behavior in order to eliminate factors of dysfunction and improve their interactional patterns. In other words, CBT focuses on behavioral problems instead of the structure of the family. Some of benefits cognitive-behavioral art therapy (CBAT) can provide with the immigrants include reality shaping, personal constructs analysis, problem solving, modeling, relaxation techniques and mental imagery, stress reduction and adaptive coping strategies, and systematic desensitization (Rosal, 2016).

Discussion

The purpose of this literature review was to evaluate how effective family art therapy can be for Korean immigrant households and shine a light on art therapy approaches and techniques that are effective and culturally sensitive to the Korean immigrant families. One important finding is that art therapy can be a powerful tool for Korean immigrant families to help with self-expression by allowing equal opportunities for each family members. Another intriguing finding is that Adlerian art therapy can be an effective tool for Korean immigrant families. Additionally, this literature review finds that each family members in Korean immigrant households can greatly benefit from individual therapy as well as family group therapy with mindfulness-art therapy and cognitive-behavioral art therapy. This section presents these findings in more detail by making connections between literature about Korean immigrant family and family art therapy.

Self-Expression Withstanding Confucianism

One of the remarkable cultural characteristics of Korean immigrant families is family atmosphere rooted in Confucianism. Lee et al. (2015) asserted that Confucianism is the center value for Koreans to determine their family system. Confucianism emphasizes hierarchy in family and cultivates disciplines that offspring is supposed to respect their parents which results in holding back from voicing their thoughts and expressing themselves. It is likely cause cut-off in communication between parents and children and develop family dysfunction as a result. It is crueler to young children who are placed in the lowest level in the family hierarchy and still developing their verbal ability to articulate their thoughts and emotions clearly.

Using art in the family setting can resolve this problem by allowing each generation to have equal opportunities (Malchiodi, 2012) and enabling each family members to express themselves in a non-threatening way. Art making is fair with everybody. Art making does not discriminate against people by a gender or age and does not require verbal skills or special capacity. In a family setting, it frees family members from their roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Therefore, they can be more communicative and expressive through art making, and it gives the family chances to understand each other better.

Findings

Adlerian art therapy to see the family as a whole

The concept of Adlerian theory can particularly speak to the Korean immigrant population because of its emphasis on human's desire to feel a sense of being significant and the sense of belonging for an individual's behavioral motivation, and on the importance of understanding individual's behaviors within a social context (Cherry, 2023). Adlerian theory would explain 2nd generation Korean-Americans' exceptional behaviors through their natural desire as a human to overcome the suffering from discrimination in society and the limited

social relationship and to increase their sense of significance and belonging (Chio & Dancy, 2009). Their parents also have difficulties in cultivating the sense of being accepted by the mainstream due to different social norms and cultures. Moreover, the situation in which they had to change their occupation, leaving behind their decades of professional career possibly escalates isolation and impaired self-esteem (Rohner et al., 1992; Chang & Myers, 1997; Han et al., 2017). These difficulties of parents also may be associated with their behavioral motivation in a certain way to decrease their isolation and improve self-esteem. These psychological distresses parents and children experience individually would have a negative impact on the family system and contribute to the family dysfunction. Thus, taking Adlerian approach would be helpful to understand the family as a whole system as well as an individual family member. Also, the art direction to ask parents or grandparents to draw the family atmosphere of their family of origin would work effectively, considering Korean family's strong familism culture.

Individual therapy for identity and boundary work

Based on the discussion throughout this literature review, there are some more considerations to take into when counseling Korean immigrant households. First of all, individual therapies for parents and children separately are needed for their identity and boundary work. Working on exploring one's own identity would be essential for Korean parents especially given that they have difficulties identifying themselves without their children's image (Choi & Dancy, 2009) and their situation in reality where they had to dismiss their own but adapt to the new culture (Chang & Myers, 1997; Han et al., 2017). They also would need to practice protecting their own boundary and understanding how to respect others' boundaries as well. Second, before a family issue or problem can be externalized, the internalized problem must be identified (Hoshino & Cameron, 2007). In family therapy, understanding individual

family member's internalized issues is as much important as understanding the family's issue and externalizing it. Individual work must be followed by family work, especially for Korean immigrants when considering their relation-oriented attitude and tendency to identify with family members.

When working individually with Korean immigrants, mindfulness-based art therapy (MBAT) and cognitive-behavioral art therapy (CBAT) can be useful in that they score high on depression and anxiety (Choi et al., 2006; Yeh, 2003; Choi & Dancy, 2009; Park, 2009; Rohner et al., 1992) and that MBAT and CBAT are effective for anxiety-related, depressive, and stress-related issues (Cuncic, 2021; Kim & Chang, 2022).

Additionally, considering Korean cultural trait of relation-oriented, setting up a therapist's role and developing the rapport needs to be prioritized than any other things in counseling Korean immigrant population. The well-set relationship can determine the whole therapy journey with them. Furthermore, a structured form of counseling would be preferred to Korean population due to their cultural values of authority.

Limitations and Implications

There are several limitations to this study. Most notably, the data used in this review are somewhat old although data collection regarding culture was selective. Therefore, there is a need for further research of the generational conflict between more recent population. Also, the art interventions and theories applied are limited in this literature review. Research should continue in the area of art interventions and family therapy. Furthermore, due to practical constraints, this paper cannot provide a comprehensive review of Korean immigrants across the U.S. and may not be applicable to all types of Korean immigrants. Thus, geographical and cultural considerations need to be taken.

This literature review can be used as a reference for practicing counselors working with Korean population because it suggests Korean culture in an inclusive way. It can be helpful to understand their clients. Also, further research about Korean's attitude toward art materials or their response to art supplies in the ETC perspective can be conducted based on this literature review.

Conclusion

Immigrants make the decision of leaving for many different reasons from pursuing economic opportunities or educational motives to escaping conflict, violence, persecution, or human rights violations. No matter what makes them leave their homelands and families behind, the migration process is complex and physically and psychologically demanding at many levels including cultural, social, financial, and political which even can result in traumatic experiences both before and after immigration.

Korean immigrants experience distinctive struggles in their post-immigration stage. The struggles persist in not only the individual level but also the family system level. The biggest factors to the struggles within family system are their strong familism and relation-oriented culture in addition to the acculturative stressors.

The effects of art therapy for immigrants and in the family setting have been well-noted in the mental health field. There are many different therapeutic approaches utilizing art for Korean families including narrative art therapy, Adlerian art therapy, mindfulness-based art therapy, and cognitive-behavioral therapy. Each approach holds benefits for the Korean population considering their unique cultural features. However, there is no one size fits all solution. Family, especially immigrant household, is an intricate form of system that many

layers need to be considered. Therefore, deep and reflective consideration should be taken into when deciding the most effective approach for Korean immigrant families.

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In the judgment of the following signatory this thesis meets the academic standards that have been established for the above degree.

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