

After the *Sa-i-gu* (April 29) Los Angeles Riots: Correlates of Subjective Well-Being in the Korean-American Community

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Using 498 randomly selected Korean residents in Los Angeles from a recent epidemiological health telephone survey, correlates of subjective well-being in the Korean-American community were investigated including riot victim status, perceived riot effects, demographic variables (age, gender, and income), acculturation, and social support and social integration variables, approximately 6 months after the *Sa-i-gu* (April 29) Los Angeles Riots. Multiple regression analyses indicated that two indices of subjective well-being, general happiness and perceived physical health status, though significantly correlated, appeared to be influenced by different psychological processes. Moreover, significant gender differences were found in various types of correlates in accounting for the two indices of subjective well-being. Overall, of the correlates investigated, demographic (age and income) factors, perceived riot effects, acculturation indices, and social support/social integration contributed to both Korean-American men and women's subjective well-being. Certain effects of social support and social integration were not consistent with past research. Implications for future research and limitations were discussed in terms of community psychology's focus on extra-individual, as opposed to micro-level individual approaches.

The 1992 Los Angeles Riots, commonly referred to as the *Sa-i-gu* ("April 29" in Korean) Los Angeles Riots among Korean Americans¹—seemingly triggered by the "not guilty" verdict of four White police officers in the brutal beating of an African-American motorist, Rodney G. King—epitomizes the growing impact of ethnic-racial diversity in our neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces (cf. Boyarsky, 1993; Hacker, 1993; Lambert & Taylor, 1990; Moore, 1993; Rutten, 1992). Such diversity refers not only to increasing numbers of ethnic-cultural group members due to immigration or interethnic/interracial marriages, but it also refers to the changing nature of social relationships among members

¹In the Korean tradition, historically important events are often referred to in terms of a date on which the event occurred. "*Sa-i-gu*" can be literally translated as "4-2-9" referring to April 29.

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of different ethnic groups, as well as within specific ethnic groups (Sasao & Sue, in press). Although ethnic-racial diversity has been stressed in community psychology's research and practice since its inception at the Swampscott Conference (Bennett et al., 1966), systematic investigations of subjective well-being amid rapidly changing and diverse social relationships have been relatively meager (e.g., House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988; Landrine & Klonoff, 1992; Loo, Fong, & Iwamasa, 1988; Takeuchi & Speechley, 1989).

Although the association between the eruption of the Los Angeles Riots in 1992 and the increasing phenomenon of ethnic-racial diversity is yet to be determined, much anecdotal evidence indicates that in addition to the devastating loss of personal or business properties in the riot-strewn Los Angeles neighborhoods, there have been numerous reports of heightened frictions between ethnic-cultural groups (e.g., Koreans versus African Americans) throughout Los Angeles County, as evidenced by increasing numbers of hate crimes, fear and avoidance of ethnic/racial groups other than one's own, and overt discrimination and prejudice on a day-to-day basis (Rutten, 1992). In addition, a dramatic increase in mental health needs with regard to familial and marital issues has also been observed locally in the Korean-American community, strongly reflecting changes in within-family and family-to-family relationships after the riots (e.g., relatives move in with a family or ask for loans of large sums of money because one's home or business was destroyed). Undoubtedly, the macro-level interethnic conflicts such as incompatible goals, competition over scarce resources, and physical proximity among different ethnic groups have impacted micro-level social relationships such as intrafamilial conflicts and neighborhood relations. Given that Korean Americans are one of the fastest-growing and newer immigrant groups² struggling in the process of acculturation (Yu, 1990), the riots may have greatly affected the manner in which they interact with individuals of different ethnic-cultural groups as much as with their own ingroup members, thereby necessitating additional changes in life-style with accompanying influences on well-being. Moreover, investigations of factors related to interethnic relations are particularly relevant for immigrant Asian populations such as Korean Americans, because the importance of "harmonious and smooth" social relations is the hallmark of social life and quality of life in many Asian cultures (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, Botempo, Villareal, Asai, & Lucca, 1988).

The purpose of this study was primarily exploratory in that it attempted to identify correlates of subjective well-being in Los Angeles' Korean-American community, whose individual and community costs exceeded those of any other group in Los Angeles, particularly as the *Sa-i-gu* riots influenced the patterns of social relationships (Los Angeles Times, 1992; Ong & Hee, 1993; Yu, 1993). In addition to examining the riots' obvious psychological effects in the Korean-American community, this study provides a fertile ground for theoretical work on the relationships among life events, social relationships, and subjective well-being of individuals living and working in increasingly *multiethnic* or *multiracial* contexts. The present study examined demographic, cultural, and social-ecological correlates of subjective well-being on the basis of the 1992 UCLA Korean Health Survey, a recent telephone survey of randomly selected Korean-American residents in Los Angeles County.

²Los Angeles County is the largest county in the state of California with a total population of 8,863,164 residents, with 55,675 or 1.64% being Korean according to the 1990 U.S. Census information (Asian Week, 1991), and is the most ethnically diverse county in the United States.

Theoretical and Conceptual Background: Social Relationships and Subjective Well-Being in Multiethnic Contexts

Conceptually, how are interethnic and intraethnic relationships after a life event such as the *Sa-i-gu* Riots related to quality of life among individuals who live in multiethnic contexts? Although several models have been proposed and tested that link critical life events (particularly, natural disasters such as earthquakes and hurricanes) and well-being for the general population (e.g., Block & Zautra, 1981; Finkel & Jacobsen, 1977; Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Kaniasty & Norris, 1993; Myers, Lindenthal, & Pepper, 1975), no specific aspects of an unambiguous, singular event such as the *Sa-i-gu* riots (e.g., social relationships, property damages) have been studied in relation to the well-being of community residents belonging to a particular ethnic-group. Based on review of the literature, several sets of variables were deemed important as correlates of subjective well-being in the Korean-American community, including riot victim status and perceived riot effects, acculturation, social support/social integration including ecological variables, and demographic information.

Riot Victim Status and Perceived Riot Effects

One of the most salient correlates of subjective well-being is the proximity of the respondent's residence to the riot areas (mainly, Koreatown and South Central Los Angeles). Thus, we anticipated that to the degree that the riots limited resources and access to many services in areas where the victims resided (Hobfoll, 1988; Yu, 1993), Korean-American residents would show lower levels of psychological and/or physical subjective well-being. Also, how the effects of the riots themselves were perceived or interpreted by the respondents would directly influence the level of well-being (cf. Monroe & Peterman, 1988). For example, if loss of personal or business properties was considered the most salient consequence of the riots, but not its social or psychological impact such as increased ethnic-racial tensions, or vice versa, then it is conceivable that the riots may have a different meaning and impact on the well-being of these individuals regardless of actual effects incurred. On the other hand, ethnic-racial tension may have become very salient to Korean Americans after the riots; thus, perception of increased ethnic-racial tension itself can become an important source of distress, or result in anxiety or fear for personal safety.

Level of Acculturation

Past research on the role of acculturation indicates that acculturation or having assimilated into the mainstream culture has been associated with positive mental health outcome measures (e.g., Sue & Morishima, 1982). Moritsugu and Sue (1983) argued that being an ethnic minority itself in our society places the individual at risk for psychopathology because the experience of being a minority serves as a psychosocial stressor. A recent study comparing adolescents of several Asian ethnic groups on mental health outcome measures has found that Asian groups, consisting primarily of recent immigrants such as Korean Americans and Vietnamese Americans, tend to be the least adjusted or substantially different from other Asian groups, particularly Chinese and Japanese Americans who have the longest history of immigration among Asian groups (Kim & Chun, 1993). This finding was explained in terms of differences in the level of acculturation represented in various Asian groups. Also, an epidemiological study of depression among Asian-American adults (Kuo, 1984) found that Korean Americans

were *more* depressed than White Americans or other Asian Americans. Although *none* of these studies directly measured the level of acculturation of the Asian groups, acculturation appears to be one of the key factors that explains the presence of ethnic differences in Asian Americans (Sasao, 1993a). In another epidemiological study of mental health status among Chicago's 622 Korean Americans, Hurh and Kim (1990) found that acculturation had a differential effect on gender. Acculturation, as measured by immigration status, was significantly related to the well-being of Korean-American men but not women. Although there is no universal, operational definition of acculturation for Asian Americans (Sasao & Sue, in press), proxy indices of acculturation such as language use or the length of stay in another culture can be examined with respect to its impact on well-being.

Social Support and Social Integration

Past research has consistently demonstrated that social support and social integration can reduce the negative effects of stressful life events (Barrera, 1988). In Asian families, family and community support systems in the face of critical life events have often been proposed as resiliency factors for functional behaviors (Shon & Ja, 1982; Sue & Morishima, 1982). Particularly for new immigrants with linguistic-cultural differences and reduced social support from extended family members such as that obtained in Korea, stressful life events like the *Sa-i-gu* riots can add another layer of complexity to the process of establishing or re-establishing social support in the United States. In the present study, effects of dyadic social ties with family members/relatives and friends on the well-being of Korean-American residents are examined.

In addition to the functional aspects of social support, the mere existence or the quantity of social relationships—social integration—has also been found to be a significant correlate of health and subjective well-being (e.g., Diener, 1984; House & Kahn, 1985). Social integration variables such as being married, being employed, or being a member of some social clubs have been frequently investigated (e.g., Diener, 1984; Takeuchi & Speechley, 1989). For Korean Americans, the extent of personal involvement with religious activities is an important index of social integration because church activities constitute the core of many Korean-American families in Los Angeles (Park, 1988). We predicted that frequency of religious activities (as opposed to church membership *per se*) such as collective worship and church support groups in the Korean-American community can attenuate the impact of otherwise stressful social relationships experienced interethnically and/or within families.

One aspect of social support, often suggested though not recognized by community members as alternative sources of social support (Felton & Shinn, 1992), is *extra-individual* or nondyadic social relationships such as transactions between an individual and a group, or between groups of individuals. Particularly in view of increasing ethnic-cultural diversity and changing social relationships, consideration of social support in ethnic-cultural communities must include extra-individual conceptualizations of social support in addition to traditional modes of support through dyadic interactions. One such index of extra-individual social support would be the ethnic or racial composition of one's residential area that may contribute to the resident's subjective well-being. There is increasing evidence to suggest that sense of community or homogeneous perception of one's community is associated with subjective well-being (Davidson & Cotter, 1991). Perceived homogeneity of one's neighborhood may serve as a type of *extra-individual* level social support for those living in an ethnically or racially heterogeneous setting, by insulating

themselves within their own ingroup to derive a sense of community or social support (Felton & Shinn, 1992). For instance, the rates of psychiatric hospitalization were higher in areas where individuals differed from their neighbors in terms of age, marital status, place of birth, and type of profession (Wechsler & Pugh, 1967). Therefore, an ecological factor such as living in an Asian neighborhood may be conducive to more happiness among Korean-American residents. Another way of measuring extra-individual level of social support would be to measure the degree of emotional attachment to the Korean-American community (cf. Phinney, 1990; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) because emotional identification with the community provides a sense of empowerment at both community and individual levels (e.g., Felton, Hinrichsen, & Tsemberis, 1981). This study will explore the concept of extra-individual social support using these variables.

Demographic Variables

Sociodemographic background information is also considered important in accounting for subjective well-being in the immigrant population. As in Hurh and Kim's (1990) study, we expected that although Korean-American females and males do not differ significantly in measures of psychological or physical well-being, correlates of such well-being may present a different picture. Additionally, effects of other demographic variables such as age and income were examined in the present study.

Method

Design and Sampling Procedures

Data were drawn from the 1992 UCLA Korean Health Survey, a community telephone survey of randomly selected Korean-American residents ($N = 599$), aged 25 to 70 years, in Los Angeles County. The goal of the study was to assess health status, health-risk behaviors, and health care needs among Korean Americans. Although it was not originally designed for an assessment of the riots' impact on the well-being of Korean Americans, the survey provided data which served the purpose of the present study of demonstrating indirect evidence of the effects of the riots in Los Angeles' Korean-American community. For the present study, we used responses from 498 Korean-American residents sampled on the basis of the Korean surname list in the original dual-frame sampling plan.³ Technical details of the sampling

³In the 1992 UCLA Korean Health Survey, the adequacy of two sampling strategies was investigated: random digit dialing and surname-based procedures. The present dual-frame sampling design (Aday, 1989) was adopted in which one frame was based on the modified random digit dialing (RDD), and the other on the ethnic surname list consisting of telephone numbers under unique Korean surnames obtained through a telemarketing company (Survey Sampling, Inc., Fairfield, Connecticut). In the RDD sampling frame, telephone prefixes were first identified in census tracts in Los Angeles County where the Korean-American population exceeds 6% of each tract, with a coverage of approximately 41% of the Korean Americans in the county, and then mapping these tracts back to prefixes. Given these prefixes, two-digit random numbers were generated, and added to the telephone exchanges. In the surname-list sampling frame, given the total number of unique Korean surnames, frequency counts of Korean surnames were used to generate a list of randomly drawn telephone households per surname. Respondents between the ages of 25 and 70 were randomly selected within each household based on the "next-birthday person in the household" method (Trolldahl & Carter, 1964). In each sampling design, up to 5 call attempts were allowed with the exception of several cases in which interviewing was completed in the sixth or seventh attempt when the fifth call attempt was a call-back. A simple spreadsheet model was developed to determine how to allocate the sample between the two frames so as to obtain the smallest sampling error for a given budget. The model depended on assumptions concerning incidence and completion rates from the two frames, and also assumed costs of dialing, screening, and actual interviewing. The model-determined allocation was 239 for the RDD sampling and 415 for the surname-list sampling, which would produce a sampling error of .019 or less for estimates of proportions.

procedures, survey methodology, sample disposition, and survey items are described elsewhere (Sasao, 1993b).

The survey began approximately 6 months after the *Sa-i-gu* (April 29, 1992) Los Angeles Riots, on October 28, and ended on December 10, 1992, running for a period of 6 weeks. Each interview lasted no longer than 23 minutes on the average, and included approximately 87 questions and branching-out questions covering demographic information, health status, health risk and preventive behaviors, and social relationships in the community or neighborhood. The interview was conducted in either Korean or English, whichever was the respondent's choice: 97% of the completed interviews were conducted in Korean.

Measures

The survey items were modeled after several large national and community health surveys (e.g., National Health Interview Survey; Aday, 1989; California Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, 1984-1989; The Vietnamese Community Health Promotion Project at University of California, San Francisco; Health Risk Factor Survey, University of Rhode Island - Cancer Prevention Research Center).

Subjective well-being. Two items of subjective well-being (SWB) were used: (a) *perceived general well-being or happiness* as assessed on a 3-point scale with the following question, "In general, how would you say things are these days? Would you say you're very happy, happy, or not too happy these days?" (3 = "very happy," 1 = "not too happy"), and (b) *perceived physical health status* using a 4-point Likert scale with the question, "Compared to other people your age, how would you describe your own health—would you say it is generally very good, good, fair, or poor?" (4 = "very good," 1 = "poor"). Both indices approximated normal distributions in their raw-score forms.

Riot experiences. The type of riot experience was based on the open-ended question, "In what ways have you been affected by interethnic relations since the *Sa-i-gu* (April 29) Los Angeles Riots?" All responses were coded so that they were classifiable according to the following four categories: (a) "tangible losses or effects" such as reduced number of customers, (b) "increased ethnic-racial tension" (e.g., overt prejudice and discrimination), (c) "psychological distress" (e.g., anxiety, fear), and (d) "other effects." Three dummy variables were created for regression analyses using the last category ("other") as a control. In addition, two aspects of the riots were coded on the basis of the residential Zip codes:⁴ (a) *primary victim* coded as 1 (those who lived in the riot-disaster area defined by relevant Zip codes, regardless of the extent of their losses) ($n = 192$) and (b) *nonprimary victims* coded as 0 (those whose residences were in areas other than the riot areas, regardless of riot losses) ($n = 306$).

Acculturation. Two indices of acculturation were used. The self-perceived level of English language proficiency was measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "fluent

⁴ Zip codes were identified where Korean-owned businesses were damaged (Ong & Hee, 1993). If the respondent resided in any of the following Zip code areas, he/she was classified as a "primary victim" and all others as "nonprimary victims": 90001, 90002, 90003, 90004, 90005, 90006, 90007, 90008, 90010, 90011, 90014, 90015, 90016, 90018, 90019, 90020, 90021, 90026, 90027, 90028, 90029, 90033, 90035, 90036, 90037, 90038, 90043, 90044, 90046, 90047, 90056, 90057, 90058, 90059, 90061, 90062, 90220, 90221, 90222, 90230, 90247, 90250, 90255, 90262, 90301, 90303, 90304, 90305, 90404, 90661, 90701, 90723, 90731, 90732, 90745, 90802, 90803, 90805, 90806, 90807, 90810, 90813, 91103, 91106, 91335, 91402, 91406, 91605, 91732, 95225, and 96019.

like a native" (5) to "not at all" (1). The number of years in the United States since immigration was also used as the second index of acculturation. Because both of these were slightly skewed to the left, they were log-transformed to best approximate a normal distribution.

Social support and social integration. Social support is usually defined as functional content of social relationships (House & Kahn, 1985), whereas social integration refers to the existence and quantity of social relationships. Social support was measured using the simplified Dimensions of Social Support Scale (Schaefer, Coyne, & Lazarus, 1981) for two categories of individuals: family/relatives and friends. For each category, three dichotomous questions were asked about being reliable in times of need, having caring attitudes toward the respondent, and being a personal confidant to the respondent. A single index was created separately for kin (family/relatives) and for nonkin (friends) by summing over the standard scores. An examination of skewness for each index revealed adequate normal distributions.

For social integration, two indices were constructed using the numbers of contacts with either kin (family members/relatives) or nonkin (friends), separately. Additionally, marital status (1 = married, 0 = not married), frequency of religious activities (4 = very frequent, 1 = not at all frequent), and employment status (1 = employed; 0 = not employed) were also used as proxies of social integration.

Extra-individual social support was measured by assessing the ethnic/racial composition of residential neighborhood by a 5-category response: mostly Korean or other Asian, mostly Hispanic, mostly African American, mostly Caucasian, and well-mixed; however, for the purpose of analysis, it was coded as a dichotomous variable, 1, representing mostly Korean or other Asian neighborhood, and 0, other non-Korean or non-Asian neighborhoods. Another index of extra-individual social support, the extent to which the respondent felt emotional attachment to the Los Angeles Korean community, was also measured on a 4-point Likert scale (4 = "very strongly," 1 = "not at all").

Demographic variables. Demographic information included age (in years), gender (1 = male, 0 = female), and household income (1 = less than \$10,000, 2 = \$10,000–29,999, 3 = \$30,000–49,999, and 4 = more than \$50,000).

Results

Telephone Survey Results and Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

The total number of completed interviews was 498 on the basis of the surname-based sampling frame.⁵ The interview completion rate was extremely high (89.3%) when compared to national average rates of approximately 50%–70% (Lavrakas, 1987), whereas the refusal rate was less than 7%.⁶ The distribution of interviewed respondents indicated a representation of all age levels (20s = 10.0%, 30s = 27.6%, 40s = 29.7%, 50s = 16.2%, 60s = 8.7%, 70s = 7.8%) with the median age of 45.5 years, and a slight majority of females (60.2%). The majority of the survey respondents were married

⁵Although an additional 101 interviews were completed based on the RDD list, the present study focuses on the other 498 respondents because the two samples yielded slightly different sociodemographic profiles. The implications of the difference due to sampling frames are discussed elsewhere (Sasao, 1993b).

⁶The interview completion rate was defined as the proportion of interview completions divided by the eligible respondents (completes, passive and active refusals, inaccessible, and those too ill to be interviewed) whereas the refusal rate was defined as the proportion of eligible respondents who either were active refusals or used passive refusal behaviors such as repeated call-backs or answering machines to avoid interviews (Frey, 1983).

(83.5%) and the rest were never married (8.7% single); 7.4% were either divorced, separated, or widowed; and .4% refused to answer. Household income and education information indicated that 33.1% of the respondents completed high school education either in Korea or in the United States, 52.9% completed 4-year college or graduate education, and 37.6% earned \$50,000 or more annually. Of 66.0% of the respondents who were employed, 50.1% were self-employed. As expected (Yu, 1990), Christianity was the most common religion the respondents identified with (72.7%), followed by "No Religion" (14.3%), Roman Catholicism (9.8%), Buddhism (2.4%), "Other" (e.g., Jehovah's Witness, Mormon) (.6%), and "Refused" (.2%). Among those who indicated any religious belief, more than half described the frequency of their religious activities such as attending worship services or Bible studies as either "often" or "very often." Finally, 39.2% of the respondents lived in ethnically or racially well-mixed neighborhoods, 12% in primarily Korean or Asian neighborhoods, 37.1% in mostly Caucasian neighborhoods, 9.4% in predominantly Hispanic (Mexican-American) areas, and only 1.6% in primarily African-American neighborhoods. In comparison to the latest 1990 U.S. Census information of those census tracts selected for the surname-based sampling frame, the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents were similar to those in each census tract.

Interrelationship Among Subjective Well-Being Measures

Zero-order correlations were computed in order to assess the association between the two indices of subjective well-being (general happiness and perceived physical health). As expected, the two indices (general happiness and perceived physical health) were significantly correlated: $r(497) = .25, p < .0001$.

Correlates of Subjective Well-Being in the Korean-American Community

Multiple regression analyses were used to explain subjective well-being (general happiness and perceived health status) from a set of variables including riot victim status, perceived riot effects, acculturation, social support/social integration, and demographic variables. All variables were force-entered sequentially, and all interaction variables involving victim status, riot effects, and social support/social integration variables were entered in a step-wise fashion with the .01 criterion. None of the interaction variables reached statistical significance; hence, the final models included the main effects only. No gender differences were statistically significant on either index: (a) general happiness, $M_{\text{female}} = 1.98, SD = .60, M_{\text{male}} = 1.96, SD = .59, \text{diff } t(497) = .35, \text{n.s.}$, and (b) perceived health status, $M_{\text{female}} = 2.89, SD = 1.10, M_{\text{male}} = 3.02, SD = .97, \text{diff } t(497) = 1.40, \text{n.s.}$ Nonetheless, separate analyses were performed for female and male respondents (see Table 1 and Table 2, respectively) because gender differences were found in a past study on correlates of Korean immigrants' mental health (Hurh & Kim, 1990).

General happiness. Table 1 displays the regression results for female respondents. For women, the model provided a reasonably good fit: adjusted $R^2 = .15, p < .01$. Demographic variables contributed significantly to the model, age, $\beta = -1.13, p < .01$, and household income, $\beta = .02, p < .01$. This indicates that female residents tended to be less happy if older, but happier if they had a higher income. Although the effect of the riot victim status itself was not statistically significant ($\beta = -.06, \text{n.s.}$), two dummy variables, "increased ethnic-racial tension" and "psychological distress," each representing a specific riot effect using "other effects" as a control, were significantly associated with less happiness, $\beta = -.05, p < .05$, for increased ethnic-racial tensions, and $\beta = -.11, p < .05$, for psychological distress. One acculturation index, length of stay

in the United States, was positively and strongly related to more happiness ($\beta = .04$, $p < .01$) suggesting that a longer stay in the United States is associated with more happiness. Of the social integration variables, significant effects were attributed to high frequency of religious activities ($\beta = .05$, $p < .01$) and frequent contact with nonkin friends ($\beta = .09$, $p < .01$). The relationship between any of the individual-level support variables and general happiness was not statistically significant. However, living among Korean or Asian Americans ($\beta = .24$, $p < .01$) significantly increased the sense of general happiness.

Table 1
Multiple Regression Analyses^a of Subjective Well-Being for Female Respondents

	General happiness	Perceived physical health
	β (SE)	β (SE)
Demographic information		
Age (in years)	-1.13 (.36)**	-1.80 (.62)**
Income	.02 (.00)**	.02 (.00)*
Riot victim status & perceived riot effects		
Riot victim status	-.06 (.07)	-.17 (.14)
Tangible effects	-.02 (.10)	.15 (.20)
Increased ethnic-racial tensions	-.05 (.02)*	-.16 (.21)
Psychological distress	-.11 (.04)*	-.16 (.05)**
Acculturation indices		
Perceived fluency of English language	-.06 (.05)	.07 (.09)
Length of stay in U.S. (in years)	.04 (.01)**	.03 (.01)**
Social integration & social support		
Marital status	.01 (.01)	-.06 (.17)
Freq of religious activities	.05 (.00)**	-.01 (.01)
Attachment to the Korean community	.01 (.04)	.07 (.06)
Employment status	-.10 (.07)	-.27 (.10)*
Asian neighborhood	.24 (.06)**	.34 (.13)*
Kin (family) contact	.04 (.07)	.25 (.09)**
Kin (family) support	.01 (.01)	.03 (.01)*
Nonkin (friend) contact	.09 (.02)**	-.01 (.09)
Nonkin (friend) support	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.02)
Adjusted R^2	.15**	.07**

^aListwise deletion was used, thereby reducing the total sample size down to 284 for regression analyses.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

The regression results for male respondents on general happiness are shown in Table 2. The model provided a statistically significant fit for men: adjusted $R^2 = .10$, $p < .01$. The effects of the demographic variables were statistically significant and were similar to those for female respondents. The older male respondents indicated less happiness ($\beta = -.51$, $p < .01$). High income was significantly related to happiness, $\beta = .01$, $p < .05$. Similar to female respondents, the effect of the riot victim status among males was not statistically significant, $\beta = -.05$, n.s. Only one dummy variable, increased ethnic-racial tensions, significantly contributed to less happiness, $\beta = -.19$, $p < .01$. An

acculturation index, length of stay in the United States, was positively related to more happiness ($\beta = .02, p < .05$), but not as strongly as for female respondents. Of the social integration variables, only marital status ($\beta = .15, p < .01$) was a significant predictor of general happiness for Korean-American men whereas both extraindividual level support variables, attachment to the Korean-American community ($\beta = .09, p < .01$) and residence among predominantly Korean- or Asian-American neighbors ($\beta = .18, p < .05$), were statistically significant. Unlike their female counterparts, other social integration variables (e.g., frequency of religious activities, contact with family or friends) and individual-level social support variables (e.g., support from family members or friends) were not significantly related to general happiness among male respondents.

Table 2
Multiple Regression Analyses^a of Subjective Well-Being for Male Respondents

	General happiness	Perceived physical health
	β (SE)	β (SE)
Demographic information		
Age (in years)	-.51 (.36)**	-1.09 (.77)**
Income	.01 (.00)*	.01 (.02)
Riot victim status & perceived riot effects		
Riot victim status	-.05 (.08)	-.12 (.16)
Tangible effects	-.18 (.14)	-.32 (.24)
Increased ethnic-racial tensions	-.19 (.07)**	-.25 (.10)**
Psychological distress	-.13 (.11)	-.47 (.14)**
Acculturation indices		
Perceived fluency of English language	.05 (.07)	.26 (.10)**
Length of stay in U.S. (in years)	.02 (.00)*	.01 (.02)
Social integration & social support		
Marital status	.15 (.03)**	.43 (.17)**
Freq of religious activities	-.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Attachment to the Korean community	.09 (.03)**	.02 (.07)
Employment status	.02 (.13)	.08 (.21)
Asian neighborhood	.18 (.10)*	.81 (.20)**
Kin (family) contact	.13 (.08)	.12 (.14)
Kin (family) support	-.01 (.02)	.02 (.02)
Nonkin (friend) contact	.10 (.07)	-.07 (.11)
Nonkin (friend) support	.01 (.01)	-.02 (.01)
Adjusted R^2	.10**	.08**

^aListwise deletion was used, thereby reducing the total sample size down to 187 for regression analyses.

* $p < .05$.; ** $p < .01$.

Perceived health status. In the regression model for perceived health status, the total variance accounted for by the equation was not as high as the one of general happiness (adjusted $R^2 = .07, p < .01$, and adjusted $R^2 = .08, p < .01$, for women and men, respectively).

As shown in Table 1, among Korean-American women, the effects of demographic factors were significantly associated with perceived physical health status. The age of the

respondents most strongly contributed to the equation ($\beta = -1.80, p < .01$), indicating that older females tended to perceive their health more negatively. However, higher household income contributed positively and significantly to the equation, $\beta = .02, p < .05$. Riot victim status (primary versus nonprimary victims) did not have a significant effect on perceived health status ($\beta = -.17, n.s.$). However, the perceived riot effects of psychological distress were significantly related to the lowered level of perceived physical health, $\beta = -.16, p < .01$. The number of years living in the United States significantly influenced perceived health status ($\beta = .03, p < .01$). Of the social integration variables, employment status and kin (family) contact were statistically significant, $\beta = -.27, p < .05$, and $\beta = .25, p < .01$, respectively. This means that being employed led to negatively perceived health status, but more frequent contact with family members or relatives was related to better health status among Korean-American women. As an individual-level social support variable, receipt of support from family members or relatives was positively related to the perceived level of health status, $\beta = .03, p < .05$. Living in a Korean or Asian neighborhood, a social support variable at the extra-individual level, contributed significantly to the model, $\beta = .34, p < .05$.

For male respondents, the effect of age was also significantly and negatively associated with perceived physical health as in the case of Korean-American women's perceived physical health (see Table 2) ($\beta = -1.09, p < .01$); however, having higher household income was not significant ($\beta = .01, n.s.$). As with the women, riot victim status (primary versus nonprimary victims) did not have a significant effect on perceived health status in men ($\beta = -.12, n.s.$). However, two of the three dummy variables of perceived riot effects were significantly related to the lowered level of perceived physical health: increased ethnic-racial tensions ($\beta = -.25, p < .01$) and psychological distress ($\beta = -.47, p < .01$). Being fluent in the English language ($\beta = .26, p < .01$) was strongly related to perceived physical health, whereas a longer stay in the United States ($\beta = .01, n.s.$) did not have a significant effect among men. Marital status is the only significant social integration variable that positively contributed to the equation, $\beta = .43, p < .01$; but Korean or Asian neighborhood, perhaps serving as a "supportive" niche of living, made a significant positive contribution to the model, $\beta = .81, p < .01$.

Discussion

This exploratory study examined the correlates of subjective well-being in Los Angeles' Korean-American community approximately 6 months after the *Sa-i-gu* Los Angeles Riots. Both psychological and physical aspects of subjective well-being were assessed. The psychological index of subjective well-being measured the level of general happiness of the Korean Americans. The physical index measured the level of physical health perceived by the respondents themselves. Multiple regression analyses showed that the two indices of subjective well-being, though significantly correlated, appeared to be influenced by different psychological processes.

One main objective of the present study was to assess the impact of the *Sa-i-gu* Riots on the well-being of Korean Americans living in the greater Los Angeles area. Surprisingly, neither riot victim status (i.e., the proximity of residence to the riot areas) nor having experienced tangible effects of the riot was a significant correlate of Korean Americans' level of subjective well-being. However, perception of increased ethnic-racial tensions in the neighborhoods made both Korean-American men and women less happy and lowered the men's perception of their health. The high perceived level of psychological

distress as a result of the riots, on the other hand, significantly lowered both men and women's perception of their physical health and women's general happiness.

These findings suggest three possibilities about the impact of the *Sa-i-gu* Los Angeles Riots. First, many of the riot victims were rather resilient in the development of negative psychological or physical effects, similar to some research on natural-disaster victims (e.g., Bravo, Rubio-Stipec, Canino, Woodbury, & Ribera, 1990). Second, it may be argued that it is too soon to trace the actual impact of the riots on subjective well-being only 6 months after the riots because many of the individuals living in the riot area are preoccupied with the recovery of their routine life-styles. Third, many of the individuals living in the riot areas are not business property owners or self-employed, but rather tend to live and work for wages. Therefore, those who reside in Koreatown or South Central Los Angeles did not feel the effect of the riots itself as devastating; however, they experienced psychological stress or heightened intergroup tensions. To assess these possibilities, future investigations of the riot effects must be conducted in a prospective as well as retrospective design.

Although the experience of the riots generally indicates a negative effect on psychological well-being among Korean-American females and a more negative perception of physical health among Korean-American males, further research is needed to clarify to what extent the riots affected the role of family and community relations in accounting for respondents' sense of well-being. It can be speculated that Korean-American males were more likely to react to psychological stress in terms of physical or somatic responses than Korean-American females because somatic expressions of psychological stress in terms of physical or somatic responses are more socially desirable in many Asian cultures especially for males (cf. Sue & Morishima, 1982), regardless of level of acculturation (Sasao, 1993b).

Past research found that acculturation is related to both mental and physical health (Cueller & Roberts, 1984; Roberts & Vernon, 1984). The findings of the present study are consistent with the research literature in that the less acculturated ethnic minority individuals probably experience greater psychosocial stress adjusting to a new culture and attempt to "make ends meet" with less financial and social resources in their newly adopted country (cf. Golding & Baezconde-Garbanati, 1990). The Korean Americans who have lived longer in the United States were generally happier than those who have lived in the United States for a shorter period of time. Length of stay in the United States also resulted in a more positive perception of physical health among female respondents. Among male respondents, however, perceived fluency of their spoken English influenced the perception of their own physical health. These findings are generally consistent with the past finding that acculturation significantly accounted for lower depression and greater happiness in Korean immigrant men, and lower psychophysiological impairment in women (Hurv & Kim, 1990) although types of acculturation measures used are not equivalent between the present study and Hurv and Kim's (1990) study. Furthermore, comparisons of results from these studies may not be valid, particularly because the Korean-American residents in the present study were presumably under greater extraneous stress (i.e., the riots) than those in other studies involving Korean-American residents. Future research must focus on clarifying the concept of acculturation (Sasao, 1993a) and the conditions under which subjective well-being is related to acculturation.

The social support and social integration literature suggests that the more support one receives from his or her social network or the more contact one has with his or her social network, the better adjusted he or she will be in times of stress (Barrera, 1988;

Hirsch, 1981; Thoits, 1985). Our findings suggest that this may be *gender-specific*; that is, patterns of correlates showed significant gender differences. Neither the amount of social support received from family or friends nor the frequency of contact with family or friends had any effect on the quality of life for male respondents. One of the strongest correlates of subjective well-being, both psychological and physical, for Korean males was marital status. Married men were generally happier and also perceived their health more positively. However, marital status had very little explanatory power for women in any of the subjective well-being measures. Instead, women's positive perception of physical health was explained significantly by the frequency of contact with and amount of support received from their family. Additionally, women who contacted friends more frequently were generally happier than those who did not.

These results imply that Korean-American males' main source of social support may be their spouse in the family. This interpretation is generally consistent with the finding that Korean males are more reluctant than females to seek emotional support within the broader or extended family (cf. Kitano & Daniels, 1988). Traditional Korean values that emphasize complete emotional independence among adult males may not allow the Korean male to turn to other sources of social support, as such actions are thought to reveal psychological weaknesses and thus bring shame onto himself and even to his family (e.g., his parents, siblings, relatives). As a result, the spouse becomes the sole confidante. On the other hand, emotional independence is not demanded of Korean women as much as it is of men. In fact, it is not considered as shameful when a woman turns to her parents, siblings, or friends for assistance or support under most stressful circumstances (Chan, 1992). Thus, the findings of the current social support and support network literature may be more descriptive of life quality among Korean-American women but not among men. These results also have important implications for psychological interventions for Korean-American families because of these culturally sanctioned gender roles.

Significant gender differences were also found in other areas of social integration. For example, engagement in frequent religious activities was important to women's general happiness. Frequency of religious activities for Korean-American women can also mean frequent nonkin contact because much of these women's network consists of friends from church (Chan, 1992). Therefore, not only does this variable measure the degree of social integration, it may also be an indirect measure of social support among Korean females. Employment status also had a differential effect on subjective well-being. Being unemployed did not contribute to male respondents' subjective well-being whereas it significantly contributed to *more positive* perception of physical health among Korean-American female respondents. This is inconsistent with past research on the role of employment in women's psychological well-being in that working women tend to have higher life satisfaction than nonworking women (e.g., Baruch & Barrett, 1986; Kessler & McRae, 1981), but it is consistent with Hurh and Kim's (1990) findings noted earlier. This probably has to do with a culturally ingrained belief in the traditional role of the woman as housewife in the Korean-American community (Hurh & Kim, 1984). Korean-American women are often forced to join the labor force when they immigrate to the United States for economic reasons. Having to work is incongruent with the Korean woman's cultural beliefs or expectations, and is often viewed as shameful or as a "loss of face" because it reveals her spouse's inability to support the family financially by himself, thereby providing a sense of social stigma or shame when women are employed. Furthermore, often without help from their husbands with household chores and raising children, they are overloaded with work at and away from home; therefore, it may well

be that Korean-American women perceive their health as relatively more positive while staying at home fulfilling their traditional role as housewife. These findings warrant further investigations of gender differences in types of social support and networks used in the Korean-American community.

In the research literature, social support has been often conceptualized as an individual-level construct, if not an extraindividual or community-level construct (Felton & Shinn, 1992). In this regard, one interesting finding is that the ethnic composition of the neighborhoods in which the respondents lived had a strong influence on both psychological and physical well-being for both women and men. Korean Americans living in a predominantly Korean or Asian neighborhood tend to be happier and perceive themselves to have better physical health than those living in a non-Korean or non-Asian neighborhood. One possible explanation for this finding could be that because interpersonal relationships are the foundation of developing and maintaining social support and support networks (e.g., Duck & Silver, 1990), and because Korean Americans are often unfamiliar with culturally relevant social skills (e.g., language skills, eye contact) in the communities in which they conduct business but do not usually reside, Korean business owners' daily interactions with multiracial or multiethnic individuals in economically disenfranchised areas (e.g., South Central Los Angeles; Ong & Hee, 1993) make them interpersonally vulnerable. Further, potential negative interpersonal effects of ethnic-racial diversity in work settings mean more psychological burden on family members as well (cf. Hurh & Kim, 1984). This finding may also be related to the degree of social integration into the neighborhood or the community and the amount of social support Korean Americans receive from their neighbors. Also, this observation confirms the argument that the individualistic bias in past research on social support often overlooked certain forms of social support and integration otherwise unnoticed as "supportive" or having salutary effects on individual well-being (Felton & Shinn, 1992). Future research must address the type of social support (e.g., perceived homogeneity of a community, sense of community) endemic to particular ethnic-racial communities within the larger context of society (cf. Sasao & Sue, *in press*).

In addition, being emotionally attached to the Korean community contributed to increased general happiness among male but not female respondents. This appears to indicate that the important source of extraindividual level of social support can be derived "geographically" but it can be also derived "psychologically" (by augmenting social identity to the ingroup), thus enhancing the level of individual as well as collective self-esteem (cf. Luhtanen & Crocker, 1991; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Therefore, any further investigation of social support must begin addressing the multidimensionality of social support variables including individual (psychological) as well as community-based sources of social support.

Furthermore, much recent research on social support tends to show that often stressful life events such as natural disasters and human warfare may result in deterioration (rather than mobilization or enhancement) of social resources (e.g., emotional support from family members or friends), thus trivializing the universal stress-buffer hypothesis (cf. Lin, 1986; Kaniasty & Norris, 1993). It can be explained, based on the social support deterioration model (Barrera, 1988), how the negative impact of the riots may, in some instances, lead to decreased well-being through worsening interethnic or intraethnic (family or community) relationships. Therefore, it is not necessarily true that the riots automatically mobilized social support and other networks to ease the stress-inducing tension brought on. Instead, the riots might have deteriorated the often assumed support within the Korean community and family system; thus, the effect of social support

may be diminished or minimal. Yu (1993) reports that there was within-group (Korean) rivalry in resource allocation and service delivery in the Koreatown area after the riots. Longitudinal research is clearly needed to elucidate the process in which a life event affecting social relationships influences individual well-being.

In addition to the gender effects noted above, other demographic factors appear to play a major role in explaining Korean Americans' subjective well-being. Generally, age of respondents and level of household income appear to be important correlates of both general happiness and perceived physical health for both Korean-American women and men. The past research literature reports very little or no relationship between age and subjective well-being (Diener, 1984); however, the majority of the research failed to investigate the relationship in the presence of a life event that affected the entire community. The negative relationship we found between age and subjective well-being can be attributed to age differences in the perception and conceptualization of the event (Monroe & Peterman, 1988).

Finally, some of the limitations of the study and implications for future research should be noted. First, the present findings on subjective well-being must be tempered by the fact that measures of such well-being may be too limiting as each index was based on a single-item measure. However, much research on subjective well-being indicates that highly reliable outcomes can be obtained even based on single-item measures of life quality (e.g., Andrews & Whitney, 1976). Nonetheless, future investigations of subjective well-being should include multiple measures of well-being in order to account for measurement errors. Also related to the measurement issues is that in view of significant gender differences, various multidimensional subjective well-being measures can be developed to tap into the possibility of specific ecological or contextual effects such as life satisfaction in different settings (e.g., the family, work). Above all, one of the major shortcomings of the present study is that in the absence of any comprehensive theory or conceptual framework for understanding a once-in-a-lifetime event such as the *Sa-i-gu* Los Angeles Riots with unknown societal implications, the study relied heavily on the extant literature on intergroup relations, social support and social integration, and subjective well-being in an exploratory fashion. Efforts must be expended in developing a conceptual model to understand the impact of the increasing ethnic-cultural diversity in our society, and also longitudinal research must be encouraged.

The present study, utilizing the data from a timely community epidemiological health survey conducted approximately 6 months after the 1992 *Sa-i-gu* Riots, provided some indirect evidence for short-term effects of the riots along with moderating, resilient effects of correlates on the well-being of Korean Americans in Los Angeles. However, the long-term effects remain to be seen in the Korean-American community as well as in the entire Los Angeles community. Further research is clearly needed to provide clarity on the impact of the riots and concomitant changing social relationships on the well-being of individuals who must live and work in the multicultural context.

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