

Critical Adult Learning of Asian Immigrant Workers: A Social Network Perspective

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This study reveals how the social networks of immigrant workers play a key role in mediating critical learning towards a particular political attitude. Theoretical relationships between critical learning and political attitudes were set up and four types of political attitudes were identified. A "resistant political attitude" was conceptually linked to critical learning, and this link was investigated by using social network analysis. Finally, based on the social network analysis, we argue that both the network size and network position of immigrant workers who represented a resistant political attitude tended to shape critical adult learning when they were associated with the collective reinterpretation of the immigrant workers' social lives.

Key words: critical adult learning, social networks, political attitude, Asian immigrant workers

Introduction

The social lives of immigrant workers have been widely explored in socio-economics, geography, and anthropology since the 1990s (Altonji & Card, 1991; Borjas, 1999; Friedberg & Hunt, 1995; Heisler, 1992; Seol & Han, 2004). Over the last decade, there has also been an increasing number of studies on the educational issues which effect immigrant workers (Bankston & Zhou, 1995; Lee, 2001; McNall, Dunnigan, & Mortimer, 1994; Su, Lee, & Vang, 2005; Suarez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2001; Timm, 1994). However, these studies are focused mainly on first or

second generation immigrant students in Western countries, and little attention has been paid to adult learning in non-Western societies.

Because there are several non-Western societies - Andorra, The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Malaysia, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Kuwait, Qatar, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, etc - where considerable immigrant populations reside, we were able to focus our study in a different context. For two main reasons, we paid special attention to Asian immigrant workers in Korea. Firstly, the number of immigrant workers has been rapidly increasing in Korea since 1987, and it reached approximately 367,000 as of 2003. Importantly, about 78% of these workers were undocumented and came mostly from less industrialized Asian countries (Seol & Han, 2004). Almost all of them were "forced" to work in 3-D jobs (difficult, dirty, and dangerous) (Seol & Han, 2004). With these types of jobs, the incidences of institutional discrimination, through underpayment, human rights violations, and the lack of access to social security, are very high. Secondly, more importantly, it is nearly impossible for undocumented immigrant workers to access formal education because they have no legal right to formal

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education in Korea. Due to the fact that informal learning represents all information gathered without a direct/intentional reliance on a teacher or organized body of knowledge (Livingstone, 2001), the informal adult learning process of immigrant workers becomes a critical factor in their quality of life whilst in Korea. Due to its practicality and specificity, informal learning is more often used for adult learners in dealing with situational problems (Livingstone, 2001).

To account for the importance of informal learning in the adult learning process in general and for undocumented immigrant workers in particular, informal learning was examined as a factor in the development of political attitudes. The idea of the development of political attitudes was chosen because the informal learning experience of immigrant workers includes social involvement within a socio-political environment and a political attitude is the value system that evaluates social issues surrounding human beings (Lane, 1965). The unfair work practices (e.g., delayed payment of wages, underpayment, human rights violations, prejudice, discrimination, sweatshop labor practices and the lack of access to social security) surrounding immigrant workers go beyond the boundary of the individual and becomes an important learning context. Within this context, the empirical research on the learning of adults in a non-Western context is quite rare.

Therefore, our study contributes to complementing this dearth of empirical research through a social network analysis of immigrant workers' critical learning. In particular, the purpose of our research is to unveil the critical learning process of immigrant workers as embedded in their political attitudes. Our research centered on the following research questions: How is critical adult learning conceptually intertwined with political attitudes? How do the social ties of immigrant workers play a role in mediating critical learning towards a particular political attitude? Specifically, how are immigrant workers' network size and network positions associated with their political attitude? To this end, we draw primarily on the theoretical relationships between critical learning and political attitudes. Based on these theoretical relationships, we attempt to test the link between social ties and political attitudes. By doing this, we reveal why the critical learning of one immigrant co-worker differs from another in terms of their social ties.

Theoretical Framework

The Conceptions of Critical Adult Learning

The social behaviors of individuals based on their social interaction have been mainly discussed by social learning theory in general and Bandura's theory in particular. According to Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, a human being's learning is explored "in terms of a model of triadic reciprocity in which behavior, cognitive and other personal factors, and environmental events all operate as interacting determinants of each other" (p. 18). This human learning perspective elucidates our understanding of the dynamic interaction between individuals and social contexts and has been an "ideological umbrella which has gathered theorists whose major concern is the learning of socially relevant behaviors in a social context" (Khan & Cangemi, 1979, p. 42). Unfortunately, social learning theory tends to focus heavily on the cases of adolescents and children. Although social learning theory provides a solid understanding of the social contexts of learners, it can not be applied well to critical adult learning. Therefore, it was necessary to lay out a conceptually-woven net to more fully capture the meaning of "critical" as intertwined with "adult" learning.

The term "critical" is a fluid concept because it has different meanings for different people (Brookfield, 2005). The Webster Dictionary (1943), for example, defines "critical" as: inclined to criticize, careful judgment, nicely judicious, or crucial (p. 627). Another dictionary defines "critical" as a cognitive process when one captures the essence of phenomena by recognizing the conditions embedded in the other side of the phenomena (Nam et al., 1991, p. 582). In particular, the term has been significantly stressed by the critical theorists known as the Frankfurt school. Their perspective on criticality is in line with Marxism, which views criticality as one of the crucial axes of rationality needed to unmask contradictions embedded in oppressive social systems. Therefore, critical theorists regard criticality as relentless reflection upon predominant socio-economic systems that systematically exclude certain groups through distorted power relations (Blackburn, 1996). That is, critical theorists focus on seeking radical social change through their criticality. Our understanding of critical adult learning is conceptually informed by critical theory. Based

on critical theory, we regard the meaning of “critical” as encompassing “any attempt to understand practices of criticism, interpretation, and historical understanding of social action” (Blackburn, 1996, p. 89).

Operating from the Blackburn (1996) definition of critical theory, our conception of critical adult learning was theoretically integrated with critical adult educators who pursue democratic characteristics of adult learning (e.g., Brookfield, 1993, 2005; Collins, 1991; Freire, 1972; Kilgore, 2001; Mezirow, 1981; Welton, 1995). For example, Brookfield (1993) emphasizes that critical theory of adult learning contributes to alerting “an unauthentic, distorted form of control” over learning conditions (p. 235). In a similar vein, Kilgore (2001) underscores that “[critical] learning...is reflecting on and challenging what we know and how we know it, and perhaps acting to change material and social conditions of oppressed people” (p. 55). It is important that we differentiate critical adult learning from self-directed learning even though some characteristics of self-directed and critical adult learning overlap (e.g., learner-oriented view, self-regulation, learners’ exercising control over learning conditions, and the stress of learner’s experience). The major difference is that critical adult learning rejects the technical rationality embedded in self-directed learning because it does not have an instrumental approach to learning whereas self-directed learning focuses more on individuals’ adaptation to existing social systems (Collins, 1991; Welton, 1995). In this regard, one important characteristic of critical adult learning is the socially contextualized self-regulative relationship with existing learning conditions. Self-directed learning is more likely to be overwhelmed by individual success or competitive advantage, because, unlike critical adult learning, it tends not to place an emphasis on reflective thinking as a method of adaptation and advancement.

Reflective thinking is conceptualized as another pillar of critical adult learning. Mezirow (1981) highlights reflective thinking as essential to critical awareness. Freire (1972), one of the key harbingers of critical adult learning, provides a substantial discourse on the concept of critical adult learning. According to Freire, reflective thinking is “an on-going process of dialogue through which there is a continuing re-creation of those individuals involved in the reflective process...[thus] authentic reflection occurs in the challenge of living and thinking about life” (Jarvis, 1987, p.

89). As such, critical adult learning highlights social change or social transformation through progressive contextual interaction. Reflective thinking is a process within critical adult learning that constructs messages and creates meanings that transform social contexts, shaping the lives of adult learners.

Based on the dialectical voices of those critical adult educators, we see critical adult learning as a process of constructing self-regulative relationships with given learning conditions, based on the social conditions that formulate learning. To fully encompass criticality, the meaning of self-regulative relationships here should be redefined as socially contextualized self-regulative relationships. Importantly, socially contextualized self-regulative relationships with learning conditions can be built by critically acknowledging outside influences such as capitalism, institutional discrimination, bureaucratic systems, technical rationality, and grand discourses. In summary, we define critical adult learning as the process of reorganizing one’s epistemological framework as well as the process of reflecting upon one’s own ontological position from one’s social contexts.

Critical Adult Learning Embedded in a Particular Political Attitude

Critical theory, the precursor of critical adult learning theory, “is firmly grounded in a particular political analysis” since it aims to “provide people with knowledge and understandings intended to free them from oppression” (Brookfield, 2005, pp. 23-25). In this sense, critical adult learning can be characterized as individuals’ awareness of the political geography of their social settings via reflective thinking and contextualized self-regulative learning.

As such, “a critical theory of adult learning is inevitably also a theory of social and political learning” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 31). As mentioned above, critical adult learning is intertwined with individuals’ attempts to seek social change and emancipation. Because these attempts are enactments of individuals’ value systems that show how they evaluate the social conditions surrounding them (Lane, 1965), they could be observed and studied in order to unveil an individual’s political attitudes. According to Brown (1974), political attitudes evolve out of successful crisis resolutions during interactions with the socio-political environment. Therefore, the foundation for the maturation of individuals’ political

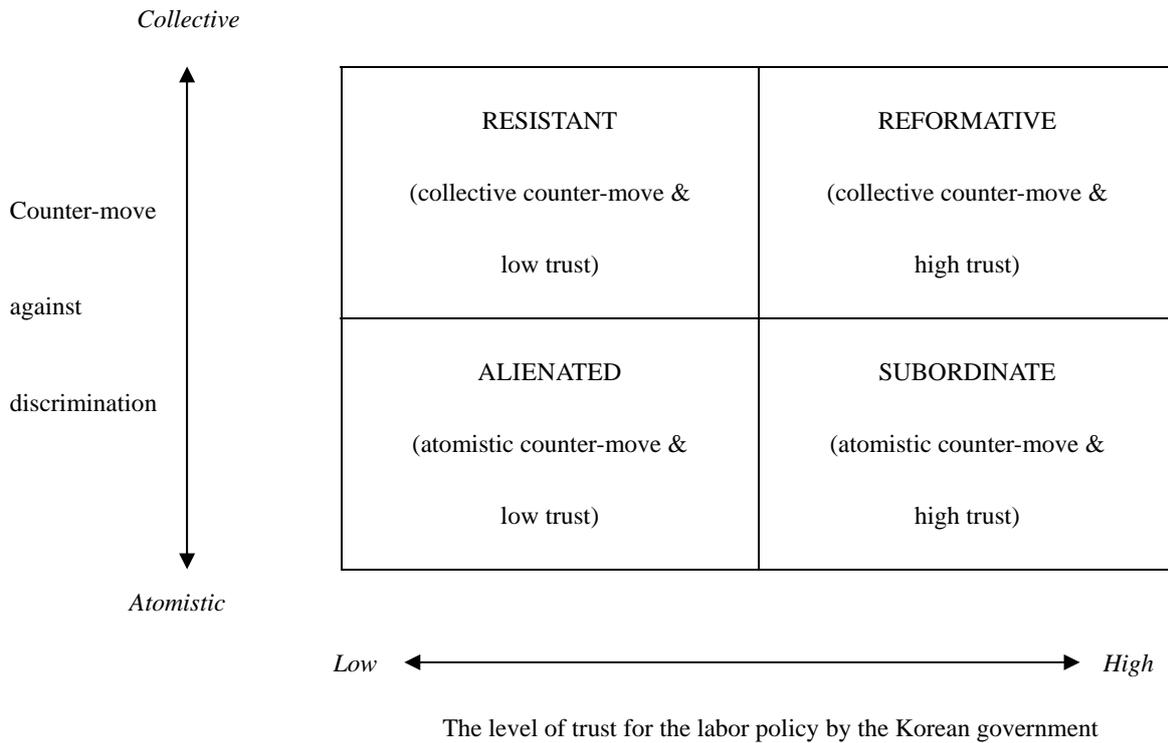


Figure 1. The political attitude of foreign immigrant workers

attitudes is built upon their learning experience within the socio-political environment. Thus, we examined the political attitudes of immigrant workers as a yardstick for capturing the multi-faceted qualities of their critical adult learning.

In analyzing the political attitudes of immigrant workers, we developed a theoretical framework that charted their political perspectives. As seen in Figure 1, political attitudes were categorized by the co-relationship between the horizontal axis (the level of trust that immigrant workers have in the labor policy of the host country) and the vertical axis (the counter-move of immigrant workers against institutionalized discrimination).¹

On the basis of the co-relationship, four types of political attitudes were identified: subordinate, alienated, resistant, and reformative political attitudes. The alienated political attitude represented those immigrant workers who responded to institutionalized discrimination individually, with a low level of trust for immigrant labor policy. Those immigrant workers who responded to institutionalized discrimination collectively, with a low level of trust for

immigrant labor policy belonged to the resistant political attitude. The reformative political attitude was characteristic of immigrant workers who responded to institutionalized discrimination collectively and had a high level of trust for immigrant labor policy. Lastly, the subordinate political attitude encompassed those immigrant workers who responded to institutionalized discrimination individually, with a high level of trust for immigrant labor policy.

In developing this framework, we hypothesized that those who engaged in more critical adult learning would show more active, collective responses to institutionalized discrimination and have lower levels of trust for immigrant labor policy. Hence, immigrant workers who represented a “resistant political attitude” were logically regarded as critical adult learners.

Design of the Study

Initially the first author of this study intended to

examine the contexts in which the critical adult learning of immigrant workers occurred. To this end, a case study approach was used as the main research method to capture both the perceptions and behaviors of immigrant workers. The first author began searching for a site where substantial immigrant workers reside, work, or gather on a regular basis. Several spatial categories where various immigrant workers are gathered were considered: ghettos, workplaces, religious institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Among them, NGOs were selected as an appropriate research site. NGOs supported various immigrant ethnic groups by being involved in the critical social issues of immigrant workers (e.g., workplace welfare, human rights, and education). Places such as ghettos, workplaces, and religious institutions were eliminated as possible research sites because there was a tendency that one single ethnic group of immigrant worker occupied one particular ghetto, workplace, or religious institution. These sites might obviously skew access opportunities to various life experiences of diverse immigrant populations and not provide the intended context for this study. After reviewing the ethnic demographics of several NGOs, one NGO was purposively selected as a research site. The NGO was located in a suburban area of Seoul, and the first author participated in the NGO as a participant researcher as well as a volunteer for Korean language teaching.

The data collection was conducted over a period of six months in 2002 within the NGO. This small-scale case study employed observations, two surveys, and 14 interviews to collect data about faith, perceptions, value systems, social ties, and symbolic interactions among immigrant workers. Two surveys were composed, an in-home survey and an in-NGO survey. The in-home survey was a self-administered survey, which was written in English, because most immigrant workers could speak but not read Korean. In general, most immigrant workers in the NGO were high school graduates or college graduates in their own countries. This suggests strongly that most of them could read and understand the survey items written in English. The first survey sought basic information about their everyday life (e.g., job, friendship pattern, residential years, Korean proficiency, motive of immigration, education, marriage, etc.). A total of 122 immigrant workers who had clear contact information for mailing were invited for the survey. Among them, 50 immigrant workers (41%) from eight Asian

countries responded to the survey.² Through the second survey, focusing on social ties among immigrant workers, the scope of the study expanded.³

Seven out of 50 immigrant workers also participated in in-depth interviews. The purpose of the in-depth interview was to gather data regarding social ties and the nuances of daily life that might not be revealed by the survey questionnaire. Each of the seven immigrant workers was interviewed individually for about two hours. All interviews were conducted in Korean. In fact, most of the seven participants could speak Korean well because of their long residence in Korea (on average 3 years). For two out of seven participants, two voluntary interpreters who worked for the NGO helped the first author to conduct the in-depth interview.

In analyzing the data, critical feedback was obtained from seven participants by cross-checking the interview data gathered. Cross-checking was employed to minimize the factual errors and interpretive errors of the qualitative data by in-depth interviews. Finally, to analyze the quantitative data collected by the two surveys, we used SPSS and a social network analysis software (UCINET 6).

Results and Discussions

Based on the responses of the immigrant workers, Figure 2 shows the four types of political attitudes resulting from the level of trust for labor policy of the Korean government, and the counter-moves against institutionalized discrimination.⁴

The horizontal axis was based on a 4-value Likert scale, with 1 indicating “not much” and 4 indicating “very much.” The vertical axis ranged from “silence/endurance” (the most atomistic way of reacting) to “demonstration/assembly” (the most collective way of reacting). Political attitudes were determined by the point of intersection between the two axes. For example, if one immigrant worker gave a score of “1” and chose “strike” as a way of counter-move, then his or her political attitude would be classified as a “resistant” political attitude because the point of intersection was located on the section of resistant political attitudes.

According to the survey, 39 out of the 50 immigrant workers showed an alienated political attitude while only nine out of the workers represented a resistant political

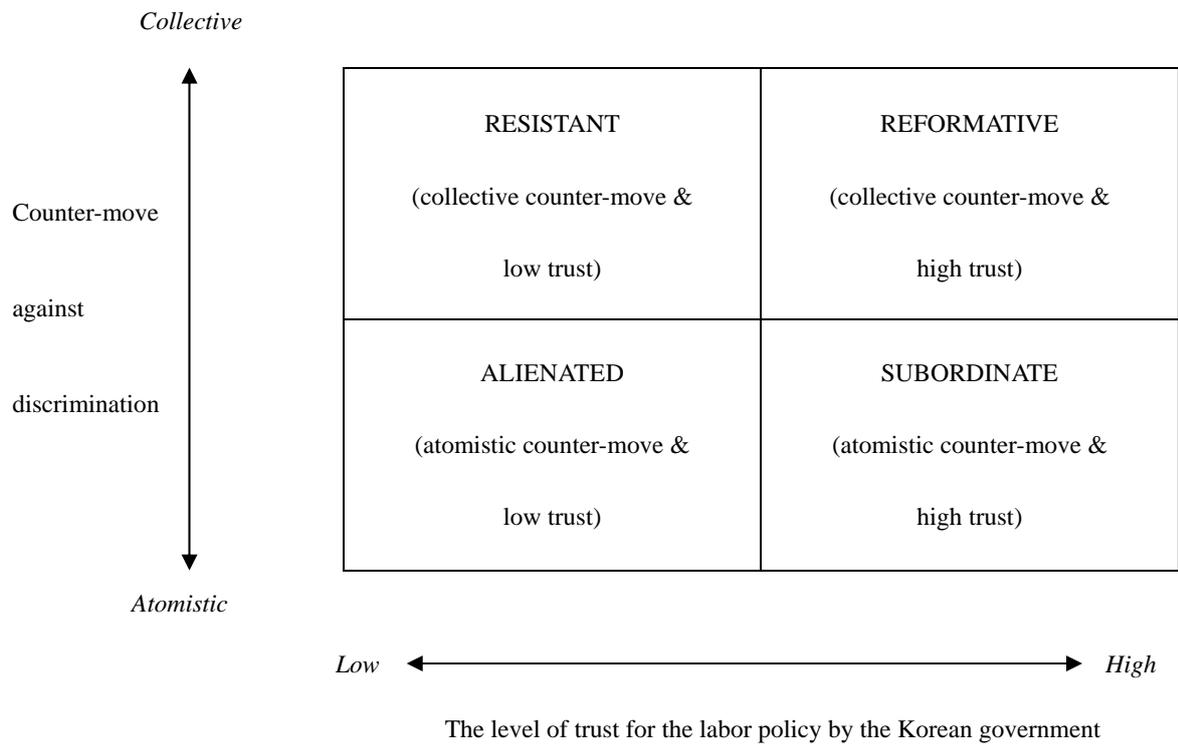


Figure 1. The political attitude of foreign immigrant workers

attitude. Only two workers showed a subordinate political attitude. The main reason why most workers showed an alienated political attitude was that they were concerned that they would be deported by the Korean government if they engaged in forms of resistance such as striking or demonstrating against institutionalized discrimination. Since their status is that of illegal workers, the majority of the immigrant workers tended to choose passive, atomistic

counter-moves against institutionalized discrimination such as “silence/endurance” or “change of occupation.” Our data suggest that social ties were heavily associated with shaping the alienated political attitude, resulting in the dearth of critical learning occurring amongst this group.

Table 1 represents the characteristics of social ties of each group categorized by political attitudes through two important indicators: the number of directed ties and

Table 1
Social Ties of Immigrant Workers by Different Political Attitudes

Groups by Political Attitude	Numbers of Immigrant Workers	Number of Directed Ties		Normalized Betweenness Centrality
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>
Alienated (group1)	39	1.20	2.33	0.12
Resistant (group2)	9	5.55	5.59	1.67
Subordinate (group3)	2	1.00	0.00	0.21

Note. n = 50, *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation

betweenness centrality. The number of directed ties refers to the number of social ties connected among immigrant workers. This shows the dynamics of information exchange among the immigrant workers. The concept of betweenness centrality measures the extent to which a particular immigrant worker lies “between” the other immigrant workers in this network. According to Scott (1991), betweenness centrality measures “the extent to which a particular point lies ‘between’ the various other points in the graph [network]” (p. 89). Due to the characteristic of the concept, it is regarded as a measure of information control. In other words, betweenness centrality shows “how much an individual is indirectly linked to other members of the group and is a measure of to what extent an individual is between two others” (Durland, 2005, p. 37). As such, this study identified those individuals who mediate information have to information have-nots in their social network by using betweenness centrality. Although betweenness centrality is more appropriate for analyzing non-directed ties in general, we used betweenness centrality for the non-symmetric network in this study, based on Gould’s (1987) measures, showing that betweenness centrality can be applied to

directed ties.⁵ To acquire the data for the two indicators, the immigrant workers were asked “who are the immigrant workers in this NGO that would provide information or advice if you had a problem or were faced with a difficult situation?”⁶

As seen in Table 1, interestingly, immigrant workers who showed a resistant political attitude (group 2) had the highest social tie means in comparison to the other two groups.

The result suggests that resistance-oriented immigrant workers in terms of their political attitudes had more social ties (Mean 5.55) and occupied more important socio-structural positions (Mean of Normalized Betweenness Centrality 1.67) in their network than the other members of their peer groups. In particular, this phenomenon is illustrated in Figure 3, which shows the relationships between social ties and political attitudes.

In Figure 3, the nine immigrant workers who had a resistant political attitude are identified by size (e.g., B1, B4, B5, B7, B9, C8, MY 6, MY 17, and S1). Among them, seven out of the nine immigrant workers had more social ties and occupied more important social positions than other workers.

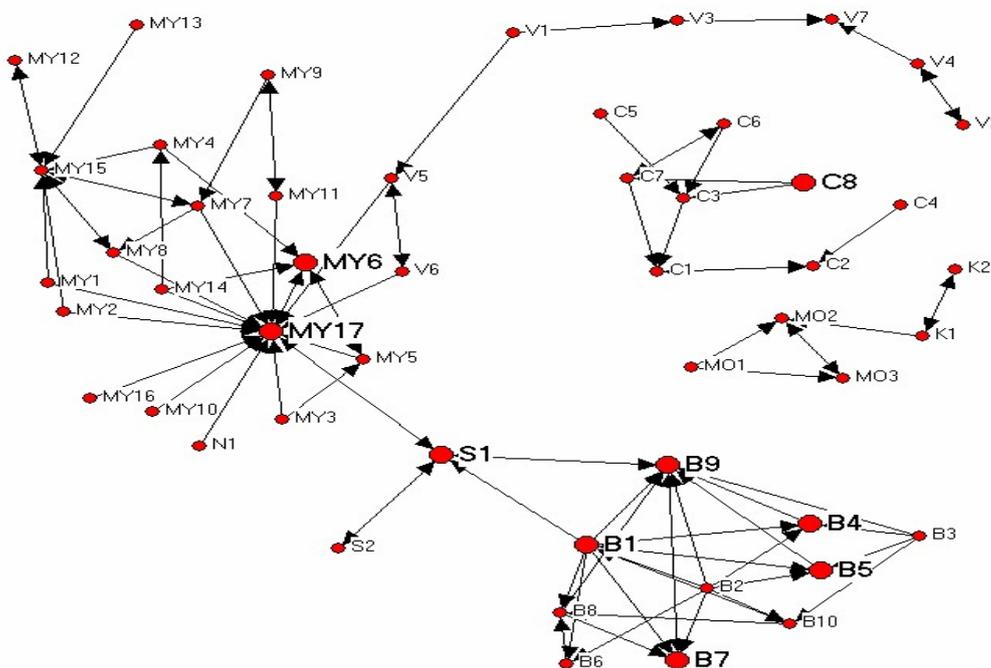


Figure 3. Relationships between social ties and political attitudes

Note. B (Bangladeshi workers), C (Chinese workers), K (Kazakhstan workers), MO (Mongolian workers), MY (Myanmarese workers), N (Nepalese workers), S (Sri Lankan workers), and V (Vietnamese workers)

C8 and S1 had less social ties. However, the immigrant worker, S1, played a role in bridging two different ethnic groups (Myanmar and Bangladesh). The Sri Lankan worker (S1) was regarded as a “cutpoint” in terms of his network position. Cutpoints are defined as “if removed, cause the network to break apart or individuals to be disconnected from the network” (Durland, 2005, p. 38). In fact, his Betweenness Centrality was 4.92, which was the second highest in the immigrant workers engaged in this study. Interestingly, he was a leader of the Sri Lankan community.

In addition, Bangladeshi immigrant workers who represented the resistant political attitude (B1, B4, B5, B7, and B9) tended to protest against the vulgar capitalism of their Korean employers not through their use of scientific language such as “class” and “anti-capitalism” but through the reinterpretation of their cultural and religious symbols. For example, Bangladeshi immigrant workers perceived their moral superiority over Koreans through their own cultural and religious ritual such as *Ramadan*. It is worthwhile to mention an interview of a Bangladeshi worker with a resistant political attitude.

B1: I have to pray to Allah 5 times a day. Whenever I want to stop working to pray, my boss often does not allow me to do so because it may disturb the working process. However, whenever I was not allowed to pray, I thought...they [employers] think of nothing but money.⁷

This Bangladeshi worker was internalizing a negative image of Koreans by producing a symbolic image of Koreans who exploit immigrant workers for economic gain. Noticeably, in terms of their network position, some of these Bangladeshi workers were mutually connected with each other in their social network and formed cliques (more exactly, *n*-cliques) referring to “subgroups [in a network] where all members connect to each other” (Durland, 2005, p. 30).⁸ This means that immigrant workers who shared similar resistant political attitudes were interconnected in their social relationships whereas other workers (e.g., C4 and K2) were just connected to a member of a cyclic component—“a set of points [actors] which are linked to one another through continuous chains of connection” (Scott, 1991, p. 105)—but they “do not themselves lie on a cycle” (Scott, 1991, p. 109).

Another crucial feature was that most immigrant

workers might have been struggling to overcome a number of daily stressors in their workplaces, by simply enduring the situations or changing jobs. In viewing this from a learning dimension, these behaviors could be classified as instrumental or adaptive learning. However, as some of them began to realize that their personal problems were intertwined with social discrimination through increasing interactions within their community, their instrumental or adaptive learning would have been transformed into critical learning.

S1: In 2001, I and some of my friends made a Sri Lankan community in order to overcome the personal difficulties facing us. For example, if we get injured at our workplace, it's hard for us to get reparations for the injury [because we are illegal workers]... So, we made our own community, consisting of less than 10 members. Now, there are approximately 300 or 400 people in the community... And we help many other Sri Lankan people through our community.

Like this Sri Lankan worker, most immigrant workers in Korea had several nodes such as churches, mosques, and NGOs as gathering places for their immigrant communities. For example, a mosque was the typical space where Bangladeshi workers' fragmented experience from their everyday life is naturally shared, collectively re-interpreted, and critically learned.

B1: When I go to the mosque located in *Itaewon* [the center of Seoul, Korea], I have many opportunities to meet old and new Bangladeshi friends. Through them, I get to know the news of my country, and we often talk about events happening in our workplaces. On the day of *Eid al-Fit*[the joyous three-day festival at the end of *Ramadan*], more than one thousand Bangladeshi workers get together in the mosque. So, I can meet other Bangladeshi friends who live in other provinces.

This collectively re-interpreted daily experience seems to stimulate the resistant political attitude of this Bangladeshi worker. As seen in Table 2, the social ties of Bangladeshi workers had more density compared to other ethnic groups,

Table 2
Social Ties and Political Attitudes of Bangladeshi Workers

Nationality	Bangladeshi	Other ethnic groups
Total number of the immigrant workers	10	40
Number of immigrant workers with the resistant political attitude	5	4
Group mean of the number of social ties	6.7	0.8

which may have led to a more resistant political attitude.

In addition, this phenomenon means that their resistant political attitudes were not based on their class identity as a marginalized working class, but generated from their cultural or religious identity. As mentioned earlier, Bangladeshi workers tended to protest against institutionalized discrimination not through scientific language, but through their religious rituals such as *Ramadan* and *Eid al-Fit*. Like the Islamism of Bangladeshi workers, Myanmarese workers recognized we-ness through their religious rituals.

MY17: On the month of *Tabotwe* [the period of the first harvest leading to the Myanmarese harvest festival] last year, we Myanmarese workers got together for a festival. We shared our traditional food....Also, on the day of *Thingyan* [Myanmarse traditional “water” festival], we washed the face of our Buddhist statue with water, and then we sprinkled each other with water. Korean people stared us strangely while we did it, but we did not care about that. Although we are illegal workers, we do not do anything illegal. Rather, we felt like we are Myanmarese.

This interview suggests that these collectively reinterpreted cultural rituals, based on their social ties, seemed to stimulate a resistant political attitude. As identified in Figure 3, the social ties of Bangladeshi and Myanmarese workers had more density compared to other ethnic groups, which may have led to a resistant political attitude. This result also suggests that a critical agent of social change for adult learners may be embodied in the formation of communities. The concept of a “community of practice” (Wenger, 1998) provides a further explanation of this point by illuminating why a resistant political attitude is relatively well founded in the two ethnic groups, compared

to other ethnic groups. That is, the elements of a community of practice such as mutual engagement and a shared repertoire (Wenger, 1998)—*Ramadan*, *Eid al-Fitr*, *Thingyan*, and *Tabotw*—within those ethnic communities over time seem to shape a particular political belief and behavior such as a resistant political attitude. In a similar vein, McAdam and Paulsen (1993) found that belonging to a community helps members become involved in social-movement activity through allowing them to contact with others. Additionally, in the sense that learning occurs in the process of substantive engagement in a community of practice, Lave and Wenger’s (1991) model of situated learning may further contribute to illuminating the process of critical adult learning.

Lastly, the years of residency of the immigrant workers showed significant correlations with both the number of directed ties ($r = .394, p < .01$) and betweenness centrality ($r = .440, p < .01$). This result suggests that as the immigrant workers live in Korea for a longer period of time, they are more likely to be connected with other immigrant workers. In other words, over time, their social ties are extended and their social positions become more important. Additionally, as they become more connected with other immigrant workers, they are more likely to have the resistant political attitudes due to more opportunities to engage in a community of practice. This is consistent with both the situational learning model and the data. The three groups categorized by political attitudes showed a different mean of years of residency: an alienated political attitude group (2.6 years), a resistant political attitude group (4.7 years), and a subordinate political attitude group (2.5 years).⁹ Thus, it can be argued that the social ties of the immigrant workers become more strengthened within their own cultural, religious identity over time where the host society is exclusive to immigrant workers. Indeed, some of the immigrant workers (e.g., S1, B1, and MY17) seemed to

reflect on their ontological positions from oppressive social contexts, and their reflection was accelerated by interconnecting with other immigrant workers within their religious communities. This behavior of reflection is viewed as the process of critical adult learning.

Limitations

There are two main limitations in regard to our results. First, there is a time-gap between data collection (in 2002) and data analysis (in 2006). This implies that recent socio-cultural changes in Korea—e.g., continuously growing immigrant populations, the organization of labor unions for immigrant workers, mounting social and public attention being paid to immigrant workers, new laws regarding immigrant workers' legal status, etc.—which substantially condition immigrant workers' day-to-day life in general and their informal learning environments in particular, were not charted by this study. Second, though we identified a positive association between immigrant workers' residential years and their network positions, because of this small sample size, statistically significant relations of critical learning to gender, education, country, and job-type were not obtained. Thus, our ongoing analyses through further data collection will pay attention to those demographic characteristics and critical learning in order to improve the strength of our results.

Conclusions

Based on critical theory, we argued that the “resistant political attitude” is conceptually linked to the characteristics of critical learning. We demonstrated that those immigrant workers who represented a resistant political attitude tended to possess more social ties and occupy more important network positions than other immigrant workers. Based on our analysis, we argue that the critical learning process of immigrant workers is closely associated with the dynamics of their social ties. In this regard, we argue that the social ties of immigrant workers are the major social contexts in which the critical learning for immigrant workers takes place. We intuitively know that people learn by communicating and interacting with others because adult learning does not

simply occur in a social vacuum. For the immigrant workers involved in this study, this meant that network size and network position influenced the shaping of critical learning. This might best explain the large number of alienated political attitudes. The existence of such attitudes might be better conceptualized as potentially “resistant” with an underdeveloped social network. Therefore, we see social ties as a key mediator bridging critical learning to a particular political attitude.

Additionally, the collective process of critical reinterpretation of everyday life seems to be a positive outcome of social ties. In other words, social ties seem to function as a conveyer for critical adult learning that are embedded in the collective reinterpretation of immigrant workers' social lives—a community of practice. The collective reinterpretation of their everyday life was also facilitated by particular religious rituals or cultural symbols (e.g., *Ramadan*, *Eid al-Fitr*, *Thinyan*, and *Tabotwe*).

Finally, critical learning mediated by social ties seems to be related to immigrant workers' efforts to change forced social conditions within the Korean context. In other words, the immigrant workers shape their political attitudes through collective and critical learning based on their social networks in Korea where the “culture of silence” (Freire, 1972) is forced. In this sense, the findings in this study are sufficient as a first approximation for understanding the characteristics of immigrant workers as critical adult learners in a non-Western context. In addition, considering the fact that undocumented immigrant workers do not have a legal right to formal education in Korea, most of them may learn many things from informal learning situations mediated by their social ties. As this is the case, the social network analysis employed in this study turned out to be a useful research method for revealing the process of critical learning of immigrant workers.

Note

¹ This framework was originally developed from the first author. Later, however, we found that Yamada (1990) also provided a political alienation model in a similar vein. Yamada suggested four types of political alienation by combining political estrangement and political distrust: alienated, apolitical, anti-establishment, and allegiant. Yamada's model enabled us to

further elaborate our conception of political attitudes.

- ² There were 320 immigrant workers enrolled in four Korean language classes. Because much of their contact information was unclear, only 122 workers were invited to participate in this sample.
- ³ More details about descriptive statistics are described in Appendices.
- ⁴ In the original survey, the level of trust was measured on a 5-value Likert scale. The type of counter-move against institutionalized discrimination was measured by a dual-response. As a result, 79% of immigrant workers showed an alienated political attitude while 3% of immigrant workers indicated a subordinate political attitude. However, since the data were coded into a 4-value Likert scale in the process of social network analysis, 39 (78%) and 2 (4%) out of the 50 immigrant workers showed an alienated and a subordinate political attitude respectively.
- ⁵ See Gould (1987) for more details about the use of betweenness centrality for non-symmetric networks.
- ⁶ A list of the 50 workers' names was provided, and then the immigrant workers chose a person whom they seek for information or advice.
- ⁷ All interview data is part of the information collected for Lee (2003).
- ⁸ By symmetrizing the directed ties, we identified some n-cliques (the largest geodesic distance between any two nodes is "2") which mostly consisted of those Bangladeshi workers who show the resistant political attitude: For example, B1 B2 B7 B9 (n-clique 1) and B1 B2 B5 B9 (n-clique 2).
- ⁹ According to an ANOVA test, there were the differences of mean among the groups in terms of residential years ($F = 11.05$, $P < .01$). However, the test turned out to be violated by Levene's test ($P < .01$) because of the significantly different sample size and the unequal variance among the groups categorized by political attitudes. Also, this significantly different sample size of immigrant workers categorized by political attitudes limited certain statistical meanings between other variables (e.g., gender, education, country, and religion) and social ties.

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Appendix A

The Demographics of 50 Immigrant Workers

Gender (Male/Female)		41 / 9	Immigrant Colleagues in Workplace (On Average)		11
Origin		8 Countries	Korean Friend (On Average)		0.8
Average Age		31.4	Immigrant Community	Whether or Not the Existence of Immigrant Community	88% (Yes)
Average Residential Years in Korea		3.0		Whether or Not the Membership of the Community, If the Community Exists	91% (Yes)
Education	Middle School Graduates	8%	Occupation Before Immigration	Farmer/Fisherman	24%
	High School Graduates	54%		Factory Worker	12%
				Service Industry Worker	12%
	College Dropouts or Graduates	38%		Self-Employed	4%
Public Servant				4%	
Administrative Staff				12%	
Technician				8%	
Marital Status (Single/Married)		40 / 10		Residential Type	Dormitory Offered by Factory
Religious Conversion to Christianity After Immigration		42%	Rental Room (Offered by Factory)		52%
			Rental Room with Roommates		8%
			Rental Room with Family		20%
Major Learning Strategy of Korean	Self-Study	8%	Legal Status	Legal Trainee	8%
	Conversation with Koreans	34%		Undocumented Worker	92%
	Learning through Institutions	58%			
	No Learning	0%			

Appendix B

The Descriptive Statistics of 50 Immigrant Workers

	Alienated Political Attitude	Resistant Political Attitude	Subordinate Political Attitude
Country (%)			
Bangladesh	5 (12.8)	5 (55.6)	0 (0)
China	7 (17.9)	1 (11.1)	0 (0)
Kazakhstan	2 (5.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Mongolia	3 (7.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Myanmar	15 (38.5)	2 (22.2)	0 (0)
Nepal	1 (2.6)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Sri Lanka	1 (2.6)	1 (11.1)	0 (0)
Vietnam	5 (12.8)	0 (0)	2 (100)
Gender (%)			
Male	30 (76.9)	9 (100)	2 (100)
Female	9 (23.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Religion (%)			
Muslim	4 (10.3)	4 (44.4)	0 (0)
Hinduism	1 (2.6)	1 (11.1)	0 (0)
Buddhism	22 (56.4)	1 (11.1)	1 (50.0)
Atheism	10 (25.6)	2 (22.2)	1 (50.0)
Russian Catholic	2 (5.1)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Others	0 (0)	1 (11.1)	0 (0)
Education (%)			
College	10 (25.6)	7 (77.8)	2 (100)
High School	26 (66.7)	1 (11.1)	0 (0)
Middle School	3 (7.7)	1 (11.1)	0 (0)
Legal Status (%)			
Un-documented worker	37 (94.9)	9 (100)	0 (0)
Documented worker (Trainee)	2 (5.1)	0 (0)	2 (100)
Total Immigrant Workers (%)	39 (78)	9 (18)	2 (4)