



Gender Division of Childcare and the Social Investment Approach to Welfare State in South Korea

Mi Young An

Department of Public Administration, Kookmin University, Seoul, Korea

한국의 아동돌봄 분배와 복지국가의 사회투자접근

안미영

국민대학교 행정학과

Objective: This article queries the gender division of childcare and its relation to the social investment approach taken by South Korea's welfare state.

Methods: We conducted descriptive and regression analysis of data on married men and women aged between 20 and 64, drawn from the 2014 Korean Time Use Survey. We distinguished learning-related from physical childcare.

Results: Wives' share of childcare was three times larger than husbands'. Relative income exerted the most powerful influence on childcare for both. For men, the effect of income was important for physical care but had a weak influence on learning-related care. In contrast, for women, the effect of income was the most important factor in both types of childcare.

Conclusion: Results suggest that married women's economic bargaining power over the division of childcare is strong in Korea. We claim that the Korean welfare state's social investment approach has strengthened the caregiving role of women by enabling them to exert their economic bargaining power over the division of childcare. This effect might be context-specific, however, and we suggest the effect of the social investment approach on gender relations depends on the socioeconomic cultural, labor market and welfare regime context.

Keywords: childcare, gender, social investment, welfare state, Korea

Introduction

The number of studies on the gender division of unpaid work in East Asia has grown rapidly over the last half decade. The gender division of unpaid work, mostly housework, in South Korea (Korea) is the focus of comparative studies (Iwai, 2017; Y.-M. Kim, 2013; Oshio, Nozaki, & Kobayashi, 2013; Tsuya, Bumpass, & Choe, 2000) and, also of within-country studies (An, 2017a; S.-Y.

Kim & Chin, 2014; S.-J. Kim & Kim, 2007; Oh, 2016). Gender differences in the division of domestic labor are subject to time, education, income and ideology. Human capital theory (Becker, 1964) suggests education affects employability and earning power. Evertsson and Neramo (2004) claim spouses' levels of education are an important dimension of their relative resources. Employment determines time availability (England & Farkas, 1986), and both autonomous and relative power relations are based on material

Corresponding Author: Mi Young An, Department of Public Administration, Kookmin University, 77 Jeongneung-ro, Seongbuk-gu, Seoul, Korea
E-mail: myan@kookmin.ac.kr

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resources. Bargaining power in negotiations over who does what in the home is determined by income (Blood & Wolfe, 1960). Husbands and wives use whatever resources they have to strike the best deal and advance their self-interests. Economic dependency (Sørensen & McLanahan, 1987), or the proportion of women's income as a contribution to family income, influences the amount of housework they do themselves, as well as their spouses' share (Bianchi et al., 2000; Bittman, England, Sayer, Flobre, & Matheson, 2003). In contrast, the socialization-gender role attitudes thesis says people socialized to believe in gender-segregated work cling to those beliefs (Coverman, 1985). Men and women with traditional perceptions of gender roles divide unpaid work more unequally than couples whose perceptions are more progressive. Studies suggest that high-earning women and lower-earning men do not always behave rationally to reduce housework (Brines, 1994; Greenstein, 2000).

Research on the gender division of childcare is limited, but researchers have found that working hours matter more for fathers' childcare time than for mothers' (Bianchi, 2011; Connelly & Kimmel, 2007; Sandberg & Hofferth, 2001). While longer working hours often decrease women's time for housework and leisure, García-Mainar, Molina, & Montuenga (2011) say that in Europe, childcare has an important investment component that requires more parental time. Sayer, Bianchi, & Robinson (2004) make the same claim in their American research. The findings of studies of the effect of income or wages are mixed. In America, higher wages decrease the amount of time that mothers but not fathers spend on childcare. Connelly and Kimmel (2007) find that higher wages make it possible for American women to negotiate childcare. In a comparative study of Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, García-Mainar et al. (2011) find childcare is subject to economic bargaining based on non-labor income; mother's contributions to the family's non-labor income reduces the time they spend on childcare. Raley, Bianchi and Wang (2012) say fathers' involvement in childcare increases when their wives are employed and contribute a greater share of household income. But a study in Europe finds material resources are less relevant for gender division of childcare (Maassen van den Brink & Groot, 1997).

Korean scholars have tested various theses to determine the effect of bargaining power and gender display. However, most of these apply to America and their applicability to the Korean context is debatable. In addition, Korean findings are inconsistent, not least

because the samples are different, ranging from all married families to dual earner families. Further, the independent variables included in the regressions vary and are measured in different ways. S.-Y. Kim and Chin (2014) analyze couples with preschool children using Time Use Survey (TUS) data for women aged between 25 and 44. They find relative income (measured as women's income as a proportion of couples' income) is related to less housework time on weekends. S.-J. Kim and Kim (2007) analyze the 2004 TUS for couples in dual-earner families; they say the relative income (measured as men's share of couple's income) has no relevance to the differences in time spent by men on housework, and they find gender display among the married working women. An (2017a) addresses the issue for couples in dual earner families considering education, employment status, occupation, working hours, absolute and relative income, and gender ideology. She measures relative income following Sørensen and McLanahan (1987) and finds no relevance of the measure on men's and women's housework. Y.-M. Kim's (2013) comparative study on Korea, Japan and Taiwan claims gender display is strong in Korea among couples aged 25 and 47.

Previous research has identified several issues. First, in research on Korea, there is less attention to how the responsibilities of caring for children within the household are allocated. However, this is important for a couple of reasons. Childcare differs from housework in that it is much more enjoyable (García-Mainar et al., 2011), and easier to hire someone for cooking and cleaning than for childcare (Ribar, 1995). Extending the point, there is a lack of attention in literature to the need to deconstruct childcare activities into physical care and learning-related care. Childcare is an important component of social investment (García-Mainar et al., 2011), but we suggest learning-related activities, such as reading books, have a stronger component of social investment than physical care, such as feeding, as the former are more directly related to cognitive development. Physical care can be viewed as feminized labor, like housework. Second, only a few studies have included time availability, income, and gender ideology in regression analysis. Consequently, the extent to which bargaining power is related to childcare division in the household when time constraints, gender ideology, and household characteristics are controlled is unclear.

Finally, it is important to understand the micro-level division of childcare in relation to macro-level social policy or the welfare state/

regime. Sociologists have demonstrated that division of housework cannot be fully understood without considering the welfare regime at a macro level (Fuwa, 2004; Geist, 2005). Geist (2005) argues that married women in social democratic welfare regimes can exert bargaining power over the division of housework, as the welfare state supports women's employment and gender equality. She further says married women in liberal welfare states exert economic bargaining power because these regimes highlight individualism, the ideology underlying the liberal tradition (O'Connor, Orloff, & Shaver, 1999). García-Mainar et al. (2011) show that the gender division of childcare in social democratic welfare states where mothers' employment is supported by the welfare state through work and family policies is less unequal than elsewhere, particularly countries where care is presumably paid informally, i.e., southern Europe.

The Korean welfare state is neither a social democratic nor a liberal regime. Neither is it similar to southern European states where care is often a paid form of work in the informal sector. The Korean welfare state is characterized by developmentalism (Kwon, 2005), and its policy is implicit about gender relations, taking the strong gender division of labor for granted. However, since the 2000s, the government has actively intervened in family and care, indicating a significant defamilialization of the caring function (An & Peng, 2016). Social expenditure on early childhood care and education (ECEC) increased from 0% of GDP in 1990 to 0.8% in 2013 (OECD, 2018a). In 2014, 35.7% of children under three years of age received formal childcare (OECD, 2018b). An and Peng (2016) claim the public-finance nexus across the public and private sectors in childcare service has important implications for the effect of childcare policy on gender relations. An (2017b) posits that if childcare providers are heavily marketed and if generous subsidies to families are available from the government to encourage the use of the market service, the government replaces men as breadwinners without viewing women as paid workers. In other words, it supplements the caring function of family without necessarily changing gender relations in the family. In Korea, where the state's financial commitment has increased, the majority of service providers have been market-based. This suggests that although Korea's childcare provision might have encouraged more women into the labor market through paid forms of care, at an ideational level, it does not view Korean women's socioeconomic role as that of paid workers.

We should also consider the effect of family policy on the gender division of labor in context-specific ways. The welfare state comprises more than politics and policy instruments. It is embedded in a socioeconomic and cultural context (Pfau-Effinger, 2005). The effect of a policy cannot be assumed to be similar across societies. Thus, it is necessary to remember the context of childcare provisions. We suggest that a woman's labor market participation behavior and her gender role ideology are important and related concerns; a woman's decision on whether to work for pay is significantly related to her belief on its influence on her children (Orloff, 2009). Korean women still leave the labor market to raise their children, showing an M-shaped pattern of age-specific labor market participation. This pattern is related to attitudes to or preferences for childrearing. In a national survey on the family in 2015, 32.7% of respondents strongly agreed and 48.3% agreed that fathers and mothers have equal childcare responsibilities (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2015a). In a national survey on childcare in 2015, 64.9% of mothers with preschool children chose not to work for pay in order to concentrate on childrearing (Ministry of Health and Welfare, 2015b).

The social investment approach to welfare state has appeared in OECD countries since the late 1990s. Social investment emphasizes the development of human capital (Esping-Andersen, Gallie, Hemerijck, & Myles, 2002). Peng (2014: 143) points out that childcare expansion in Korea is shaped by the idea of social investment. Of course, social investment is not new in East Asian welfare regimes; social policies in these countries were designed to facilitate the development of human capital to support the industrial economic base. This, in turn, strengthened a structural context that emphasized the human capital development of children, making the social reproduction of the family and women's role as caregivers imperative. An (2018) finds the number of children younger than 10 decreases stay-at-home mothers' share of housework; she does not find that effect for married working mothers, but it appears in married women between the ages of 20 and 39 who are likely to have young children and, also in women over 40. The findings indicate that being a stay-at-home-mother reduces a woman's share of housework. Despite the substantial growth of formal childcare, the role of grandparents in childcare has remained important in Korea: Song (2017) reports that 20-40% of households with preschool children have grandparents

involved in childcare. In short, childrearing in Korea might be a source of empowerment for all married women.

This article asks three questions.

Question 1

How are the learning-related and physical care responsibilities for children allocated between husbands and wives?

Question 2

To what extent, if at all, does income determines husbands' and wives' share of childcare? Are there differences in its influence by types of childcare?

Question 3

How can we explain the role of relative income on share of childcare in relation to the Korean welfare state's social investment approach?

We expect the division of childcare to be gendered. But we also expect married women to negotiate the division of childcare because the social investment approach has highlighted the family's social reproduction function and the role of women. By deconstructing childcare, we expect to find gendered patterns in the relationship between relative income and childcare. Previous research tells us that unequal division of housework is related to men's greater bargaining power. Thus, we expect relative income to be important for married men's share of physical care, as it is similar to housework in being feminized labor, but it may not be important for their share of learning-related childcare.

Methods

Study sample

The data for this study came from fourth wave of the Korean Time Use Survey (TUS) 2014, conducted by the government every five years since 1999. We selected a sample of 24,268 married cohabitating people between the ages of 20 and 64. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the sample. Husbands generally were more

educated than wives, 53.2% of married men and 43% of married women had at least a college education. Men's worked an average of approximately 385 minutes per day; women worked an average of 181.2 minutes. About half of the married men had traditional attitudes on gender roles, while only 29.1% of married women did. Among male respondents, 42.3% reported being in good or very good health while 37.6% of females did. On average, married men were economically independent at 0.6, while women were dependent at -0.3. Nearly 70% of the families earned less than 50 million won annually.

Measurement

Time spent on childcare collected in the TUS includes physical care, teaching, reading, playing, nursing, and other care or children under 10 and their siblings 10 and older. Childcare included both main and simultaneous activities, including time spent on travelling for housework-related activities. We considered teaching, reading and playing as learning-related childcare; nursing and other care are considered physical care. Our dependent variable was a proportional share of childcare as it addressed inter-gender differences while the absolute amount of time spent addressed intra-gender differences. The share is important in bargaining power as we cannot assume that a who spends more time on childcare experiences more unequal division of childcare than a woman who spends less. A larger value indicated more time on the activity than the spouse.

Relative income was based on monthly income, which the TUS collected using income band (1: no income, 2: less than 50, 3: 50-100, 4: 100-150; 5: 150-200, 6:200-250, 7: 250-300, 8:300-350, 9:350-400, 10:400-450, 11:450-500, 12: more than 500). We assigned 0 to no income and middle value for the response category from 2 to 11, and 500 million won for the response category 12. Our relative income variable indicated economic dependency (Sørensen & McLanahan, 1987), measured as $(\text{respondent's income} - \text{spouse's income}) / (\text{respondent's income} + \text{spouse's income})$. The value ranged from -1 to 1 where 0 indicated no economic dependency between the couple, a value larger than 0 means economically independent, and a value smaller than 0 means economically dependent.

We included economic dependency squared to find the gender

Table 1
Sample

	Men (<i>n</i> = 11,732)	Women (<i>n</i> = 12,536)
Age	47.1 (9.5)	45.4 (9.8)
Education (college and above)	53.2%	43%
Working hours	384.8 (270.8)	181.2 (238.8)
Gender ideology (traditional)	49.1%	29.1%
Health status (good or very good)	42.3%	37.6%
Number of children aged less than 10	0.5 (0.8)	0.5 (0.8)
Economic dependence	0.6 (0.5)	-0.3 (0.6)
Annual household income (less than 50 million won)	68%	69.3%

Note. *N* = 24,268. Unit; *M* (*SD*).

Table 2
Division of Childcare

	Men		Women	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Share of childcare	21.9	31.2	77.6	31.7
Share of learning-related childcare	24.2	33.2	75.9	33.2
Share of physical childcare	12.5	24.6	87.3	24.7

display effects. The thesis suggested curvilinear effects and we included economic dependency squared as done by Greenstein (2000). The curvilinear effect in division of unpaid work among men is that those who economically dependent do not spend more time or take more share of unpaid work than those who are economically independent. The effect among women is that more economically independent women do not spend less time on or take a smaller share of unpaid work than women who are economically dependent do. We see this effect if economic dependency decreases unpaid work time and share of unpaid work while squared term decreases it for men. We also see this effect if economic dependency decreases unpaid work time and share of unpaid work while the squared term increases the unpaid work for women.

The TUS collected data on education (0 = *no education*; 1 = *primary school*; 2 = *middle school*; 3 = *high school*; 4 = *2-3 year college*; 5 = *4 year college*; 6 = *master's degree*; 7 = *doctorate*). We recoded those who did not have a college education as 0, and 1 for those with a college education or more. We considered time availability, measured as working hours (both main and simultaneous activities), including time for travel to work as an average minutes-per-day in a seven-day week. The TUS collected

information on gender role perspectives by asking whether respondents *strongly agree* (1), *agree* (2), *disagree* (3), *strongly disagree* (4) that a man's role was to be the breadwinner and that a woman's role was to take care of the home and raise children. A smaller value indicated a traditional attitude.

Controls included respondent age, health status, household income, the number of children younger than 10, and weekdays/weekends. Health status can be controlled for division of unpaid work (Bianchi et al., 2000) and we used information that the TUS collects with response categories *very good* (1), *good* (2), *fair* (3), *bad* (4), *very bad* (5). We recoded those with good and very good as 1 and others as 0. We checked multicollinearity of all our variables and so we did not include spouse's age.

Analysis procedure

We run descriptive statistics to identify patterns of division of childcare. Then we run regression analyses to find the effect of the relative income. We will use the results on the second question to answer our third question: how social investment might affect the micro level of gender division of childcare.

Table 3
Regression Results on Share of Childcare

	Men		Women	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SD</i>
Constant	28.586***	3.517	71.996***	3.343
Economic dependence	-4.839**	1.419	-5.345***	1.053
Economic dependence ²	1.911	1.492	-5.252***	1.347
Age	0.054	0.052	-0.054	0.051
Education (college and above)	-2.264**	0.868	-1.341	0.87
Spouse's education (college and above)	1.258	0.871	1.344	0.902
Gender ideology (progressive)	2.233***	0.434	0.648	0.446
Spouse's gender ideology (progressive)	-0.591	0.448	-2.019***	0.432
Working hours	-0.046***	0.002	-0.039***	0.002
Spouse's working hours	0.036***	0.002	0.048***	0.002
Health status (good or very good)	2.613***	0.724	0.66	0.729
Spouse's health status (good or very good)	-1.185	0.73	-2.679***	0.722
Household income	0.003	0.218	0.218	0.215
Number of children less than 10	1.57**	0.472	-1.552**	0.471
Weekends	3.051**	0.883	-2.453**	0.867
Adjusted model <i>R</i> ²	0.217***		0.224***	
Durbin-Watson	1.703		1.702	

** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

Results

We asked how childcare is divided between married men and women in Korea and the effect of relative income. We conducted descriptive statistics and regression analyses. Table 2 shows the results for the first question. Men's share of childcare was on average 21.9% and the corresponding figure for women was 77.6% for childcare. Men's share of learning-related childcare was higher (24.2%) while the share of physical care related activities was 12.5%. Women's average share of physical childcare was 87.3% while learning-related childcare assumed 75.9%.

Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5 show the regression outputs for the second question. It shows that a man's share of childcare is related to his economic dependency ($B = -4.839$), but there is no gender display. Men with more education performed less housework ($B = -2.264$). A traditional attitude on gender roles indicates a lower degree of a share in childcare division ($B = 2.233$). Korean married men's share of childcare significantly increased during weekends ($B = 3.051$), and with a larger number of the young children ($B = 1.57$). Married men's good health increases his share of childcare (B

$= 2.613$).

Women's share of childcare increases with economic dependency ($B = -5.345$), and there is no gender display (economic dependency squared $B = -5.252$). A woman's share of childcare is also associated with her spouse's gender ideology and her and her spouse's time availability. A husband's good health decreases a wife's share of childcare ($B = -2.679$). Interestingly, a larger number of young children means reduced share of childcare ($B = -1.552$), which perhaps reflects the fact that those with younger children tend to use multi-childcare arrangements. Women share less of the childcare during weekends ($B = -2.453$). Both men and women's share of childcare in Korea are related to resources, time availability and gender ideology. However, economic dependency matters more than time availability and gender ideology.

Table 4 shows regression results on share of learning-related childcare among men and women. For married men and women, share of childcare depends on whether it is weekends or weekdays and number of children younger than 10. Men take on a larger part of childcare on the weekend when they have more children. In contrast, women share less of the learning-related childcare

Table 4
Regression Results on Share of Learning-Related Childcare

	Men		Women	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SD</i>
Constant	38.58***	4.92	61.871***	4.706
Economic dependence	-3.776 ⁺	2.089	-6.648***	1.741
Economic dependence ²	1.797	2.164	-7.594***	2.1
Age	-0.165*	0.08	0.209*	0.081
Education (college and above)	-2.276 ⁺	1.168	-2.59*	1.126
Spouse's education (college and above)	2.403*	1.131	0.92	1.215
Gender ideology (progressive)	2.188***	0.577	1.086*	0.599
Spouse's gender ideology (progressive)	-0.976	0.599	-2.113***	0.575
Working hours	-0.045***	0.002	-0.029***	0.003
Spouse's working hours	0.027***	0.003	0.045***	0.002
Health status (good or very good)	2.288*	0.956	2.035*	0.957
Spouse's health status (good or very good)	-2.161*	0.959	-2.356*	0.954
Household income	-0.168	0.299	0.426	0.301
Number of children less than 10	3.369***	0.606	-3.132***	0.602
Weekends	8.842***	1.226	-8.967***	1.221
Adjusted model <i>R</i> ²	0.209***		0.211***	
Durbin-Watson	1.820		1.794	

⁺*p* < 0.1. **p* < 0.05. ****p* < 0.001.

on weekends. Husbands' share of the childcare increased their wives were more educated ($B = 2.403$) if the husbands have a more progressive gender ideology ($B = 2.188$). While a husband's working hours reduce his share of the learning-related childcare, that share increases if his wife's working hours increase. It is important to note that husbands' relative income has a weak association with their share of the learning-related childcare.

Women's share of learning-related childcare decreases if they have more years of education; unlike with husbands, the spouse's education has no relevance. Progressive ideas on gender roles decrease mothers' share of childcare as do husbands' progressive ideas. Like their male counterparts, women's working hours decrease the share of childcare and husbands' longer working hour increase it. It is important to note that unlike men's, women's economic independence means less of the learning-related childcare and they do not do the gender display.

Table 5 shows regression results on share of physical childcare. Similar to learning-related childcare in table 4, the number of children under 10 means a larger share of the childcare for husbands. There is no difference between weekdays and weekends.

Husbands' share of the physical childcare increases when they have progressive ideas on gender roles and when they are more educated. Interestingly, unlike table 4's findings on learning-related childcare, economic independence has a significant association with the share of the physical childcare, indicating that economic independence means a smaller share of childcare.

For married women, share of physical childcare is subject to number of children younger than 10 and more meant a smaller share of the childcare. Women's but not men's physical childcare is related to the spouse's education ($B = -2.715$) and gender ideology ($B = -1.484$). It is also different from the results in table 4 that wives' share of leaning-related childcare is not related to husbands' education. As we found in table 4 for learning-related childcare, economic independence means a smaller share of childcare for women. In addition, there is no gender display phenomenon.

Discussion

We examined the way the Korean welfare state's social investment

Table 5
Regression Results on Share of Physical Childcare

	Men		Women	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SD</i>
Constant	19.269***	3.837	82.139***	3.723
Economic dependence	-6.241***	1.666	-4.174**	1.396
Economic dependence ²	3.779*	1.713	-4.18*	1.685
Age	-0.168**	0.063	0.171**	0.064
Education (college and above)	2.081*	0.92	-0.771	0.9
Spouse's education (college and above)	0.737	0.897	-2.715**	0.962
Gender ideology (progressive)	1.479*	0.456	0.672	0.472
Spouse's gender ideology (progressive)	-0.604	0.469	-1.484**	0.457
Working hours	-0.027***	0.002	-0.027***	0.002
Spouse's working hours	0.025***	0.002	0.029***	0.002
Health status (good or very good)	1.085	0.757	0.486	0.766
Spouse's health status (good or very good)	-0.379	0.764	-1.14	0.76
Household income	0.389	0.241	-0.189	0.243
Number of children less than 10	3.052***	0.482	-3.125***	0.482
Weekends	0.697	0.963	-0.516	0.962
Adjusted model <i>R</i> ²	0.141***		0.141***	
Durbin-Watson	1.744		1.713	

* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$. *** $p < 0.001$.

approach is related to the gender division of childcare. To this end, we analyzed the effect of relative income and we divided childcare into learning-related and physical childcare. Results using data from the 2014 Korean Time Use Survey showed that women's share of childcare was three times larger than men's. Childcare division was less gendered than housework division: women did four times as much housework as men (An, 2018). Relative income was the most important factor for share of childcare for both men and women. For married men, it was weakly related to learning-related childcare but strongly related to physical care. It was a significant factor in married women's share of childcare.

Unlike previous research, we did not find gender display (S.-J. Kim & Kim, 2007; Y.-M. Kim, 2013). Again contrary to previous findings (García-Mainar et al., 2011; Masssen van den Brink & Groot, 1997), we found relative income was the most important factor in the gendered division of childcare in Korea. We therefore claim that the social investment approach may have created an institutional context in which married women can exert economic power over the division of childcare. Equally important, however, this effect might be context- or society-specific. In Korea, the

social investment approach operates in a context where the family's welfare provision and function of social production is much more important than in other welfare states; human capital development is a way of life for individuals and families alike; women's age-specific labor market participation still shows the M-shaped pattern; perspectives on mothers' employment and children's is significantly traditional. Thus, the effect of the social investment approach on gender relations needs to be analyzed to its broader socioeconomic, cultural, labor market, and welfare regime context.

We suggest that women's empowerment at the household level in a familialistic developmental welfare state can be different from their empowerment in a welfare state focusing on individual social rights or where individualization is a strong ideological value. However, it is important to note that the division of paid and unpaid work is much more unequal in Korea than elsewhere. Therefore, we suggest how Korean government brings married women, particularly mothers, into the labor market and makes men do more caring is an issue.

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Notes

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Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

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ORCID

Mi Young An <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9561-4483>

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