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MARGINALITY AND COPING:
A COMMUNAL CONTEXTUAL NARRATIVE APPROACH TO
PASTORAL CARE WITH KOREAN AMERICAN CHRISTIANS

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the University of Denver and
the Iliff School of Theology Joint PhD Program

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Jaesang Lyu

June, 2009

Advisor: Dr. Carrie Doehring

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Author: Jaesang Lyu
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ABSTRACT

Focusing on Korean American experiences of racism, sexism, and intergenerational conflicts related to the acculturation process, this dissertation examines the social reality of marginality and constructs a communal contextual narrative approach to pastoral care. Current approaches to pastoral care in the Korean American church encourage a deferring style of religious coping that maintains the status quo—the internalized status of marginality—without activating self agency for the fulfillment of one’s own selfhood within the communal life of religious communities. A communally grounded sense of self agency is described in terms of three aspects of Korean indigenous culture: 1) *uri* (we-ness), 2) *jeong* (communal empathic connection), and 3) *han* (the experience of suffering from interdependent injustice).

A communal contextual narrative approach challenges the limitations of passive (deferring) ways of coping that disengage personal narratives from biblical narratives. This approach encourages a collaborative coping style, which emphasizes the partnership of human agency with divine agency in the context of the faith community. Asian (Korean) American feminist theologies, along with theologies of divine marginalization are used to describe a process of deconstructing dominant and destructive narratives and reconstructing alternative liberating narratives based on biblical stories about

marginalization. In elaborating how to implement this model of pastoral care, this dissertation draws upon 1) narrative therapy approaches developed by White (1990, 2007) and other narrative therapists; 2) the “biblical narrative model” developed by Wimberly (1994, 2003, and 2008); and 3) the indigenous practice of *han-pu-ri* as a process of change. Four steps are outlined: 1) evoking sacredness, 2) naming and externalizing the problem, 3) re-authoring one’s story, and 4) re-membering and reconnecting with the community and God.

Finally, this dissertation proposes a vision of the Korean American church as an *Uri* community that continues to weave the human narratives with biblical narratives, in which person, community, and God collaborate as partners for authoring life-giving stories that reflect the full potentiality of life. By reframing negative experiences of marginalization within the larger narratives of both the *Uri* community and biblical narratives of marginalization, this dissertation challenges Korean immigrants and their families to move from social marginality defined by oppressive narratives to authentic marginality defined by preferred narratives about God.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Thesis and Scope.....	7
Methodology and Rationale.....	15
Significance and Limitations	19
Chapter Outline.....	20
CHAPTER TWO: KOREAN AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR EXPERIENCE OF MARGINALITY	24
The Experience of Marginality and Constructing Theologies of Marginality.....	25
Multiple Marginalities	37
Marginalization Created by Racial Discrimination	37
Marginalization Created by Conflict between Different Generations: 1 st , 2 nd , and 1.5 Generations.....	46
Marginalization Created by Gender Roles.....	51
Immigrant Stress and Lack of Self Agency	55
Pastoral Theological Implications.....	59
Conclusion	67
CHAPTER THREE: RELIGIOUS COPING AND KOREAN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HERITAGE	69
Religious Coping	72
Religious Coping as a Cognitive Process	72
Searching for the Sacred.....	75
Religious Support.....	79
Different Coping Styles and Self Agency.....	81
Positive and Negative Religious Coping	84
Connecting Coping with Culture	87
Interdependent Self (<i>Uri</i>) and the Orientation of Deference	90
Interdependent Emotion: <i>Jeong</i>	97
Interdependent Injustice: <i>Han</i>	99
Transformative Coping: <i>Han-Pu-Ri</i>	103
Conclusion: Toward Collaborative Coping	106
CHAPTER FOUR: A COMMUNAL CONTEXTUAL NARRATIVE APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS COPING.....	109
Three Vignettes.....	111
A Man in the Process of Dying.....	111
A Man with Frozen Memories.....	113
A Man Experiencing Religious Conflicts.....	114
Saturated Narratives and the Problem of Coping	117
A Communal Contextual Narrative Approach	121

The Communal Contextual Paradigm.....	122
A Narrative Approach: Empowering Self-Agency.....	128
Narrative Construction as a Political Process.....	133
Constructing Sacred Narratives.....	137
Conservation and Transformation: Theological Tasks of Remembering and Imagining.....	141
Reconstructing the Narratives of Korean American Immigrants	
From Women’s Perspectives.....	146
Korean American Women and their stories.....	146
Transforming Narratives: Reconstructing the Story of Martha and Mary (Luke 10: 38-42).....	156
Conclusion.....	160
CHAPTER FIVE: A COMMUNAL CONTEXTUAL NARRATIVE MODEL OF PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING.....	162
Narrative Therapy.....	165
Wimberly’s Biblical Narrative Model.....	170
<i>Han-Pu-Ri</i> : An Indigenous Communal Contextual Narrative Practice of Healing and Liberation.....	177
A Communal Contextual Model of Korean American Pastoral Care and Counseling.....	183
Stage One: Evoking Sacredness.....	184
Stage Two: Naming and Externalizing.....	187
Externalizing Conversation.....	190
Externalizing Racism, Sexism, and Cultural Prejudice.....	193
Stage Three: Re-authoring.....	197
The Book of Job: Privileging God-conversation over dominant oppressive narratives.....	199
The Case of Debbie.....	202
Stage Four: Re-membering.....	204
Conclusion.....	206
CHAPTER SIX – ENVISIONING <i>URI</i> COMMUNITY.....	208
Back to the Well: Re-Villaging.....	211
Weaving the Story of Radical Relationality Together.....	216
The Ministry of “Being With”: Remembering and Re-membering.....	219
Strategies for Communal Pastoral Care.....	224
Intentionality: Definitional Ceremony.....	224
Overcoming <i>Han</i> through Liberative <i>Jeong</i>	226
Reconstructing Indigenous Symbols: The Case of the Lakeshore Presbyterian Church.....	228
Late Comers: Partner of God’s Grace.....	231
Conclusion: Communal Pastoral Agents.....	232
Bibliography.....	238

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Korean Americans live in the reality of a hyphenated identity: they are identified as being both Korean and American; at the same time they may feel that they are neither Korean nor American fully. It is an experience of being at the margins of both Korean and American cultures, and this experience of marginality can be most acute in times of crisis. The challenges faced by first generation Korean Americans, of constructing multiple identities, are exacerbated by a social context in which they experience marginalization. Their experience of being on the margins of American society stands in stark contrast to the experiences of those with multiple social privileges (Lee, 1995).¹ They may not feel like citizens of the United States when they are treated as if they are permanent foreigners. Meanwhile, they do not belong in their home country even though they speak Korean and share core cultural values with other Koreans.

In this space of in-betweenness, they often maintain their original culture as a memory from their past. Their children remember Korean culture through the unchanging narratives told by their parents. It is not uncommon for Korean American immigrants to conserve and maintain traditional values that were practiced when they

¹ Marginality is experienced not only by immigrants, but also by those marginalized by other aspects of their social identities such as sex, age, disability, and other factors based on the politics of differences.

lived in Korea; values that have since been changed by Koreans in their home country. Anthropologists identify this phenomenon as a “frozen culture” in which “an immigrant group maintains the culture of origin as it was at their time of emigrating.”²

In this dissertation, the primary focus will be on marginality resulting from immigrant status—namely, a condition of being both Korean and American, while not belonging to either culture fully. Thus, the focus of marginality is twofold. On the one hand, marginal experiences are generated from the hosting culture that is shaped by the dynamics of racism, the economic system, and the sociopolitical system, etc. On the other hand, the Korean cultural heritage, experienced in terms of its gender politics based on Confucian patriarchy and intergenerational conflicts between first and second generation, can reinforce the experiences of marginality within the Korean American community. By focusing in turn on oppressive dynamics experienced in 1) racism, 2) gender inequality, and 3) intergenerational cultural conflicts, this dissertation will examine the ways in which Korean American immigrants live in constant conflict between two cultures, which can result in double oppression for the marginalized among the marginalized, especially Korean American women.

The status of marginality often provokes a sense of powerlessness, helplessness, and identity diffusion, and inhibits the assertion of self agency. The experience of

² The concept of “frozen culture” captured my imagination during my internship at the Asian Pacific Development Center in Denver, CO, where I practiced and learned about community mental health for Asian Americans. Encountering Asian immigrants and their children, I found that a culture could stay in a relatively fixed form of memory, and that an appreciation for this culture was necessary. When the past is remembered in this way--as a frozen culture--there is idealization of the past, feelings of loss, and rigidity.

marginality results not only in psychological distress but also threatens families, community, and the church since it can be part of a chain of abusive power dynamics and conflicts.³ In this context of marginality, it is an ongoing challenge for Korean Americans to maintain their sense of self as positive, to construct authentic theologies that continue to offer and shape their unique identities as Korean American Christians, and to grow as whole persons, balanced and harmonized between self and the world. The Korean American church is challenged as well as called to provide a caring ministry that can help them (1) deal with marginality and cope with psycho-spiritual distress and (2) construct theologies that are relevant and meaningful to their experiences of constructing multiple identities.

As oppressive as experiences of marginality can be, such experiences can also be revelatory, as liberation theologians have demonstrated. The challenge of constructing multiple identities contains the opportunity to inhabit one's theology in new ways. Indeed, those on the margins can provide unique perspectives on religious traditions. For example, Korean and Korean American feminist theologians have constructed liberation theologies that address many of the tensions experienced by Korean Americans (Chung, 1991; Joh, 2006). Their theologies often challenge Korean American Christians who want to maintain their cultural and theological traditions in the face of all the stresses of being immigrants. In this dissertation, I will privilege these feminist perspectives, asserting that their experiences of being on the margins offer unique perspectives on how

³ The lack of power in society is a primary factor that can contribute to abusive relationships in family, church, and community (see Poling, 1991, 2002).

Korean Americans live with marginality, constructing multiple identities and multiple ways of appropriating their cultural and theological traditions.

Since coping is at the heart of learning how to live as immigrants, I will consider the effectiveness of different styles of religious coping of Korean Americans. In the past 15 years, psychologists of religion have done extensive empirical research on how people use religion to cope with stress. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define coping as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of person” (p. 141).

While this dissertation will not test empirical hypotheses about religious coping among Korean American immigrants,⁴ the findings of the extensive empirical studies of coping, and in particular, the work of Pargament, a leader in this field, will be used to reflect upon the faith practices of Korean Americans, in much the same way that Pargament (2007) incorporates the findings of this research into the practice of counseling. Religious resources for coping with stress are especially helpful for those who feel marginalized.

For those with limited means and few alternatives, religion can take on even greater power as one of the few genuine resources for living. Perhaps this is one reason why we see religious involvement in coping more evident among members of less powerful groups in society—blacks, women, the elderly, the poor, and the more troubled. (Pargament, 1997, p.146)

⁴ While such empirical research has not yet fully examined how Asian and specifically Korean and Korean American people use religious coping, initial research studies confirm what is commonly described as a deferring or passive style of coping among Korean Americans.

Religious coping is especially important in a Korean American religious context, in which seventy percent of Korean immigrants are affiliated with Christian churches, even though many of them were non-Christian before their immigration to the United States (Hurh & Kim, 1990).⁵

Religion may be one of the “most available” and the “most compelling” resources Korean Americans have for coping.⁶ Indeed, as this dissertation will demonstrate, and the work of Korean and Korean American feminist theologians attests, religion can provide ways for Korean Americans to live out their faith authentically. The Korean American church has the potential to play a significant role by (1) providing coping resources that theologically interpret their current life in light of narratives about the divine and (2) offering social networks of care and resistance.

However, religion is not always positively related to coping; religious coping can result in negative outcomes or the process of coping can be negative.⁷ It can exacerbate

⁵ For further information about the relationship between religion and immigration, see Kwon (2003) and Hurh and Kim (1990).

⁶ Pargament argues that two major characteristics of religion in relation to coping are its availability and compelling force. For Korean Americans, the church is the most available resource in times of crisis; it also can provide a supporting community that functions as the extended family. On the other hand, spiritually the church is compelling because it easily connects its members to meaning systems.

⁷ Through empirical research, Pargament and his colleagues identified positive and negative religious coping patterns: positive religious coping includes a secure relationship with God, a sense of spirituality, a belief that there is meaning to be found in life, and a sense of spiritual connectedness with others. In contrast, negative religious coping involves a general religious orientation that is, itself, in tension and turmoil, marked by insecure relationships with God, a tenuous and ominous view of the world, and ongoing religious struggle (Pargament, 2002b).

the stresses experienced by Korean Americans, especially when they experience their communities of faith abandoning or disappointing them. Pargament (1997) notes,

The feeling that the congregation or God has somehow abandoned or disappointed people in their worst moments seems to be accompanied by other powerful feelings as well: hopelessness, despair, and resentment...Expressions of religious discontent with congregation and God are often tied with poorer outcomes. Those who report greater dissatisfaction with clergy, congregation members, and the deity also report poorer mental health status, more negative mood, and a poorer resolution to the negative life event. (p. 291)

Especially in the context of the marginality experienced by Korean Americans, religion can emphasize passive coping styles (Bjorck, Cuthbertson, Thurman, & Lee, 2001), which encourage acceptance and endurance of oppression instead of resistance and transformation.

Thus, it is important to ask questions about whether religion contributes to positive or negative coping in a Korean American context.⁸ Drawing upon religious coping theory and research, I will challenge current practices of pastoral care that foster passive coping and I will construct a conceptual model of pastoral care that uses a communal contextual narrative approach⁹ designed to enhance positive coping while taking into account the complexity of the lives of Korean American immigrants and their families.

⁸ Combining research on coping styles and coping activities, Pargament and his colleagues constructed and tested the Brief RCOPE, measuring two patterns of coping: *positive* (spiritual support, collaboration, benevolent religious reframing) and *negative* (discontent with congregation, negative religious reframing) (Pargament, Koenig, & Perez, 2000).

⁹ Narrative is defined as “an account of an event or events: storytelling,” “a selected sequences of life,” and “the mental structuring process” (Payne, 2006, p. 19).

Thesis and Scope

My thesis is that a communal contextual narrative approach to pastoral care supports Korean American immigrants and their families as they construct multiple identities and cope with marginality, by enhancing a communally grounded sense of self agency in ways that shape authentic relations with their communities of faith and God, empowering them to construct authentic theologies.¹⁰ Self agency will be explored mainly using two theoretical psychological perspectives: communal contextual narrative approaches to counseling, and psychological perspectives on how people use religion to cope with stress. I will connect this notion of self agency to three aspects of Korean indigenous culture: 1) *Uri* (we-ness), 2) *jeong* (communal empathic connection), and 3) *han* (the experience of suffering from interdependent injustice).

The communal contextual narrative approach envisions pastoral care as a co-creating process that draws upon human and narratives about the divine in a creative tension in the context of faith community. In the story-making process that characterizes positive coping, biblical narratives—biblical settings, characters, plots, and traditions—are woven into personal narratives in a transforming way for both persons and communities of faith. Anderson and Foley (1998) say, “We are transformed in part because we begin to understand our story as part of larger, transcendent narratives. God has chosen to coauthor a redemptive story for us and with us in human history...” (p. 37).

¹⁰ I am drawing upon theoretical perspectives from narrative therapy to define self agency as the “capacity to intervene in their own lives and relationships” (White & Epston, 1990, p.16). The role of self agency is crucial to the change process, as Korean American Christians continuously shape their identities in the midst of various cultural dynamics associated with immigration, such as racism, fear of not belonging, intergenerational conflict, gender politics and so forth.

Therefore, a particular goal of pastoral care in this model is to recognize personal narrative as part of divine drama and to enhance self agency and authentic relationships with one's community of faith, by identifying and living out these co-authored stories in contexts that are oppressive. Anderson and Foley (1998) say, "The future of faith communities depends on their capacity to foster an environment in which human and divine narratives regularly intersect" (p. 41).

The second theoretical perspective that will be used to understand self agency is psychological theories of how people draw upon religion to cope with stress. Pargament (1997) identifies three different coping styles based on the relationship between God and the self in coping process: 1) the self-directing approach, wherein people rely on themselves rather than on God; 2) the deferring approach, in which the responsibility for coping is passively deferred to God; and 3) the collaborative approach, in which the individual and God are both active partners in coping.

Initial research studies demonstrate that the deferring style¹¹ predominates among Korean Americans who draw upon their religion to cope with stress. Koreans Americans are reported to show "more passive coping behaviors (accepting responsibility, religious

¹¹ "The deferring style was related to a greater sense of control by God, doctrinal orthodoxy, and extrinsic religiousness" (Pargament, 1997, p. 182). In relation to this finding, my argument is that Korean American Christians need to develop self agency so that they can make more intrinsic connections between their life narratives and religious narratives.

coping, distancing, and escape-avoidance) than the Caucasians”: they tend to feel “more helpless” and use “more passive coping” (Bjorck et al., 2001, p. 436).¹²

This deferring coping style is closely related to Korean heritage of a collectivist culture, which emphasizes *Uri* (we) instead of *Na* (I). Koreans have a strong group orientation, which is expressed in *jeong*, a feeling of togetherness that enhances a sense of cohesive self and enriches interdependent relational dynamics. However, *jeong* can be a source of oppression when it fails to recognize the ways in which power differences can exacerbate marginalization. Historically, Korean women have taken the role of maintaining *Uri* at the expense of their individuality. The emotional pain that results from enduring such injustice is described as *han*. *Han* is an indigenous term in Asia that describes the emotional pain of the marginalized, as they experience victimization within systems of relational injustice and in the presence of evil.¹³ *Han* arises in situations of helplessness and powerlessness when a person feels that he or she cannot change the situation in the system of an oppressive collectivist culture. *Han* can be experienced as

¹² This research was a comparative study of ethnicity and coping among Korean Americans, Filipinos, and Caucasians; 228 participants completed the questionnaires: 86 Caucasian Americans, 93 Korean Americans, and 49 Filipino Americans. Although this is the only empirical study of religious coping among Korean Americans, my own pastoral and teaching experiences convince me that many Korean American Christians use a deferring style, which inhibits a sense of self agency and a more authentic expression of Christian faith.

¹³ “Han is an Asian, particularly Korean, term used to describe the depths of human suffering” (Park, 1993, p. 15).

an “internalized and suppressed feeling” and can cause *hwa-byung*¹⁴ (a passive form of *han*). At other times, *han* can be expressed in the form of antisocial or aggressive behaviors (an active form of *han*).

Traditionally, Shamanistic interventions, notably in the ritual of *han-pu-ri*,¹⁵ were coping methods in which people could interpret and cope with the unbearable feelings of *han*. In this ritual, *han* is named specifically in religious narratives that provide a transcendent dimension to their suffering. The explanation of *han* in spiritual terms can be helpful in situations in which there are no other ways to solve the problem but not in the situations in which individuals or the community need to take action that challenges oppression. *Han-pu-ri* can be limited as a ritual for coping with stress because it may not address the changes needed at relational and systemic levels beyond the personal religious level; in other words, it may reinforce a passive status and encourage a deferring coping style in situations where people need to use self agency to resist and transform systems of oppression.¹⁶

The deferring style of coping is “tied to a number of indications of poorer competence: a lower sense of personal control, a greater sense of control by chance, lower self esteem, less painful problem-solving skills, and greater intolerance for

¹⁴ *Hwa-byung* is a Korean culture bound syndrome attributed to the suppression of anger and expressed as somatic complaints including insomnia, excessive tiredness, loss of appetite, and muscle pains (DSM IV, 1994, p. 846).

¹⁵ *Han-pu-ri* is a ritual in which a Shaman (religious counselor or therapist), acting as a spiritual mediator, coauthors the stories of *han* with victims and other participants and relieves the deep wounds of *han*.

¹⁶ I will reconstruct *han-pu-ri* as a practice of liberation in Chapter five.

difference between people” (Pargament, 1997, p.182). The deferring style of coping is not only less effective but also morally problematic at times, as a person may be forced to accommodate to oppressive social systems.¹⁷ For instance, the suffering that comes with having immigrant status can be interpreted as a cross that has to be silently endured while one is obedient to authority, rather than as a symbol for resisting marginality. The deferring style of coping can reduce the richness of theological meanings to a simplistic and moralistic submission to divine authority.

In contrast to the deferring coping, a collaborative style of coping can enhance self agency. A collaborative style of coping can be fostered through the exploration of personal narratives—the “living human documents” described by Boisen (1936) and later Gerkin (1984)—which can provide the resources for constructing theologies that strengthen a communally-grounded sense of self agency and help people resist oppression. Liberation theologies foster such a collaborative style, and feminist Korean and Korean American liberation theologies (Chung, 2004; Joh, 2006; Kwon & Doehring, 2004) provide illustrations of how to implement a collaborative style for those experiencing life on the margins because of immigrant stress. Thus far, pastoral caregivers in the Korean American context have not yet implemented the work of Korean and Korean American feminists into a model of pastoral care that addresses the significance of personal narratives for enhancing the resisting, liberating, and

¹⁷ I am not arguing that the deferring style of coping is always harmful; Pargament states that the deferring coping style is helpful for coping in situations when people have no control over outcomes, such as experiences of the sudden death of loved ones or natural disasters. It can be morally problematic when the religious narratives that shape deferring coping styles inhibit one’s self agency and choice.

transforming functions of pastoral care; instead, models of pastoral care have overvalued the authoritative role of religious narratives in what constitutes a “moral instructional approach” (Wimberly, 1994, p. 31). In this approach, personal narratives have been considered to be “problems,” for example, when people are thought to lack faith or obedience, or to be sinful.

When pastoral care encourages a deferring coping style, it deprives the marginalized of their personal agency. This problem gets worse as people identify their own cultural norms, which became “frozen” in the time when they immigrated to the U.S., as if they are absolute norms without understanding the intrinsic relevance of religion to their current lives. As a result, people are more focused on “frozen” cultural and religious narratives rather than on “living” human narratives. Religion that maintains “prejudice, authoritarianism, and hierarchical views of social order,” rather than creates transforming power, becomes an “alienating religion” or “religion under cultural captivity” (Furniss, 1994, p. 164). When religious meaning and ways of coping are not reconstructed in the face of social oppression, religion may end up maintaining the status quo and may lose its vitality as a transforming agency. I assert that pastoral care that draws upon Korean and Korean American feminist theology can offer opportunities to reconstruct religious meanings that are more contextually relevant and more intrinsically meaningful theologically, so that the divine narratives can be embodied in life-giving, not life-limiting ways.

In constructing a communal contextual narrative model of pastoral care that supports Korean American immigrants in their coping with marginality by enhancing self

agency, I will draw upon (1) Korean and Korean American feminist theology and (2) theories and practices from narrative therapy, (3) a biblical narrative model. I will contrast the frozen narratives that Korean American immigrants construct as a way of remembering their heritage, with the concept of narrative used in narrative therapy.

White and Epston (1990) state,

Stories are full of gaps, which persons must fill in order for the story to be performed. These gaps recruit the lived experience and the imagination of persons. With every performance, persons are reauthoring their lives. The evolution of lives is akin to the process of reauthoring, the process of persons entering into stories, taking them over and making them their own. (p.13)

The re-authoring (transforming) process offers a way for Korean Americans to construct multiple identities that affirm a communally grounded sense of self agency and enhance resistance. By using the theories and practices of narrative therapy in a communal contextual narrative approach to pastoral care, I will encourage Korean Americans to identify “preferred stories,” which empower their voices and create a space for new possibilities—a space that enables liberation and transformation in creative interaction with narratives about the divine. In this approach, the problem resides in the experience of marginality, not in the Korean-American person. By enhancing self agency Korean American immigrants will become a part of the master story of liberation, a story that helps them confront and resist socio-political and psycho-spiritual captivity to marginality. Recovering one’s voice and mobilizing self-agency is crucial, especially in a culture that demands submission to authority and power.

In a communal contextual narrative approach, pastoral care that strengthens self-agency, while enhancing authentic relationships within the community of faith, helps

Korean American Christians resist individualism because the self is always understood in relational ways with others participating in the definition of self and shaping its narratives (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Self agency, in this approach, is an ongoing expression of self that takes place in social relations. By emphasizing a relational understanding of self within a Korean American context, I intend to claim the significance of both agency and authentic communion for positive coping (Sato, 1998). Without the communal vision and efforts that connect our narratives with the sacred narratives, the process of empowering self agency would not go beyond the dominant narratives of individualism or self-centeredness that lead to isolation and the loss of vital relationality.

The master story of liberation requires “a communal agent of compassion and justice” which envisions and actualizes the coming kingdom of God (Thornton, 2002, p. 182). This kind of intentional community strengthens self agency and cultivates authentic relationships. In other words, transformative narratives, like the master story of liberation, need to be co-created in pastoral care and communal practices of faith. In that regard, Neuger (2001) emphasizes “staying connected” as a form of resistance consisting of an “active and dynamic process of connection and relationality that are necessary for the maintenance of counter-stories and for the ongoing work of resistance to and transformation of dominant and oppressive forces” (p. 232). In this community, Korean American Christians experience that their story is not their story alone but the story of God-with-us.

Methodology and Rationale

This project is a pastoral theological endeavor that reexamines theological meanings of marginality and coping, and constructs a communal contextual narrative model of pastoral care. The primary method of this dissertation is a pastoral theological one. Graham (1992) states, “pastoral theology draws the resources for its creative work from the setting and acts of ministry, the living tradition, cognate secular knowledge, and the personhood of the one carrying out the act of ministry” (p. 23).

This dissertation focuses on the experience of Korean immigrants and their families. Citing Smith Kwon (2003) says, “The acts of uprooting, migration, resettlement, and community-building became for the participants a theologizing experience” (p. 293). Immigrant experiences provide a rich context for doing theology. I define “doing theology” as a process of re-storying by weaving the human and the sacred narratives in the context of faith community.¹⁸ In fact, my own experiences of living as an immigrant as well as a youth pastor, chaplain, counselor, and instructor in a (predominantly Korean immigrant) seminary have been a rich resource for doing theology which has shaped my theological perspective through a reciprocal process of reflection and action.¹⁹ In order to elaborate the particular context of the Korean American church and theological meanings relevant to it, I will bring vignettes from my

¹⁸ Pastoral theology in this communal contextual narrative model is understood as re-storying or re-membering the divine-human narratives in both personal and communal levels.

¹⁹ Freire (1997) suggests a model of praxis: “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” as an ongoing process of liberating practice from oppression (p. 33).

own pastoral care experiences²⁰ as well as other cases reported in secondary resources like novels and newspapers. The literature in Asian (Korean) American theology will also be reviewed and discussed. I will critically engage Jung Young Lee's (1994) theology of marginality, Andrew Sung Park's (1993) theology of *han*, and Chung Hyun Kyung's (1991) Korean women's theology of *han*.

After describing Korean American experiences of marginality, I will turn to the question of how people draw upon religion to cope with the stress of marginality. Religious coping theory and research, primarily the work of Kenneth Pargament, will be discussed in relation to the Korean American context, which emphasizes deferring coping styles. I will highlight the limitations of the deferring style of coping, a style that conserves Korean religious heritage in ways that inhibit self agency and limit social transformation.

In order to address this problem, I will elaborate a communal contextual narrative approach²¹ to pastoral care, which can support Korean American immigrants in the process of integrating their personal narratives by drawing upon the work of feminist Korean and Korean American women, who have done the theological work of moving

²⁰ I will draw upon my experiences in Korean-American congregations to construct composite vignettes, in which the identities of persons and congregations will be disguised. These vignettes will simply be used for illustrative purposes; these descriptions cannot be generalized to describe all instances in which Korean American Christians experience marginality.

²¹ A narrative approach to pastoral theology and care emphasizes social constructionist notions that reality is socially constructed and therefore it can be deconstructed and reconstructed. Thus, a major purpose of narrative approach is "to help people to generate new language and new interpretive lenses and thus create new realities" (Neuger, 2001, p. 43).

from deferring to collaborative ways of constructing theology. This kind of theological restructuring is a process of moving from empty “shoulds” to the “transforming performance” of self agents which resonates with their authentic narratives (Graham, Walton, & Ward, 2005). In this process, I will privilege Korean American feminist voices that challenge the theological construction that fortifies deferring ways of theological practice.²² The use of Korean and Korean American feminist theologies is meaningful because they demonstrate how to engage Christian traditions in ways that enhance self agency as people struggle with dominant narratives that silence and marginalize their voices.

Following their approach, I propose using a narrative approach to pastoral care that provides a forum for teasing out the complexity of one’s storied experiences in light of master stories—divine narratives.²³ Moreover, the narrative approach, I believe, is culturally suitable to Korean Americans who are less likely to seek out individual therapy because of its perceived emphasis on pathology. The clinical paradigm of pastoral care is less effective than a narrative approach, which emphasizes the natural flow of storying.²⁴

²² James Poling demonstrates a theological method of privileging women’s voices in his theological reconstruction of resistance against evil in relational dimension (see, for example, Poling, 1996).

²³ Doehring suggests five assumptions about a narrative approach and describes the of this approach from a social constructionist view, which emphasizes the nature of narrative as socially constructed (see Doehring, 2006, pp. 85-91).

²⁴ Asian Americans including Korean Americans are known to rarely utilize mental health services due to stereotypes about mental illness. The narrative approach provides a modality that is more suitable to Korean Americans, particularly in a pastoral context. In this dissertation, I will present a narrative model that integrates religious and personal narratives in Chapter 4.

My discussion of this narrative approach is mostly indebted to pastoral theologians such as Anderson and Foley (1998), Gerkin (1984, 1997), Lester (1995, 2003), Neuger (2001), and Wimberly (1994, 2003, 2008), who have developed narrative models in pastoral care and theology.²⁵

Along with resources in narrative pastoral care and theology, I will draw upon narrative approaches to therapy developed by White and Epston (1990) as a model that helps to construct a “preferred story” that is liberating, transforming, and creates wholeness. The use of narrative therapy will help to construct a model of pastoral care that fosters a sense of self agency. O’Grady (2005) states,

Narrative therapy is running up against a common phenomenon whereby people have internalized a belief that they are the problem. While there is certainly a sense in which taking responsibility for our lives fits with a notion of human agency and choice, the emphasis on personal responsibility frequently obscures the social context in which problems occur. This can result in individuals feeling responsible for factors that are completely beyond their control and issues of social justice are left undressed...Contextualizing problems relieves people of the heavy burden of self-blame so they are more easily able to appreciate the hurdles they have been up against in their lives and to recognize and value the ways in which they have resisted problematic experience, often in the face of considerable adversity. (p. 50)

The therapeutic process of narrative therapy—naming and externalizing, re-authoring unique outcomes, and re-remembering with others—will be explored and discussed in terms of how it can be used in the context of Korean American pastoral care and counseling (Payne, 2006).

²⁵ Gerkin is a pioneer in this area, specifically in terms of the narrative-hermeneutical model he developed. I will draw upon his insights and vision while emphasizing a contextual-communal approach. Neuger’s *Counseling Women* (2001) provides a model for integrating narrative and contextual models of pastoral care.

Lastly, I will envision the *Uri* (human-divine) narrative community, in which Korean American immigrants actively construct their preferred stories, which have already intruded into their life through the divine drama and have also been manifested in their faithful living in a new land. I will reconstruct the image of the well (John 4) as a symbol of *Uri* community where human narratives are woven with sacred narratives in the context of faith community. In this envisioning process, I will draw upon the works of pastoral theologians, such as Patton (1993), Kornfeld (1998), and Thornton (2002), all of whom envision pastoral care as communal. I will emphasize the role of community as a resisting, liberating, and transforming community, which can be found in the indigenous story of their communal resistance of *han*. I will return to liberation theology and specifically Korean and Korean American feminist theologies in order to illustrate how a liberating plot enhances self agency in the making of divine-human communal narratives.²⁶

Significance and Limitations

First, this dissertation contributes to pastoral theological literature by drawing upon Korean American experiences of immigration and Korean and Korean American feminist theology as significant theological resources with which to construct a pastoral theology that broadens as well as deepens the meaning of marginality and rediscovers

²⁶ Liberation theology can correct, convince, and activate new perceptions, which challenge us to see the hope and power of marginality, when we can collaborate with God in ways that strengthen self agency and authentic communal relations. See Lee (1995), and Pattison (1994).

the role of self-agency in the making of divine-human narratives and its community. Like other kinds of theology, such as biblical, systemic, and historical theologies, pastoral theology contributes to the development of new theological languages and meanings. This project is a constructive theological task that deepens our understanding of marginality through dialogue with theological traditions and other cognate studies.

Secondly, this dissertation makes a practical contribution by conceptually constructing a communal contextual narrative model of pastoral care, which challenges current practices of pastoral care, to reconsider the complexity of living as immigrants. By employing a narrative therapy approach, which emphasizes the change process as one of resistance, liberation, and transformation, pastoral caregivers can help the marginalized deconstruct oppressive narratives that dominate daily living, and re-author their life stories as their own. I will use some illustrations of how practically relevant this approach can be in pastoral ministry or counseling settings; however, this dissertation is limited to developing a conceptual model.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter 2, I will describe the experiences of Korean American immigrants and their families in the context of marginality, and I will explore what it means theologically to live at margins by drawing upon an Asian (Korean) American theology of marginality. Second, I will describe the social reality of marginality in relation to the host culture as well as within Korean American community, focusing in turn on racism, sexism, and intergenerational conflicts related to the acculturation process. I will emphasize the need

for conscientization, which provides a critical awareness of and engagement with both the reality of social marginality and the theology of divine marginalization. Third, I will describe immigrant stresses and the lack of self agency in the context of the social experiences of marginalization as well as in the operating theologies of Korean cultural and religious heritage. Lastly, related to this problem, I will discuss the pastoral implications of constructing theologies of marginality from the context of marginality.

In Chapter 3, I will review religious coping theory and research, and apply some important findings to the Korean American context, and propose ways in which Korean Americans can draw upon their religious faith to cope in more positive ways. Kenneth Pargament's religious coping theory will be introduced briefly; I will focus on research on positive/negative coping, two paths of coping (conservation and transformation), and three different coping styles (self-directive, collaborative, and deferring). I will argue that the current pastoral care model, which encourages deferring coping in situations where a collaborative style would be more beneficial, has limitations, both therapeutically and morally, because this style diminishes a sense of self agency and collaboration with God. My focus is on exploring how culture explicitly or implicitly sanctions particular coping methods, which are used in life-limiting ways that maintain the status quo—the internalized status of marginality—without activating self agency for the fulfillment of one's own selfhood within the communal life of religious communities.

In Chapter 4, I will propose a communal contextual narrative approach to religious coping, which, first, challenges the limitations of passive (deferring) ways of coping that disengage personal narratives from religious narratives and, second,

encourages a collaborative coping model, which emphasizes the partnership of human agency with divine agency in the context of faith community. I will explain this approach as a process of 1) empowering Korean American immigrants as they claim their own agential power in light of larger narratives of God and 2) deconstructing dominant and destructive narratives and 3) reconstructing alternative narratives, which are liberating, transforming, and life-giving. Lastly, I will introduce the work of Asian (Korean) American feminists, as examples of how to integrate conflicting experiences into positive life-enhancing narratives that enhance positive coping.

In Chapter 5, I will reconstruct the indigenous practice of *han-pu-ri* as an example of a communal contextual narrative model of pastoral care/counseling for Korean American families. In developing this model of pastoral care/counseling, I will draw upon 1) narrative therapy approaches developed by White (1990, 2007) and other narrative therapists; 2) the “biblical narrative model” developed by Wimberly (1994, 2003, and 2008); and 3) the indigenous practice of *han-pu-ri* as a process of change. I will propose a communal contextual narrative pastoral care/counseling model for Korean Americans that includes these four steps: 1) evoking sacredness, 2) naming and externalizing the problem, 3) re-authoring one’s story, and 4) re-membering and reconnecting with the community and God.

In Chapter 6, I will envision the *Uri* community as a community participating in a divine-human narrative, in which person, community, and God collaborate as partners for authoring life-giving stories that reflect the full potentiality of life. In envisioning *Uri* community, first, I will draw upon the metaphor of the well in the story of the Samaritan

woman (John 4) as a paradigmatic story of *Uri* community. Second, by drawing upon the communal contextual model of Patton (1993), I will discuss how the Korean American church can provide a ministry of remembering (conservation) and re-remembering (transformation). I will emphasize two elements of communal care: support and challenge. Lastly, I will suggest communal pastoral care strategies, which the Korean American church can draw upon in order to become *Uri* community: 1) intentionality: definitional ceremony, 2) overcoming *han* through *jeong*, 3) reconstructing indigenous symbols, and 4) late comers: the partners of God's grace.

CHAPTER 2

KOREAN AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES OF MARGINALITY

In this chapter I will describe the experiences of Korean American immigrants and their families in the context of marginality, and I will explore what it means theologically to live at margins. I will begin by describing how an Asian (Korean) American theology of marginality uses the perspective of divine marginalization to envision the potential for growth inherent in the experience of marginality. I will emphasize the need for conscientization, which provides a critical awareness of and engagement with both the reality of social marginality and the theology of divine marginalization. I will primarily draw upon the theology of marginality presented by Jung Young Lee (1995) and other Asian theologians who have developed Asian theology as a contextual and autobiographical theology that aims to raise the voices of the marginalized and to seek liberation.

Second, I will describe the social reality of marginality in relation to the host culture as well as within Korean American community, focusing in turn on racism, sexism, and intergenerational conflicts related to the acculturation process. Then, I will briefly describe immigrant stresses that result from experiences of marginality and discuss immigrants' lack of self agency as a major problem in the adjustment and coping of Korean immigrants. I will argue that this lack of self agency is not only related to the

social experiences of marginalization but also to the operating theologies of Korean cultural and religious heritage, which limit how theological resources are used for positive coping and spiritual growth.

Lastly, related to this problem, I will discuss pastoral implications of constructing theologies of marginality from the context of marginality. I will examine the role of the Korean American church as an intentional community which provides meanings that integrate the experiences of immigrants into authentic stories of faith, enhancing the process of conscientization and authentic marginalization.

The Experience of Marginality and Constructing Theologies of Marginality

Living as immigrants is a unique experience that challenges first generation Korean Americans to renegotiate their identity from the margins of society. Just as children develop their identity through the experience of leaving home, immigrants leave their home country and go through a process of developing new identities in the United States. In this process of leaving home and finding a new home they are challenged to modify their former identities as Koreans and develop new identities as Korean Americans in ways that continuously integrate their new experiences into a unified story—a holistic and congruent narrative as Korean American Christians. It is an experience of being in betwixt-and-between situations in which “they belong to neither culture fully yet participate in both” (Phan, 2003, p. 9).²⁷

²⁷ Phan (2003, pp. 8-10) describes the “in-between” predicament in terms of spatial, political, social, cultural, linguistic, psychological, and spiritual levels.

Taking a journey through this transitional time and space, immigrants may feel as if they are caught up in two different worlds, yet not belonging to either. This experience of marginality is characterized by a lack of language skills, adjustment difficulties, economic hardships, racial discrimination, and intergenerational and cultural conflicts. It also includes psychological disequilibrium caused by anxiety, insecurity, fear, and feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. At the root of these problems is the sense of not being in control of life's situations. The experience of marginality includes a loss of voice and lack of self agency. Living at the margins of society is experienced as predominantly negative, involving a process of negotiating conflicting expectations of their Korean and host cultures. They may feel that they are not only different but also wrong in the eyes of the dominant cultural perspective.

The experience of marginality does not disappear even after Korean Americans have lived in this new land for many years. I have often heard elderly Korean Americans who immigrated many years ago say that they wish they could go back to Korea and die there. Such sayings are not only an expression of their homesickness; they express their desire to be “who I am”—the yearning for full humanity without the feeling of marginalization. The children of recent immigrants also struggle with cultural marginalization; they are often labeled with the acronym “FOB” (fresh off the boat) in a derogatory manner. The second generation born in the United States feels marginalized because they are caught between the two different worlds of Korea and America. They are called “Twinkies” because of their external appearance of being Asians (Korean) and

their internal experience of identifying with whiteness.²⁸ Many adolescents, especially introverted ones, feel marginalized by the negative stereotypes of being Asians who are supposed to be quiet, submissive, nerdy, etc.

However, while leaving home is a negative experience of uprootedness, disconnection, and alienation, it is also an opportunity for personal and spiritual growth. At the very moment an immigrant decides to go to a new country, he or she is yearning for growth. Immigration is a turning point which involves both crisis and opportunity. The Chinese character of crisis involves both dimensions of risk and opportunity, as reflected in the Korean saying, “Crisis, indeed, is an opportunity.” Experiencing immigration as an opportunity is not a new discovery. Biblical narratives include many stories of growth through immigration—consider the stories of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Ruth, the Diaspora, and even Jesus Christ, who “immigrated” to the earth. These biblical narratives describe immigrant living as a pathway to divine encounter, in which uprootedness brings an attitude of openness toward the divine future. Through these biblical narratives we can find that when marginality is understood theologically, its potential as an experience of growth can be appreciated. While the social reality is not always encouraging, there is a possibility of constructing new narrative identities as those who are called to live a “blessed” life in this new land.

A recent immigrant with whom I had a chance to converse stated that living as an immigrant has shaped his new identity as a child of God. He identified his struggle as similar to that of Jacob in Genesis who struggled with his life journey from the time of

²⁸ For instance, a second-generation youth with whom I had a conversation explicitly stated that he hated to be identified as a Korean.

his birth, but eventually received a new identity named “Israel” at the Jabbok River. He believed that his life journey will eventually turn into a “blessed” life, and this belief continues to sustain him during the hardships of life as an immigrant. As such, living at the margins can provide an opportunity to discover a new identity.

Immigrant experiences provide a rich context for doing theology, by which I mean a process of re-storying by weaving together human narratives and narratives about the divine in the context of a faith community (Anderson & Foley, 1998). While the process of leaving their home involves losing a sense of security, it also offers opportunities to reflect upon their past from different angles, to envisage the future with a sense of openness to and trust in God, and to experience a new dimension of growth in the present time. This growth can take place by integrating theologies of marginality into their life narratives.

As immigrant experiences are understood in light of theologies of marginality, the external reality of marginality can be deconstructed as an oppressive reality imposed by those in the center, and then reconstructed using a new dimension of reality—divine reality, which contains sacred meanings of living as immigrants. Thus, living at the margins includes both negative and positive aspects and it is essential to change the negative reality of marginality into a transformed reality by constructing contextual theologies of marginality through re-storying of their narrative. In that sense, doing theology of marginality is “autobiographical” at its root (Lee, 1995, p. 7).

The paradoxical interpretation²⁹ of marginality is a fundamental claim in Christian faith, which disrupts our common definition of reality, in which marginality is interpreted simply as “peripheral” or “bad.” The theology of marginality challenges reality as defined by centrality—from the privileged, the dominant, and the “haves.” In the new construction of marginality, the marginalized do not live on the periphery any more. Instead, the marginalized are understood epistemologically as privileged in terms of their ability to see the paradoxical reality of divine economy, through which God orders the world. “Those who are disenfranchised are in a position to understand the biblical text [divine reality] better because they know what it means to be a marginalized person attempting to survive within a social context designed to benefit others at their expense” (De La Torre, 2002, p. 28). Marginality, in that sense, is a creative space, where deeper spiritual growth can take place.

Marginality, however, cannot be liberating in itself, if it is interpreted only from the eyes of the dominant culture. The perspectives of those in the center prevail and even determine the way people think, feel, behave, and what life goals they strive for. Therefore, the very first step for liberation is to help people see their lives through their own eyes in their own context. Freire (1997) emphasizes the need for a process of “conscientization,” in which the oppressed are consciously aware of themselves as “subjects,” and not as “objects” (p. 49). Freire (1997) states,

The truth is, however, that the oppressed are not “marginals,” are not men living “outside” society. They have always been “inside”—inside the structure which

²⁹ The word, paradox, comes from the Greek origin of para (beyond) and doxa (opinion). Paradoxical interpretation means to move beyond a common sense or definition and attach new meanings to it (see Nelson, 2004, p. 18).

made them “being for others.” The solution is not to “integrate” them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become “beings for themselves.” (p. 55)

hooks (1994) describes conscientization as “critical awareness and engagement” of people as participants in their own growth and freedom (p. 14). In others words, it is “a decolonizing political process” (hook, 1994, p. 47). Gutierrez (1999) notes,

They [the oppressed] thus make the transfer from a “naïve awareness”—which does not deal with problems, gives too much value to the past, tends to accept mythical explanations, and tends toward debate—to a “critical awareness”—which delves into problems, is open to new ideas, replaces magical explanations with real causes, and tend to dialogue. (p. 57)

The marginalized are accustomed to seeing reality through the eyes of the dominant culture. For instance, race is commonly understood as a biologically inherent trait, even though this belief has no scientific basis. Social theorists assert that “race is first and foremost an arbitrary social construction” (Tan, 2008, p. 121) which is used for the benefit of political control of dominant groups over minorities. Naming minorities as “people of color” assumes that “white” is not a color but simply “white.” This kind of classification and categorization essentializes racial hierarchy on the basis of power differences among socially identified groups.

This kind of distortion is embedded in every culture. This is not only a problem for cultures in which those identified as “white” are dominant. It also applies to Korean culture. Until recently, for instance, Korean people called a light orange color “*sal-saek*,” which literally means (their) “skin-color.” This term, *sal-saek*, normalizes the skin color of Koreans. Those whose skin is not this shade of light orange must still use the term *sal-saek*, which does not represent their skin color. This kind of language is discriminative to

other racial groups whose skin color is different from the skin color of Koreans or Asians. Even though *sal-saek* does not represent their skin color, when they talk about their skin, they have to describe it as a light orange color. This kind of language alienates people at the margins because it essentializes the definition of the dominant social group without considering the experiences of the marginalized. This discriminative use of language was not changed until 2001 when Rev. Hae Sung Kim and four foreign workers brought this problem to the department of human rights.³⁰ Now the Korean language officially names this color (a light orange color) as *sal-gu-saek* (apricot-color), and no longer uses the term *sal-saek* (Hankyore News, 2001, Jan. 15).

This kind of exclusive thinking based on centrality (the dominant culture) and marginality (others) shapes every aspect of cultural practice. By adopting the language of centrality those who are marginalized experience dissonance between the actual experiences of their lives and the social description of their experiences. The problem is that the oppressed live “in the duality in which to be is to be like, and to be like is to be like the oppressor” (Freire, 1997, p. 30) and by so doing, both oppressors and the oppressed participate in the process of dehumanization. Change is possible only when the oppressed are critically aware of this social reality and claim themselves as authentic beings by making an ongoing commitment to “praxis,” which is defined as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1997, p. 33).

³⁰ They brought up this issue in challenging companies that produce crayons, so that children who have a different skin color do not have to feel estranged from this exclusive and oppressive use of the term, *sal-saek* (skin-color). This challenge also encouraged Koreans to be more aware of the diversity of different racial and ethnic groups in Korea.

The problem of the exclusive structure of centrality and marginality applies not only to racial discourse but also any socially constructed discourse about aspects of social identity like gender, class, disability, religion, and so forth. As such, those who are marginalized use the language of the dominant culture without recognizing its power, which has a firm grip on everyday living. Systems of oppression are complicated, multidimensional, and oppressive. Poling (2003) says,

The matrix of domination is a system of attitudes, behaviors and assumptions that objectifies human persons on the basis of socially constructed categories such as race, gender, class, etc., and that has the power to deny autonomy, access to resources and self-determination to those persons, while maintaining the values of the dominant society as the norm by which all else will be measured. (pp. 126-127)

Anyone can be identified with those in the center in some areas of their lives, while being at the margins in other arenas. For example, I was identified with those in the center in terms of my racial privilege when I was living in Korea, but I am now identified with those on the margins in the United States. I am identified with those in the center in terms of my gender (male), ablebodiedness, and religion (Protestant). I did not recognize my privilege as a male until several years ago when my sister challenged my naïve thoughts about our growing up equally within our family. At the same time, other Korean American men may resent racial injustice, while taking for granted the privileges we have as males in a patriarchal system. The privileged are blind to the experience of marginality until they are challenged by the point of view of “the other.”

It is crucial to understand that people are identified in multiple ways, in terms of being on the margin or in the center. Marginality and centrality are not opposite ends of a continuum in simplistic ways. They are interwoven in a web of dynamic processes in

which interacting aspects of social identity place people in one moment on the margins and in the next moment in the center. Jung Young Lee (1995) explains the dynamics of marginality and centrality by describing multiple waves which he observed in a pond.

I observed the peaceful pond. Suddenly a huge fish jumped up at the center of the pond, creating enormous sound of water and powerful waves lapped endlessly toward the shore. When the waves finally reached the edge, however, they began to ebb back to the center from which they originated. Their backward movement was an amazing discovery for me, even though I should have expected it from my study of elementary physics. Perhaps I have seen it, but had not paid attention. Why did I not pay attention to ebbs returning to the center, but noted only the waves coming out to the edge? Why was I interested only in something happening at and from the center? Why did I neglect what happened at and from the margin? (p. 30)

He asserts that we are taught to see things from the perspective of centrality while there is always the “other” reality that can be seen from the perspective of marginality. The centrality that dominates the human mind and behaviors is a partially constructed reality, even though we pursue centrality in order to seek security and dominance. He illustrates this false attachment to centrality by describing his personal experience as a refugee during the Korean War.

When more than 100 refugees were attacked by enemy artillery, every one of us wanted to be at the center of the group. We felt subconsciously that the center was the best and safest place to be. Not one wanted to be on the periphery. When we found ourselves pushed out to it, we started to move back into the center. When we thought that we were secure in the center, we were pushed out again to the margin...*The center we seek is the center of our creation.* (p. 97)

Through this experience of dehumanization, he found that centrality does not exist in a fixed form but changes continuously. Most of all, the center is the object of attachment that humans create. By negating the position of center, one can be free from the attachment to false power—the idolatry to which humans are enslaved. In that regard,

the experience of marginality may offer a corrective to the habit of centralizing thinking and its destructive consequences for the human condition. Immigrants are given the privilege to see reality from the other side and their perspective can contribute to disclosing the larger reality of God. In other words, the perspective from the margins brings a fuller picture of the human condition and the divine order that needs to be pursued.

At the heart of this theology of marginality is “divine marginalization” (Lee, 1995, p. 78), which Lee describes in terms of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The incarnation can be understood as “divine immigration” (Lee, 1995, p. 83). Even though human immigration cannot be compared to divine immigration directly, divine marginalization can provide a paradigm of a “new marginality,” which is shown in the life of Jesus Christ. Lee (1995) says,

Jesus was a new marginal person *par excellence*...He was a stranger to his own people...On the cross, he was rejected not only by his own people but also by his own Father. He was certainly a man in-between two different worlds without fully belonging neither...Although he was rejected, he was a reconciler who broke down walls between Jews and Gentiles, between men and women, between the law and grace. He was a Jew by birth and lineage, but also a man of whole humanity by his act of love. (pp. 71-72)

In this new paradigm of the divine marginalization, the experience of immigration is no longer understood as a passive form of marginality. Christ chose to be at the margin by belonging neither to heaven nor to earth and yet fully living as both divine and human. In the same way, he lived an authentic life as a new marginal person through his death, which Lee describes as an “absolute negation of life” of “neither/nor,” and resurrection, which was an “absolute affirmation of life, in both/and” (Lee, 1995, p. 72). Then, “[t]he

margin is the locus—a focal point, a new and creative core—where two (or multiple) worlds emerge” (Lee, 1995, p. 60). Jesus Christ became the margin of marginality yet overcame marginality. In this paradoxical reconstruction of marginality, the marginalized can be empowered as “new marginal people” who participate in the work of transforming negative marginality not at “the margin defined by dominant groups, but the new margin, the margin of marginality” (Lee, 1995, p. 60)

In this view of divine marginalization, the experience of marginality can be understood both as “neither/nor” and “both/and” (Lee, 1995, pp. 64-70). And new marginal people are committed to follow the model of Christ, who is a new marginal being, through the life of discipleship (Lee, 1995, pp. 101-102). For Korean Americans, this means experiencing the authentic reality of life by being neither fully Korean nor fully American, yet being both Korean and American to the fullest extent. The marginalized do not seek a center, a place of dominance, but discover and actualize their vocation as the new marginalized people.

Conversely, transformation is possible as they realize that they are “part of creative core—the very creativity of God manifest in Jesus Christ” (Lee, 1995, p. 152). Lee (1995) suggests a new marginality that he names as “in beyond.” It is “to be in the world but not of the world” (Lee 1995, p. 72). A new marginal person is the one who “overcomes marginality without ceasing to be a marginal person” yet is in “both of them without either being blended” (Lee, 1995, p. 62). The experience of marginality carries the tension of two different realities without rejecting one at the expense of the other. It is the way of both negation and affirmation. This newly constructed marginality is

meaningful because it enables the marginalized to embrace their reality fully without assuming a passive attitude of avoidance, distortion, and displacement. The new understanding of marginality creates the ultimate dimension of divine reality—“in-beyond.” Lee (1995) asserts,

They are, in spite of their alienation from two worlds, part of them. Marginality is being at the margin that connects both worlds... Their transcendence is possible only in their immanence. In other words, to be in-beyond means to be in-between and in-both. (p. 60)

By fully accepting the call to become a new marginal people, the marginalized can have agential power to transform the reality of oppression not through their automated reaction to the dominant at the center but through their participation in the transformative works of God.

In a Korean immigrant context, the theology of marginality, which is reconstructed from the perspective of divine marginalization, is a significant resource in establishing Korean American Christian identities. Through this particular theological lens, they can see their lives as immigrants differently, and shift from passive marginality to active marginality, from social marginality to divine marginality. By so doing, they can fully live their lives as authentic Korean American Christians while challenging and transforming oppressive systems of centrality and marginality. Living as immigrants does not mean that they live as aliens but “pilgrims,” the ones who have a clear vocation of living as new marginal people (Lee, 2001). They are called to live out “the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human” (Freire, 1997, p. 48).

Multiple Marginalities

The experience of marginality among Korean Americans takes many forms in relation to the host culture as well as within the Korean American community itself. In this section, I will explore how multiple experiences of marginalities and centralities interact. I will explore three major topics: racism, different cultural orientations between Korean and American ways of life, and gender roles.

Marginalization Created by Racial Discrimination

To Korean American immigrants, “difference” is a key word that describes their experience of living as immigrants: differences in appearance, language, cultural practices, and value systems. However, this difference is not only related to external signifiers of differences to do with racial identity, but also includes the difference of status and power on the basis of “white racial identity norms” (Tan, 2008, p. 125). This difference leads to a deep sense of alienation. Sang Hyun Lee (2003) autobiographically describes how, even though he has lived as a Korean American for over 40 years, he feels “never fully accepted” due to the larger reality of racism, which makes him aware of differences in status and power. He notes, “Asian Americans are not just ‘in between’ or [in a] peripheral predicament but are pushed to be there and to remain there by the barriers set up by the dominant center” (Lee, 2003, p. 13). Matuoka (1998) defines racism in the following way.

Racism is socially defined as a structural and systemic deprivation of the human rights and dignity of people of color by those who are in positions of dominance...it is the negation of relation and the absence of direction for a collective human life due to the devaluation of life generated within societal institutions functioning as powers and principalities in our communal life. (p. 58)

Racism is practiced both consciously and unconsciously in our culture. Several years ago I experienced the reality of racism. The memory of this experience uncovers the deep wounds that I still carry with me. When my son was an infant, several teenagers in my apartment complex were quite disruptive at night—screaming, yelling, and playing loudly till midnight—and our son had trouble in falling asleep. One night, my wife and I could no longer tolerate their misbehavior. We asked them politely to be quiet and explained our situation. They seemed to understand and offered an apology. We were relieved and regretted not talking with them earlier. However, on the following day, my wife and I were shocked beyond words. They hung a zipper bag filled with their urine on our front door. We were shaken, angry, and deeply ashamed. They insulted us with the message that we are yellow, the same color as urine. Our polite request was turned down with a clear message that reminded us of who we are. Their behavior cannot be understood simply as the “acting out” behavior of teenagers. It reveals racism deeply embedded in our culture.

This event taught me that I can no longer naively view racism from a distance. My own experience of racism helped me understand my status as one who lives on the margins. Racism appears more clearly and explicitly in times of conflict as in my case. Racism becomes more visible at times when the existing power structure is threatened and the behaviors of those in the dominant culture are challenged. After the Virginia Tech shooting in 2007, I heard from my friend that her children experienced fear, antagonism, and shame, simply because they are Korean American like Seung Hui Cho, the man who did the shooting on campus. Some peers picked on them, saying, “You

look like Cho.” “Are you his cousin?” “Go back to your country.” In times of crisis, racism comes to the foreground and the marginalized feel alienated and powerless. They feel as if they are unwanted strangers even though their nationality is clearly the same as other American citizens. Some might say that this expression of racism is not only rare but also a personal problem caused at an individual level by ignorance or immorality. By pretending that racism is isolated and rare, the root problem which is systemic racism can be avoided by putting the blame on some “bad” or ignorant individuals. Racism, however, is not simply an immoral act of individuals but deeply embedded in the social system which governs the way we think, feel, and relate to others, and even to the level of unconsciousness (Sue & Sue, 2003). Peggy McIntosh (1998) identified the hidden (unconscious) levels of racism experienced by those in the dominant racial group as “unearned racial privilege.”

As a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage... I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was “meant” to remain oblivious. (pp. 147-148)

Racism essentializes a certain way of “being American” as normative in the example of whitening/assimilation theories, in which Asian Americans are predicted to become “whitened” or racially assimilated (Kim, 2008, pp. 5-6). This theory assumes that being American means being “somebody else” other than who they are. By classifying difference based on the politics of difference, racism distorts authentic ways of relating to one another—the multicultural reality that God created—and negates the image of God that each person has regardless of racial differences.

Racism also generates a false hope that assimilation within the dominant culture ultimately offers equal and unlimited opportunities to everyone. Immigrants are expected to assume the responsibility of assimilating to the host society, and if they fail to do this, they are blamed for lacking sufficient effort (Kang, 2002). This expectation is quite oppressive to Korean immigrants, who have a relatively short period of immigration history and strong commitments to their Korean cultural orientation.

An additional burden is placed on many Korean Americans to live up to expectations about being a model minority. Many Korean immigrants feel ambivalent about racial discourse about Asian Americans as a model minority. The media often depicts Asian (Korean) families as successfully “Americanized” and provides a set of examples of Korean Americans who are part of a “model minority.” However, the model minority stereotype is misleading and oppressive because it essentializes certain characteristics of Asians over other non-White ethnic groups (Yee, 2007). This discourse of model minorities is often used as a tactic to compare Asian Americans with African and Latino Americans and it disguises and even justifies such racist comparisons. Andrew Park (1996) points out hidden messages about model minorities as a justifying tool of racism to other ethnic minority groups, especially African Americans.

This country is not racist. Look at this minority group. Why can't you make it in this great country of equal opportunity like this group? You are basically lazy and inferior to the model minority. You deserve your miserable lot. (Park, 1996, p. 23)

However, the discourse about Asians as a model minority does not truly reflect the reality of Korean American immigrants who continue to live on the margins and who are, as members of the so-called model minority, not afforded the privileges conferred on

those in the center. They often feel as if they are seen as foreigners, no matter how long they have lived here or how much they conform to the expectations of being a model minority. As such, two racist attitudes coexist: one, they are seen as a model minority, and two, they are seen as alienated foreigners.

This contradictory reality of racism was evident during the Los Angeles riot in 1992. While Korean Americans have been described as a model minority—“a hard working, law-abiding, and self-sufficient people,” they were not protected by the government (Park, 1996, p. 22). They were invisible because they were described as foreigners, not as Americans (Kim, 2008). In this incident, Korean Americans were no longer designated as a model minority; rather, they were used as scapegoats caught between the historical gulfs of black-white racial conflict. Rather than focusing on urban racial conflict, the media tried to emphasize that Korean Americans were cruel, greedy, and rude to other ethnic groups and, thus, they deserve the consequences that resulted from their attitudes and behaviors.

Due to a lack of resources, including social capital, many Korean Americans run small businesses that require long hours of labor often including free labor of family members. The choice of running small businesses cannot be attributed solely to Korean American entrepreneurship and intelligence (the attributes assigned to them as the model minority) but it can also be attributed to the social structure of racism. Sociologists describe Korean Americans as playing the role of “the middleman minority” who cushion and minimize racial conflict between white and black (Martin, 1993; Kang, 2002). Suburbanization after the industrial era turned downtowns in many American cities like

Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Washington D.C. into ghettos, in which job opportunities are scarce and big corporations avoided supplying goods to those left behind. In this larger socio-economic context, the role of Korean Americans as “the middlemen minority” arose because of 1) the exclusion of Korean Americans from mainstream jobs which are usually dominated by native-born whites, and 2) the availability of business opportunities in the inner-city minority community, which are usually avoided by native-born whites (Kim, K. C., 1999). Kang (2002) states,

The Korean American owners of these businesses fit the classic profile of the middleman minority who provides goods largely supplied by the dominant group to underclass minorities. The middleman minority often becomes the scapegoat in times of economic and political distress, as was evidenced during the Los Angeles riots in 1992. (p. 64)

The racial structure based on “white superiority” affects racial relationships between Korean Americans and other racial groups, such as African and Latino Americans. In that vein, Korean Americans are marginalized, yet they also inevitably participate in marginalizing other groups within the larger system of racism created by the spread of global capitalism. Martin (1993) states,

Ethnic groups that have made it into the American Dream have traditionally stepped on the necks of African-American communities on their way up. Jews, Italians, Greeks, Chinese, Arabs and now East Indians and Koreans have all, to greater or lesser degrees quickly assimilated this Fundamental Law of Immigrant Upward Mobility. (p. 32)

The strong desire for upward mobility among Korean Americans is a strong motivator in their survival and success, which is shaped by historical, cultural, and religious values from their home country. How do Korean Americans dare to enter into

this kind of business without having previous experiences of running business and appropriate language skills in a new land? Kim and Kim (1999) explain,

During the 1970s and 1980s, when most of the Korean entrepreneurs in business today came to the United States, Korea exported large quantities of goods manufactured by workers receiving low wages and working extremely long hours. This background has imbued many Korean immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States with an intense commitment to an Asian version of the Protestant ethic. (p. 32)

Their pre-immigration experiences have prepared Korean Americans to endure long hours of labor and maintain a frugal life style. For example, a Korean American woman narrated her experience of running a business in Washington D.C. When she was struggling financially and there was no way out, she felt that she could not support her children any more—one of the most important motivations for immigration among Korean parents. The only option was to take the risk of entering into a business in a dangerous yet more opportunistic area. As she made her decision, she prayed and obtained a life insurance policy—a million dollar policy for her husband and herself to protect them in the event of their death. As she shared this story, she was tearful. She said she was assaulted by an African American teenager while she was opening her store and in the struggle her eardrum was punctured. Despite the trauma related to the assault, she said that she does not want this assailant to stay in a jail for the rest of his life, because he reminds her of her son who is also thirteen years old.

The success of many Korean Americans is often tenuous and comes with risks. They risk attack and aggression from “the marginalized of the marginalized,” who are themselves the victims of racial injustice. Korean Americans have survived in this hostile environment and established themselves as a distinctive minority group within

this complicated racial, political, and economic web. As these descriptions of the kind of struggles endured by Korean Americans illustrate, it is important to deconstruct the common depiction of Asian (Korean) Americans as a model minority.

The myth of the model minority reinforces the myths of meritocracy and individualism in which everyone has equal access and opportunity to succeed—a socially constructed idea arising from global capitalism. The enormous demands of being entrepreneurs are costly, bringing health problem, workaholism, and the loss of family relationships. Business success often comes with losses in other arenas of life. Most of all, children are pressured to achieve academically as the means of changing the socioeconomic status of their immigrant parents; if they fail, they suffer with feelings of shame, inadequacy, and inferiority. The expectations for success passed on to children are shaped by the myth of the model minority and the Confucian ideals of filial piety and attainment of academic success.

While the first generation struggles for survival, the second generation, which has become acculturated to the dominant American culture, struggles to find their identity in the milieu of racial conflict. For example, a Korean American woman was shocked when her son at the age of twelve talked about the difficulty of living with the “hyphen” between Korean and American. She thought that her son would have no problem in adjusting to school because he speaks English as his first language. The first generation tends to think that their children adjust easily because they don’t experience the language barriers of the first generation. However, the struggle of children can be harder because

they are aware of the nuances and subtleties of racism operating even at unconscious levels beyond explicit racism.

Kang (2002), through his qualitative studies with the children of the first generation, found that the internalized expectation of assimilation is quite strong in their value systems and behaviors. He listed four strategies which the children of Korean immigrants employ in relation to acculturation and racism.

First, these study participants avoided anything that might accentuate their cultural difference from other Caucasian American peers during their growing up years. Second, they were eager to eliminate cultural inadequacy by actively embracing American values and ways of living. Third, although they experience various forms of racism in everyday life, they choose not to speak out against the practices of racism. Fourth, instead of submerging their Korean cultural heritage, the young adults seek to maintain it in the private sphere of their lives. (p. 76)

As Kang's research demonstrates, racial discourse dominates the daily living of Korean American children. The excessive self-awareness of the need to fit into the dominant culture is an unnecessary burden that such children carry.

Racism, indeed, is the larger reality that Korean Americans experience regardless of their level of "successful" acculturation. Instead of privately enduring racism, Korean Americans who move through a communal process of conscientization will be able to support each other and find ways to resist racism. How can Korean Americans implement a communal process of conscientization that helps them identify the effects of racism that falsely pull them toward the center while at the same time keeping them firmly on the margins? How can they resist the racial system that fosters a false attachment to the center constructed by the dominant culture while participating in liberation for themselves and others? How can this process be rooted in their beliefs and

practices as people of faith? These are the questions that arise from fully appreciating the extent of racism that marginalizes Korean immigrants and the generations that follow them.

While being critically aware of the reality of social marginalization that takes place through racism, Korean American Christians need to find alternative narratives that challenge the dehumanizing structure of racism with the theology of divine marginalization, which attests to the falsity of power and centrality at the expense of the marginalized. They are called to participate in the work of resistance and transformation of the oppressive structures of power and to embody the divine order of a new creation.

Marginalization Created by Conflict between Different Generations: First, Second, and 1.5 Generations

The history of Korean American immigration is relatively short compared to other Asian ethnic groups such as Japanese and Chinese immigrants. Most immigrants from Asia came to the United States as the result of the United States Immigration Act of 1965. Therefore, the majority of Korean Americans are part of family units that consist of first generation parents and their children. However, looking deeper into the experiences Korean Americans, we can find important within-group differences that depend upon their ethnic/cultural identity and acculturation levels—first, 1.5, second, and third generations. The concept of “active culture” can be helpful in understanding within-cultural differences (SooHoo & Bloedow, 2003, p. 3). For instance, to some early immigrants, their active culture still can be the Korean culture they experienced at the period of their immigration. I observed that early immigrants tend to hold onto more

traditional Korean values. The experience of what is called the 1.5 generation in the Korean American community demonstrates the complexity of identity development. Among the 1.5 generation, while a Korean culture can be more active for some individuals, an American culture can be more active for others.

Because of the different levels of ethnic/cultural identity, Korean Americans have different value systems and different views of cultural expectations. While the second generation tends to consider American values such as individuality, independence, and privacy as essential, the first generation tends to emphasize traditional Korean values such as filial piety, interdependency, and shared dimensions of family life. For example, I heard a story about a conflict between a mother and a married daughter about whether the mother could have a key to her daughter's house. The mother wanted to come and visit her daughter's house so that she could leave *kimchi* and other dishes while her daughter was working. But the daughter did not want her mother to be in her "space" when she was not present. In this kind of situation, their different value systems conflict. Consequently, the mother felt sad about what she experienced as a rejection, while the daughter felt frustrated about her mother being "too Korean."

In this way, the first generation often goes through feelings of grief over the loss of what they have treasured—a Korean way of life. The sense of loss is profound because "No" is not simply "No" in a literal sense but implies rejection of the person and this feeling of rejection can be exacerbated when parents think about all that they have sacrificed for their children. They believe that they chose to move from the social status of "centrality" that they experienced in their homeland to the experience of "marginality"

as immigrants in order to give their children a better life and a place at the center of American culture.³¹

The theme of self-sacrifice, I believe, has huge implications. A parental generation may transfer this theme to the children, yet it can be used negatively. Culbertson (2000) notes, “Self-sacrificers ultimately become manipulators of other people...What on surface appears to be a contradiction—a “selfish” self sacrificer—is really no contradiction at all” (p. 18). This pattern of self-sacrifice takes a toll; it often becomes or is experienced as emotional manipulation. When parents can’t let go of their dreams for their children they are left feeling sad and resentful when their children do not meet their expectations.

While this kind of complex and conflicted relational attachment between parents and children is a strong source of life, it can also cause emotional pain. Parents often feel that their children’s Americanized behavior is “uncontrollable” and consider independence as disobedience and a threat to their core values of family loyalty (Moon & Song, 1998). Parents tend to consider their children as an extension of themselves. For example, an elderly man shared his sadness and anger with me, saying, “Korean American children are blessed to know two cultures and two languages yet they sometimes take advantage of knowing two worlds by selecting either Korean or American ways for their own benefit.” He lamented that the younger generation does not respect their parent’s generation. As many first generation parents reach retirement age, a crucial question emerges, of how to provide culturally appropriate support that

³¹ Many Korean immigrants are from the middle class in Korea (see Song, 2004).

addresses not only the physical losses that can come with aging but also the losses of their cherished values.

The stark differences between Korean and American cultural orientations were manifested clearly after the Virginia Tech shootings in 2007. While first generation Korean Americans shared a sense of communal apology and guilt because the offender was a Korean American young man, the second generation thought that it was a crime of an individual, which had nothing to do with being Korean American. As the Washington Post reported:

Many Korean American students said they not only felt no need to apologize for the actions of Seung Hui Cho, the gunman, but were resentful that older Koreans, including Seoul's ambassador to Washington, had publicly expressed a sense of remorse for an atrocity that they view as bearing no relation to them or their origins. (Constable & Aizenman, 2007)

Included in this news report was a quotation from Ester Chung, 36, a youth counselor, who said, "We are Western-born. Our parents want us to think collectively, but we also have to live independently. It is part of the tension of growing up here." The inner conflict exists among the children who are pulled between two different worlds of being Korean and being American.

Young Korean Americans, more so than the children of many other immigrant groups, talk of leading a double life—immersed in American culture by day, then reverting to traditional Korean family life when they return home at night. One world encourages them to express emotions and explore new freedoms. The other expects them to obey without question and keep their doubts and fears to themselves. (Constable & Aizenman, 2007)

As such, young Korean Americans experience marginality in the midst of conflicts between Korean and American norms. A Korean American adolescent said that she sometimes feels that she belongs to neither Korean nor American culture. She said,

“I am embarrassed when American people say that I speak good English. English is my first language that I should know how to speak. I also feel embarrassed when Korean adults ask me whether I can eat *kimchi*, which is the food that I have been eating all my life.”³² The second generation feels confused about their ethnic identity—“the degree to which one views oneself as a member of a particular ethnic group” (Nagayama & Okazaki, 2002, p. 42). A conversation that I had during a Bible study with youths illustrates this confusion. Some adolescents shared that they feel strange and even ashamed to walk with their parents in a public place like a mall because their parents are not “Americanized” enough. On the other hand, the young generation feels marginalized within Korean culture because they have learned about Korean culture only at home and church via stories of their parents and popular Korean culture like music, movies, and other media.

The Korean American church is where the cultural gap between the first generation and the second generation appears most distinctively. Many young Korean Americans leave the Korean church in what has been called a “silent exodus” (Lee, 1996) because they feel that their voices are not heard and they are treated like children. Ironically, even though they are successful in other public places, like their work contexts and other social settings, their voices are unheard in the church. The leadership in the Korean church is given to the first generation, most often in the form of a rigid hierarchy, in which age identity is the most valued attribute of church leaders. On the other hand, the first generation feels underpowered outside the circle of the Korean-speaking

³² This vignette is based on a personal conversation in the youth group where I was a youth pastor.

community (family, church, other Korean ethnic associations), and they want to claim their agency in such places.

The cultural gap is quite visible between these two strikingly different generations. In this stark contrast, the in-between generation (the 1.5 generation) also feels they are over-burdened by having to play the role of bridge makers between two seemingly different worlds, while experiencing their own internal struggle between two cultures. Even though they appear competent in both worlds, some members of the 1.5 generation share that they struggle with a sense of incompetence in each of these worlds—being neither fully American nor fully Korean.

As such, Korean Americans can be both recipients and agents within this process of marginalization. In facing many challenges that are caused by within-cultural differences, how can they claim their Korean American identity without negating one at the expense of the other? How can they transform their experience into a positive and life-giving sense of being both/and? How can they claim both a Korean and American identity regardless of the different levels of acculturation? And how can their religious beliefs and practices inform a process of conscientization about the process of marginalization that will help them communally resist the oppressive dynamics of marginalization and claim the creative possibilities of constructing identities in which they can authentically be both Korean and American?

Marginalization Created by Gender Roles

In the Korean American community, gender is one of the most intriguing yet difficult aspects of social identity to understand in terms of marginalization. For the last

several decades, Korean American women have begun to give voice to their experiences of marginalization, which are complicated by the intricate dynamics of racism, gender, religious belief, and contextual variances. Gender norms continue to be oppressive and to silence many Korean American women. Simone Kim, a pastoral theologian, says that she felt “small, less human, invisible, and even dismissed” in the Korean Protestant congregation where she was a member simply because she is female (Kim, 2006 p. 35). In a culture where daughters used to be considered “second class citizens” from birth, being a woman means being subordinate, inferior, and, thus, women are “destined” to serve others first. For example, Confucianism indoctrinated women to follow the doctrine of “three obediences” during their lifetime: to obey her father before marriage, her husband after marriage and her son after her husband’s death (Kim, Kim & Kelly, 2006). Even though such Confucian doctrine is an old-fashioned tradition and is not practiced literally in modern society, such doctrines continue to shape gender roles. Jung Ha Kim (1999) explains this unequal gender norm in the context of the Korean American church, saying,

Churched Korean American women recognize that their own church relegates them to secondary status and systemically excludes them from gaining public recognition...much of church works is done by women, yet male church leaders tend to get the credit. (p. 207)

Women tend to take leadership positions in invisible places in their congregations—in the kitchen, in pastoral visitation, and in prayer ministries—rather than leading a congregational meeting, session, or public prayer. It is true that Korean American women gained more power due to their economic participation in family businesses and the job market and through cultural changes that gave them more equality in the public

sphere; however, achievement is still superficial and limited, because the cultural message obligates them to nurture others at the expense of their own needs, especially within the private sphere of home and family life.

Angela Son (2006), a Korean American pastoral theologian, argues there are three major psychological problems experienced by women that result from their socialization: 1) a subordinate role of Korean women under Confucianism, 2) the psychological arrest in the development of a psychological sense of self in women, 3) grandiosity, low self esteem, and a pervasive sense of shame caused by a lack of self development and its effects on relationship (p. 326). These problems are due to a particular socialization process: “the fundamental task of finding identity through a man” (Moon & Song, 1998, p. 142). Korean culture emphasizes that women are responsible for “communal connection” at the expense of their own needs. Boyung Lee (2006) says,

Overvaluing relatedness deprives Korean women of the power to know themselves and contributes to repressed feelings, diffused boundaries, low self-esteem, dependency on others, sacrificing their needs for others, feelings of shame, deprivation of the right to communicate, ambiguity about themselves and the world, and lack of centeredness. (pp. 346-347)

This patriarchal cultural system overburdens Korean American women because many women feel obligated to assume “double roles,” working at both work and household by playing supporting roles (Kim, 1997; Min, 1998). Married Korean American women work outside the home at a substantially higher rate than Korean women in their home country because less acculturated Korean American men need financial support from their wives; at the same time, Korean American women continue to assume responsibility for domestic work, including raising children (Min, 1998).

Simone Kim (2007) states, “It is not uncommon for Korean/Asian North American women, especially if they consider themselves bicultural and bilingual, to experience almost a schizophrenic state of mind between the two opposite worlds” (p. 724).

The construction of gender norms can be more complicated among the 1.5 and 2nd generations. Alumkal (1999), in his field work at an English-speaking Korean American congregation, found that even younger Korean Americans believe and practice patriarchal theology—taking male headship in family and church as the norm, disagreeing with women’s ordination, etc. He concludes,

Rather than a simple movement from patriarchal to egalitarian gender norms, as might be predicted by traditional assimilation theory, the individuals in this study maintained a substantial (though far from absolute) commitment to gender hierarchy, articulating these norms in the language of American evangelicalism rather than referring to Korean culture. (p. 138)

While Korean American women of both first and second generations struggle with gaining their voices, Korean immigrant men feel resentful about the loss of their power yet they have difficulty expressing their emotions due to the cultural restrictions that prohibit men from expressing emotion. Many Korean American men feel shame about their status of “downwardly mobile” small-scale entrepreneurs. They feel powerless in relation to the larger society and think that they do not receive their due respect. Changes in gender roles make them vulnerable and insecure because they feel that they lose their male identity—dominant, masculine, providing, and being in control. The loss of their agential power at a societal level causes other problems such as domestic violence, marital conflict, and other relational difficulties (Song & Moon, 1998).

As such, it is crucial to understand the dynamics of gender norms in the larger context of social structures of both racism and Korean patriarchy. While Korean American immigrants struggle with their survival and are aware of racial discrimination, it is easy for them to not fully realize how much patriarchy continues to marginalize women. It is essential to be conscious of the web created by power structures, which causes multiple marginalities and forces Korean American women to take the burden of sustaining the homeostasis of the existing system of dominance and oppression. Hearing Korean American women's voices, as they speak from "a women centered perspective," (Song, 1998) is at the heart of liberation from multiple marginalities for both women and men, and both the marginalized and the dominant.

Immigrant Stress and Lack of Self Agency

Living as immigrants in the context of marginalities causes enormous stress. Stress can be described as "a ratio of demands to resources" (Arnold, 1982, p. 153). Living as immigrants means that Korean Americans have fewer resources and more demands in dealing with challenges in the areas of finance, job, parenting, etc. They are more vulnerable to stress and its consequences—health problems and other relational conflicts. In order to be able to lower stress to a manageable level, they should either increase resources or decrease demands. However, in reality, they can choose neither the former nor the latter. It is hard to gain more resources because of their lack of language skills, limited job opportunities, and discrimination. On the other hand, the demands seem to be endless. To Korean Americans, a minor task can be quite stressful. For

instance, a Korean immigrant man, in his sixties, shared his stress when he was not able to fill up his gas tank because the gas pump did not recognize his credit card and he did not know what to do next. It is stressful and frustrating not to be able to handle a daily task such as a hospital visit, or disputing a bill. The acculturative stresses seem to be endless.

Korean American immigrants experience stress from language difficulties and a sense of social isolation more than from other sources of stress (Kim, 2002). The lack of English proficiency makes it difficult for them to feel independent; the first generation feels dependent on their children for translation help. In addition, immigrants have less access to the job market, even though Korean Americans are known to have higher education. About half of Korean immigrants held either professional or technical jobs in Korea but only one third of them were able to continue in their careers in the United States (Hurh & Kim, 1990). It is frustrating to not be able to continue with their pre-immigration careers due to their lack of language skills and the reality of discrimination. Or, even though their previous career is accepted by their employer, they are pressured to demonstrate their competency in order to be accepted by fellow workers. A Korean immigrant nurse shared her frustration of looking incompetent, even though she believed that she had more education and job skills than those with whom she worked. Because of the seemingly endless stresses of working in an English-speaking environment, many Korean immigrants choose to run their own businesses. Yet they feel insecure about their future and are urged to work more hours while they are healthy and have opportunity. That is why they cannot reduce their work hours and lower their level of stress. Having

less resources and opportunity, they choose to work harder in order to secure their place financially and compensate for their sense of psychological loss resulting from immigration and overworking.

Surrounded by numerous external strains, they feel socially isolated. They feel disconnected from the larger society. This sense of isolation increases their dependency on their children and other Koreans. Many Korean parents struggle in terms of implementing their parental authority. Language difficulties make them depend on their children in domestic affairs and even in running a business. In such situations, children are “capable” but parents are “incapable.” The reversal of parental roles threatens the “self image” of parents and they often compensate by exercising their authority using a strict disciplinary approach that can at times become child abuse (Song, 2004). Children can also feel as if their parents are inferior to the parents of their peers; as a result, they can easily internalize negative images of being Korean Americans.

Korean American immigrants are at high risk for physical and mental illness due to both external and internal stresses. Stress can lead to mental illnesses such as general anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and panic disorder (Auerbach & Gramling, 1998). Some research studies demonstrate that Korean Americans are much more vulnerable to mental illness compared to other minority groups (Kuo, 1984; Kim, 2002). “Higher acculturative stress” and “lower social support” were associated with higher scores on measures of depression among Korean immigrant older adults (Han, Kim, Lee, Pistulka, & Kim, 2007). Yet, in a culture where mental illness is often understood as a moral failing rather than a medical diagnosis, Korean Americans can be more vulnerable

and fail to seek professional help. In this particular cultural orientation toward mental illness, somatization is often a cultural form of expressing psychological problems; it is a way of “saving face” (Tseng, 2004). This form of illness is a window through which the deeper problem can be discovered.

At the heart of immigrant stress is a sense of a lack of control, including a lack of self agency in dealing with social stressors. Related to the experiences of marginalization, the concept of cognitive control is relevant and meaningful. Yong Kim (2002) demonstrates that cognitive control—“individual perceptions of control over their lives”—mediated the effects of stressful situation on distress. While a healthy form of cognitive control can be an important factor in coping with stress, people can use unhealthy coping methods such as compulsive coping, addiction, violence, etc. These ways of coping can give the illusion of having control; this is a kind of self deception.

This lack of agential power not only affects the psychological well being of individuals but also the well being of Korean immigrant families and communities. For instance, domestic violence among Korean males is reported as a threat to Korean immigrant families (Song, 2004). Many Korean males experience threats to their male identity as they realize that they cannot carry the role of “traditional Korean male” as a bread winner. Sang Bok Lee (2003) describes a case study about Mr. Cho (49 years old), who struggled with his male image as he realized his incompetence in linguistic, financial, social, and parenting matters. Depending on his wife’s income hurt his male image because he believed that the husband is responsible for the whole family. In terms of male violence, Poling (1991, 2002) argues that unhealthy forms of power, acted out by

“overpowering” others, can result in abusive relationships in family, church, and community. To overpower others is one expression of this lack of self agency.

As such, living as immigrants can disempower one’s sense of self agency and it can cause serious damage to family and community. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the affects of acculturative stresses on immigrant families and develop pastoral care systems and strategies that can empower self agency among immigrants by engaging in their meaning making process more explicitly. While external stresses can threaten Korean immigrants and their communities negatively, it is imperative to reframe the experiences of marginalization into order to see the new identity that emerges when one refuses to be defined by the dominant culture. Theologies of marginality provide a way of reframing the stress of marginalization, challenging Korean American Christians to define themselves in relation to God, and not the dominant culture. These theologies provide the framework for pastoral care that helps Korean Americans weave their life narratives with narratives about God in theologically integrated ways.

Pastoral Theological Implications

It is estimated that approximately seventy percent of Korean American immigrants attend church; only a half of these immigrants were Christian before they immigrated.³³ The Korean American church not only provides religious services but also

³³ In major cities such as Los Angeles and Chicago, for example, 69.9 % and 76.7% of Korean Americans in these respective cities were affiliated with Korean ethnic churches, 84% and 78% of these groups, respectively, attend church at least once a week (Kang, 2002, p. 66).

fills other psychological and social needs to help people adjust (Hurh, 1998). A research study found that ethnic support is very important for the mental health for Korean immigrants while non-ethnic social support is not associated with positive health outcomes (Noh & Avison, 1996).

As research demonstrates, Korean Americans have relied on religion in the process of adjusting, coping, seeking a new identity, and making sense of life. However, higher rates of religious attendance do not explain how people use religious resources in coping with stress. In order to understand the helpful and unhelpful ways in which Korean Americans draw upon religious faith to cope with experiences of marginality, one must turn to empirical research on how religious coping helps people grow spiritually through times of stress (Pargament, 1997) and how culture is related to coping process.³⁴

Allport's (1967) notion of religious orientation—intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of religiosity—can be helpful in beginning to understand how religion is processed either holistically or partially for pragmatic purposes. While extrinsically motivated people attend church for instrumental and non-religious purposes such as enhancing social networks, providing religious (moral) education for children, and meeting psychological needs, intrinsically motivated people turn to their faith for meaning and guidance, and for a sense of spiritual purpose; in other words, religion is an end in itself. Intrinsic religious motivation, at the practical level, has a significant relation to mental health.

³⁴ Reviewing this research is the focus of the next chapter.

Park and Murgatroyd (1998) found that intrinsic religiosity was negatively related to depression, while an extrinsic orientation was positively related to depression among Korean Americans. It is important to explore how “intrinsic religious belief as a way to search for the meaning of their immigrant existence” can be effective in helping Korean immigrant cope with stress (Park & Murgatroyd, 1998, p. 322). While some immigrants are initially drawn to religion for extrinsic benefits such as meeting social, economical, and psychological needs, through a process of conscientization and authentic awareness of marginality they may find that intrinsic motivation can be enhanced and their religious belief become more integrated into their immigrant living so that they can resist racism, sexism, and intergenerational cultural conflicts, and meaningfully cope with the stress of immigration.

Sang Hyun Lee (2001) asserts that the Korean American church plays a significant role as “God’s household for the strangers in the margin” which gives a creative space to see their identity in the light of religious narratives. The themes of immigration, identity, and religion come together and their Christian faith becomes central in the process of identity development and coping with stress. Many people find that religion fills the void of their life as immigrants, helping them search for answers to the constant question of why I live the way I live in this new land.

Besides meeting the social and psychological needs of Korean Americans that arise from the experience of uprootedness, Christian faith can at times provide an implicit or even explicit economic ethos that identifies economic success as a divine blessing to

Korean Americans in their struggle of pursuing American dreams of success (Kwon, 2003).

The religious belief that the practitioners maintain positively influences their better economic achievement, by restoring their mental energy, avoiding wastes of time and money, and allowing them to live an ascetic life by trimming unnecessary activities and thoughts. (Kwon, p. 329)

The economic ethos of the Christian message—“a material and economic paradise to be realized in this life” (Kim, 2000, p. 120)³⁵—appeals to Korean Americans who seek prosperity as proof of God’s blessing. While initially, this interpretation of religious faith may be helpful in creating hope and establishing self agency, it will not provide meanings that help Korean Americans understand their experiences of marginalization through the lens of their religious faith, nor will it help them resist the social forces that marginalize them.

The Korean American church needs to be aware of and intentional about its role as a narrative community, which helps immigrants integrate the experiences as immigrants into the authentic story of faith that enhances the process of conscientization and authentic marginalization.³⁶ It is important to understand how Christian faith functions as an “integrating narrative” that empowers Korean Americans to process and activate their faith fully in intrinsically meaningful ways in dealing with stressful events. In facing the stress of acculturation and experiencing the lack of self agency, Korean

³⁵ Andrew Kim argues that Korean Christianity has been shamanized, in terms of its affinity to Shamanism, with its worldly orientation that emphasizes material blessing. For example, the threefold blessings of Christ—health, prosperity, and salvation—have attracted many people to Christianity during the full Gospel movement in Korea (see Kim, 2000).

³⁶ I will discuss what it means to be a narrative community in Chapter 6.

American Christians may adopt the extrinsic values of Christian faith without deeper theological reflection upon their experiences of marginalization. While competing Christian narratives based on the dualism of marginality and centrality continue to entice their communities to seek false attachment to the values of the dominant culture, Korean American Christians need to draw upon a theology of marginality in order to cope with the stress of marginalization in life affirming ways.

Thus, the Korean American church is challenged to take a more active role in providing cultural/religious symbols and reconstructing the meaning of life from a particularly Christian theological understanding of marginality. In that vein, the church needs to be more rigorously involved with helping immigrants construct theological meanings by drawing upon theologies of marginality, which reflect, reconstruct, and transform the experiences of Korean American Christians. Many Korean Americans, due to a traditionally hierarchical understanding of the church and the authority of pastors, seem to consider theology as a specialized discipline, which only “specialists” do and, thus, take a passive stance in drawing upon theological perspectives in integrating their life narrative. This binary approach to thinking of theology as “special knowledge,” which is separated from the mundane experiences of ordinary people, seems to be prevalent and problematic. This kind of narrowly defined theology deprives people of the opportunity of “doing theology” in their own language and inhibits them from using theological resources in more integrated ways in dealing with their life issues. Hertig (2003) describes the limited role of the Korean American church and the lack of contextual construction of theology.

The Korean Protestant immigrant church's main role is limited to being an ethnic sanctuary with ethnic island mentality. Preoccupied with its otherworldly theology and programs on the one hand, and this-worldly materialism on the other, the dominant theme of the sermons preached on Sunday mornings focuses on "if you obey and serve the church by giving all sorts of offerings and tithes, you and your children will be blessed" (p. 139).

The dualistic aspects of this theology—"other worldly theology and this worldly materialism"—weakens self agency and can result in legalistic approaches to faith practices. Legalism is a liability in the Korean cultural system, in that it emphasizes "moral formalism" based on Confucianism, as a dominant social and religious ideology that defines hierarchical social and familial structure in relation to cosmic order (Choi, 2005, pp. 5-38).

In this context, the church can cause an unhealthy form of "co-dependency" in which people are submissive to its organizational mission and moral code without fully integrating it into their personal life story (Schaef, 1987; 1990). Co-dependence is an "unhealthy pattern of relating based on low self-esteem and on the belief that one's worth depends on attachment to or the approval of some other person or group" (McBride, 1998, p. 156). Religion, then, gives "a pseudo-identity" at the expense of one's authentic identity. For instance, Korean American Christians may remain silent or even cover up the dysfunctional dimensions of congregational life—i.e., the abusive leadership of pastoral staff—in order to maintain the homeostasis of the system. In this system, church members may blame each other without explicitly making one another accountable for fostering a communal life of justice and compassion.

On the other hand, people can create another unhealthy pattern of "contra-dependence" through religion by attempting to "separate from others to avoid being

emotionally hurt” (McBride, 1998, p. 156). In this dynamic, people approach religion as a distant entity and fail to connect it to their deeper inner life. For example, as one Korean American pastor noted, some church members are afraid of engaging with the clergy or other church members at a deeper level of sharing life together due to their earlier experiences of emotional hurt. As religion becomes judgmental or irrelevant, it simply remains in private spheres without the vital energy of faith which brings the full potentiality of life.

In facing these challenges, how can Korean American churches make faith more integrated in both personal and communal ways? How can they overcome the unhealthy relational patterns of either codependency or contra-dependency? I believe pastoral theology can provide ways of making Christian faith more explicit in dealing with the issue of marginality so that Korean Americans fully reclaim their voices while being fully aware of what it is like to live in the systemic web of multiple marginalities. Pastoral theology attempts to connect personal experiences to larger societal issues and generate new theological meanings, which not only reflect the suffering of persons but also challenge the larger system of care (Graham, 1992). By privileging the experiences of Korean immigrants and their families as a source of authority, while drawing upon various disciplines related to marginality and coping, pastoral theology can generate a new theoretical frame for understanding and responding to the suffering of Korean Americans.

In reconstructing a pastoral theology of marginality, we have to ask some fundamental questions. How can pastoral theology and care help people overcome their

internalized sense of marginalization and construct their identity without remaining passive receivers of dominant narratives? How can they reclaim their self agency collaboratively in creative engagement with Christian faith? What is the meaning of their Christian faith in light of their experience of marginality? Miller-McLemore (1999) states,

Pastoral care... is not particularly “pastoral” or “nice” in the truncated ways in which it has been perceived. Pastoral care disturbs as well as comforts, provokes as well as guides. It breaks silence and calls for radical truth telling; it names shame and guilt, calls for confession and repentance, and moves vigilantly toward forgiveness and reconciliation. (pp. 80-81)

I believe that pastoral care does not simply comfort suffering people but also disturbs and challenges people to be fully aware of the radical truth given through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ who immigrated to a new realm of marginality. Korean Americans are encouraged to participate in the work of transformation by reconstructing their experiences of marginality as the creative core of identity that participates in the new divine reality of marginality.

I will develop a pastoral theology for engaging the issues of marginalization in the following ways. First, marginality will be understood within a communal contextual paradigm, in which every person is understood as a relational being who both influences and is influenced by the larger system. Second, marginality will be understood in relation to the process of narrative construction: how personal narratives are constructed in relation to the larger oppressive narratives of racism, sexism, and cultural superiority, etc. Third, marginality will be reconstructed by drawing upon liberationist approaches to pastoral theology, in which the sacred (biblical) narratives are woven into both personal

and communal narratives so that the experiences of social marginality can be transformed and integrated, resulting in a faith based upon the theology of marginality. Lastly, I will use interdisciplinary approaches to pastoral theology by drawing upon different resources: 1) my own personal experiences as a Korean immigrant as well as ministerial experiences with Korean American Christians, 2) a theology of marginality as well as other liberationist and feminist theologies, and 3) cognate disciplines such as religious coping theory and narrative therapy.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the multiple marginalities that Korean Americans experience and its impact on psychological health, especially a lack of self-agency, which can result in unhealthy forms of relationship in self, family, and church. Those “multiple marginalities” have been mainly described as racism, sexism, and intergenerational cultural conflicts. Drawing upon Jung Young Lee’s theology of marginality, I have described marginality from the underside. When those who are marginalized go through a communal process of conscientization, they can see how marginality is a construction that reveals the reality of the unprivileged—the loss of status and power, and the lack of their voice—while increasing their awareness of socio-political influences of external forces and enabling them to resist and empower their own agential power. As such, the experience of marginality can provide a double vision—living in neither/nor and both/and. This way of living is also a way of living “beyond”: in other words, immanence and transcendence cannot be separated. In this way, Jung Young Lee

reconstructs marginality as the creative core of divine reality. Using a pastoral theological method, I will develop the concept of marginality as a transforming hermeneutic for Korean American Christians.

In the next chapter, I will explore how religious faith affects the process of coping with stress; especially, how self agency operates in Korean religious contexts. As discussed in this chapter, the Korean American church has great resources for religious coping, yet it draws upon them in limited ways. I will expand current theory and practice of pastoral care by drawing upon psychological theories, especially, religious coping theory, and theological resources. I draw upon pastoral theology to relate these diverse modes of interpreting and responding to marginality

CHAPTER 3

RELIGIOUS COPING AND KOREAN AMERICAN RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

In the previous chapter I described the experiences of Korean American immigrants and their families, and focused on the stress they experienced as a result of being marginalized. The experience of immigrant stress is a chronic form of stress compared to other kinds of stress (Noh & Avison, 1996). The acculturation process is tiring and endless. It seems to be a “never-ending” story. At a systemic level, it involves dealing with intricate power structures of both the host culture and Korean American culture—the reality of multiple marginalities. At a personal level, it accompanies low self-esteem, the lack of a sense of mastery, and increased vulnerability to social stressors (Noh & Avison, 1996). As a way of coping with these complex sources of stress, many people rely upon religion as a coping resource.

In this chapter, I will review and summarize literature and research on religious coping. Theories and research on religious coping, I believe, can enhance pastoral care by offering a unique understanding of religion and its role in the life of immigrants. Different from negative views of religion historically proposed by psychologists—religion as pathology, a defensive mechanism, and a political tool of manipulation by oppressors—theories on religious coping emphasize that religion can be either positive or negative depending on how it is processed in the life of a person in relation to the

environment. Religious coping theory rejects a deterministic view of religion, which tends to “explain away” or “reduce” religion to psychological or sociological phenomenon (Pargament, 2002a). Instead it tries to assess how a particular aspect of religion is integrated in one’s personal life at a functional level, thus avoiding unnecessary value judgments upon religion.

A religious coping approach is helpful for understanding how religion functions in the daily life of Korean immigrants; particularly, how it is integrated into their personal narratives as a way of constructing meaning. In the Korean American context, in which theology is often understood as “prescribed” rather than “constructive,” religious coping theories and research can challenge the limited understanding of religion as simply a belief system and delineate how a particular theology operates at pragmatic levels.

A key question is: to what extent does religion play a positive or negative role in the life of Korean American immigrants? From my own experience in the Korean American immigrant church, I believe that religion functions as both a stress-reliever and stress-generator. While religion offers coping resources through social, psychological, and spiritual support, it can increase stress by imposing guilt-driven religiosity and legalism at a personal level and by causing painful and unhealthy power struggles in interpersonal relationships, which often result in church conflicts and splits, and which inflict deep spiritual wounds upon congregations and its members. Facing this ongoing problem, I intend to explore the religious coping of Korean American immigrants in a broader socio-cultural context and offer insights for positive religious coping as part of a

new pastoral care model. Critical engagement of religious coping approaches can generate new theological meanings of marginality and provide practical guidance for pastoral care.

With this purpose in mind, I will review religious coping theory and research, and apply some important findings to the Korean American context, and propose ways in which Korean Americans can draw upon their religious faith to cope in more positive ways. In order to make religious coping theory and research relevant and meaningful, the theory needs to be contextualized. This effort to contextualize theories and research on religious coping will allow such theories to have “practical bearings” (Hummel, 2003) on Korean immigrants and their families in their struggle with marginality. Contextualizing theories of religious coping can help to delineate how religion and culture interplay in the coping process. My focus is on exploring how culture explicitly or implicitly sanctions particular coping methods, which are used in life-limiting ways that maintain the status quo—the internalized status of marginality—without activating self agency for the fulfillment of one’s own selfhood within the communal life of religious communities.

I propose that religious coping should embrace the dimension of transformation more explicitly, by being based on the belief that God empowers the agential power of person and religious community in times of stress. By critically underscoring socio-cultural dynamics embedded in the Korean American cultural context, I will challenge the limitations of current pastoral care models, which, to some extent, seem to fail to activate positive religious resources for transformation, and will suggest a pastoral care

model that is more congruent in the context of the stresses experienced by Korean immigrant families.³⁷

Religious Coping

Religious Coping as a Cognitive Process

Religious coping can be understood as a “transactional process,” (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) in which religion interfaces with stressors at a cognitive level, resulting in positive and negative outcomes. Research and theories on religious coping explore how religion helps people appraise stressors and gain “cognitive control” over threatening situations (Kim, 2002). If external environments cannot be changed, people still can change their thoughts and responses. This kind of cognitive control helps to modify behaviors and by so doing, negative responses to stress can be reduced. Religion can be a kind of cognitive resource, which helps to make sense of life experiences (Taylor, 1991). From this cognitive perspective of religious coping, religion, especially constructive theology, can provide a cognitive resource by which marginalized people might know more fully their situation but understand it cognitively in such a way that they are empowered to cope more positively with it.

People rely upon religion particularly in times of stress (Pargament, 1997). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define coping as “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of person” (p. 141). This definition implies that

³⁷ I will develop a communal contextual narrative approach to pastoral care in Chapter 4.

coping is not simply a “reactive” but a “proactive” process (Lazarus, 1999). In other words, people make personal choices and “individualized construction[s] of reality” (Pargament, 1997, p. 74). Thus, the coping process can be either positive or negative depending on how people manage or control stress by using available coping resources. Religion is one of the significant coping resources that can modify cognitive and behavioral responses to stress.

What is religion and how is it integrated in the process of coping? Pargament (1997) defines religion as “the search for significance related to the sacred” (p. 32). Religion can be understood as a kind of “orienting system” (related to a sense of significance) that provides cognitive or interpretive maps that help people assess stressors. A negative life event, which is often the cause of stress, challenges the existing cognitive system with the deeper question of “why”—i.e. why does God allow or even cause my suffering? In dealing with negative events people try to appraise events by drawing upon religious resources—this is called “primary appraisal” (Pargament, 1997). For instance, a negative life event can be appraised as a punishment from God, a demonic event, or being tested by God.

Religious coping, then, involves secondary appraisals which deal with the question of “what, then, should I do?” (Pargament, 1997). For instance, in a clinical case with a Vietnamese male, who struggled with his prolonging grief, I saw how he used a particular Buddhist belief system to interpret the death of his mother as the consequence of his karma. His primary appraisal had evoked feelings of guilt. This primary appraisal led him to pray for his mother every night; however, he continued to feel depressed

because he felt so responsible for this tragedy. His religious appraisal was primarily fatalistic. This example illustrates how (1) religion offers cognitive resources for interpreting negative life events in terms of the two questions of “why” and “what” and (2) these appraisals influence positive or negative coping.

In a similar vein, McIntosh (1995) explains that religion provides “cognitive schema”, defined as “cognitive structure[s] or mental representation[s] [for assimilating] external events in a particular cognitive process” (p. 2). For instance, in dealing with immigrant stress, those who have religious schema that include beliefs about suffering as “God’s trial” can appraise their stress as a time of trial, which eventually leads to God’s blessing. Compared to non-religious people, the appraisal process of those who utilize religious schema can be quicker than those who do not use religious schema, because such schema are immediately available and can shorten the appraisal process (McIntosh, 1993, 1995). In other words, religion functions as a “ready-made” interpretive tool in times of stress. It is easily available and accessible.

Furthermore, religious coping provides resources that for many are more “compelling” compared to other coping resources in dealing with questions of meaning, purpose, and life in times of stress (Pargament, 1997). Dealing with post-immigration stress is not only an issue of survival but ultimately involves questions of meaning. Korean American immigrants constantly search for meaning to their life as immigrants, making religious appraisals of their immigrant stress using resources like biblical stories that enhance identification with biblical immigrants. Imagine, for example, how the biblical narrative of Job is also a classical example of how they can appraise their

experience of evil—“why do bad things happen to good people?” In times of stress, people still can give negative life situations meanings that “redeem” their suffering in transforming ways (Kushner, 1981, p. 149).

Searching for the Sacred

Compared with other forms of psychological coping, religious coping is distinctive in its spiritual dimension—the ways in which it draws upon an awareness of “the sacred.” While religious coping is involved in the process of cognitive appraisal and choosing certain coping behaviors, it is of utmost importance to know that religion is also an end in itself, not just a means to an end (Pargament, 1997). Given Pargament’s definition of religion as “a search for the sacred,” one of the goals of religious coping is to enhance one’s spirituality.

Spiritual resources are not simply another problem-solving tool. They are instead embedded in a larger worldview. ...[S]piritual resources are, first and foremost, designed to facilitate an individual’s spiritual journey. Therapists who overlook the larger sacred purpose and meaning of these resources risk trivializing spirituality and reducing it to nothing more than a set of psychological techniques. (Pargament, 2007, p. 12)

Religion involves whatever one identifies as one’s “ultimate concern” and religious faith is a dynamic process that seeks for ultimate reality (Tillich, 1957). Pargament (2007) emphasizes that the quality of one’s search for the sacred can be described in terms of integration. He has a comprehensive and complex understanding of well-integrated spirituality, which he defines as

...broad and deep, responsive to life’s situations, nurtured by the larger social context, capable of flexibility and continuity, and oriented toward a [spirituality] that is large enough to encompass the full range of human potential and luminous enough to provide the individual with a powerful guiding vision. (Pargament, 2007, p. 136)

The need for a well-integrated spirituality increases as people approach what Pargament calls “a boundary condition,” in which one is keenly aware of “the limitation of human condition;” in such circumstances faith becomes one of the most effective resources that one can hold onto (Pargament, 1997, p. 153). The experience of marginalization of Korean immigrants challenges their established identities by raising deeper questions about their identities. It is the question of “Why am I here as an immigrant?” This is fundamentally a theological question. Korean Americans need to continue to develop their narratives, which give new meanings to their experiences of marginality. Thus, a well integrated spirituality is crucial for Korean American Christians because they need to cope with their experiences of marginality by developing cohesive and meaningful narratives of living as immigrants.

Religious coping is often preferable to other coping methods, especially when there are no alternative responses, or when other resources are scarce. Taylor (1991) says, “Often the situation cannot be changed but the way person views it can be changed” (p. 7). If one cannot change the situation, religion can change the person through spiritual transformation. For instance, a dying person can search for religious ways of defining his ultimate concern that goes beyond his situation of physical deterioration. Religion gives a direction of life; “having a purpose” can be essential in coping process (Oates, 1985).

Religion is not only about “the ends sought” but also includes the process of “searching.” People “strive for” purpose beyond survival, searching for significance—personal, communal, or spiritual—and experience a sense of sacredness through such strivings (Emmons, 1986). This understanding of the role of striving is quite different

from a deterministic view of human nature, in which people are considered simply as “reactive beings.” Pargament (2007) notes, “The capacity to investigate, look ahead, think about future, and imagine and implement ways to achieve goals is a critical ingredient of human nature” (p. 53). Religion, as the search for the sacred, is embedded in “the individual’s whole motivational structure” (Pargament, 2002a, p. 241).

In relation to this understanding of religion, coping is understood as the relationship between those two elements—“the significance” and “searching.” Pargament (1997, 2007) calls “the significance related to the sacred” as having to do with “religious ends” or “spiritual destination,” and searching as the “means to coping” or the “religious pathways.” Positive coping occurs when religious means and ends are integrated and balanced, while negative coping is more likely when religious means and ends are not integrated or imbalanced.

Pargament et al. (1997, 1998b, 2007) suggest three “red flags” related to negative religious coping: going in the “wrong direction,” or down a “wrong road,” and going “against wind.” Going in the “wrong direction” takes place when one has a destination (ends), which is not balanced with one’s own situation. It includes self-negligence, self-worship, spiritual apathy. Going down a “wrong road” takes place when the means of coping is not balanced with the ends of coping; an example of going down a wrong road is interpreting an event as a punishment from God. Going “against the wind” occurs when the ends and means are in conflict with social ecology, i.e., anger against God, interpersonal religious conflict, conflict with the doctrines of church, etc.

An example of going in the “wrong direction” can be found in the story of a battered Korean American woman who continues to stay in an abusive relationship because she believes the theology of sacrifice provides a spiritual destination in the form of self-negligence, causing her to continue to endure the abusive relationship. In this case, her safety is in jeopardy and her spiritual destination is not congruent with her current situation. Going down the “wrong road” can be found when she appraises her suffering as God’s punishment for her past sinfulness. In this case, she relies upon religious resources that create a religious destination of making sacrifices in order to atone for sinfulness. An example of going “against the wind” is found when a woman decides to divorce her husband yet the decision conflicts with the doctrine of church where she attends, which asserts that divorce cannot be an option even in abusive relationship. By enduring not only an abusive marital relationship but also the abusive use of the doctrinal statement of church, she cannot but experience enormous stress.

Religion as the search for significance is a dynamic process that changes through life transitions in the midst of other unexpected stresses. Pargament (2007) describes this process in terms of three stages: 1) discovering, 2) conserving, and 3) transforming the sacred. People discover something significant related to the sacred, whether it is material, psychological, role related, social, people related, or spiritual, and tend to hold onto it (Pargament, 2002b). Then, they try to conserve the significance of the sacred, which is integrated into a hierarchy of significance in their belief system. Later, if the significance of the sacred is jeopardized through “sacred loss” or “desecration” through the violation of the sacred, people try to transform their sense of the sacred through “religious change”

such as conversion, change of denomination, or change of religious belief (Pargament, Magyar, Benore, & Mahoney, 2005).

For instance, a recent Korean American immigrant may discover that Christian faith gives him a sense of the sacred, in ways that make his life in a new land religiously meaningful. He then tries to conserve the significance of his faith by being actively involved with the church and its ministry. He may experience the desecration of his faith as the church goes through a power struggle among church leaders and eventually splits into two congregations without further effort for reconciliation. He may initially struggle with the meaning of his faith in this stage of life but may experience the transformation of the sacred through change in his religious belief, which embraces the complexity of life and faith.

Religious Support

Pargament (1997) explains that “religious support” that helps people deal with stress comes from two sources: direct support from a sense of the presence of God and support from church members. A favorable view of God as benevolent has been associated with a favorable self-concept, self-esteem, less loneliness, and ability to cope effectively (Fiala, Bjorck, & Gorsuch, 2002). Religious support from congregational members, who share a similar set of values and worldview, also provides a significant source of coping in critical times in life (Ellison & Levin, 1998).

To Korean Americans, experiences of religious support have been an integral part of immigrant living from the first settlement of immigrants in Hawaii 100 years ago till now. The belief that God will support them in a new land makes a difference in their

settlement process in this new land. The church as a gathering place for members of their ethnic group has played a central role as provider of religious support as well as social support, which are easily accessible and available compared to other non-religious service centers. My own personal and pastoral experiences fully affirm this. After my car accident, the support from the clergy and other church members transformed this difficult time in my life into a time of spiritual renewal and deeper connection to other Christians. Religious support is commonly offered through prayer, pastoral visits, and financial support. Support comes not only in such visible, tangible ways, but also through the perception of religious support in itself. For instance, “the awareness of prayers being offered on behalf of the individual or the belief that God is working through others” strengthens the positive coping process (Hill & Pargament, 2003). This spiritual connection with clergy and church members creates a sense of divine community that is an antidote to the constant feelings of loneliness, disconnection, and fear of the “unknown” that are part of the experience of immigration and marginalization.

Research demonstrates that ethnic support can be particularly helpful to minority persons (Noh & Avison, 1996). Support from one’s ethnic group who share similar core values of life brings a sense of understanding, belonging, and assurance. While “social isolation” is one of the most stressful experiences of Korean Americans (Kim, 2002), seeking spiritual support is related to positive outcome (Bjorck et al., 2001). The Korean American church functions as “a pseudo-extended family” (Hurh & Kim, 1990), and clergy play a significant role as central figures in connecting the network of care.

On the other hand, high expectations of clergy and congregational members can place more demands upon one another, which can cause coping resources to wear thin. The ministry demands on Korean American clergy are extremely high; “boundary ambiguity” and “presumptive expectations” of the pastor—“being all things to all people”—result in extreme stress and symptoms of “burnout” (Han & Lee, 2004). Since religion is considered “a way of life” (Hurh & Kim, 1990) among Korean Americans, it can be hard to maintain healthy boundaries. While religious support is extremely important and helpful for positive coping, it can be a source of distress when religious participation becomes mandatory in ways that are not ultimately spiritually nourishing, resulting in people seeking a sense of belonging yet do not experiencing life-giving relationships. We should remember that religious support can also include the negative aspects of manipulation and control in the guise of care.

Different Coping Styles and Self Agency

Pargament (1997) differentiates different coping styles based on how one uses self agency in relation to God. He identifies three different coping styles based on the relationship between God and the self in coping process: 1) the self-directing approach, wherein people rely on themselves rather than on God; 2) the deferring approach, in which the responsibility for coping is passively deferred to God; and 3) the collaborative approach, in which the individual and God are both seen as active partners in coping.

While self-directing and deferring styles of coping are associated with mixed positive and negative outcomes, only the collaborative style is associated consistently with positive outcomes. The self-directing style can be helpful by giving the locus of

control to oneself in situations where one can take charge and change external stressors. However, the self-directing style can be harmful in situations in which change is not possible, such as in responding to terminal illness in which there are no options except preparing for death. The more one tries to control, the more distress one experiences. Self-directing coping can reinforce the idea of that the individual has total responsibility without the medium of grace.

In the deferring coping style, one gives up self-agency by entrusting it to God. This style is associated with mixed positive and negative outcomes, depending on situational factors. In situations in which control is not a viable option, people can benefit from deferring to God. Yet, it can be negative when change is possible and needs to be encouraged. One of the pitfalls of the deferring style is that it encourages passivity and weakens self agency.

These empirical findings demonstrate that situational factors should be considered thoroughly in order to understand what kind of religious coping can be most helpful. It is important to assess whether stressful situations are controllable or not. The lack of proper assessment of the situation can lead to negative religious coping instead of positive coping. In relation to the experiences of Korean Americans, it is important to ask whether the experience of marginality is controllable or not. Is racial discrimination controllable? Is gender inequality a given? Can cultural differences among Korean Americans be negotiated? If so, then, to what extent is change possible? More specifically, in what areas can one change the situation? For instance, if gender inequality is appraised as “prescriptive” in an abusive relationship and a deferring coping

style is used, it results in negative outcomes such as vulnerability to male aggression and violence, low self esteem, learned helplessness, and so forth. As such, the deferring coping style can encourage self negation by suppressing, minimizing, and demoralizing self agency.

On the other hand, an excessive emphasis on a self-directing coping style can create a false illusion of self-grandiosity, in which human finitude is denied or avoided. It should also be remembered that the construct of coping is a cultural discourse that originated in the context of the Western individualistic culture and it needs modification in order to apply to other cultural contexts. It can be misleading to believe that an individual can cope positively through self-directive coping approach in other cultures.³⁸

In the research on ethnicity, coping, and distress, Bjorck et al. (2001) found that Korean Americans appraised stressors as greater losses, while Caucasians appraised stressors as challenges. They are reported to use “more passive coping behaviors (accepting responsibility, religious coping, distancing, and escape-avoidance) than the Caucasians” (p. 436). Korean Americans tend to feel “more helpless” and use “more passive coping.”³⁹ This general coping style, I believe, can be applied to understanding the religious coping styles of Korean Americans. An analysis of different coping styles

³⁸ I will develop my argument about coping and culture in the section that follows—Korean religious heritage and coping.

³⁹ There is no research that compares the religious coping attitudes of Koreans with that of Korean Americans. I hypothesize that Korean immigrants are more marginalized due to their status of being a racial minority, the lack of English competence, and other socio-cultural barriers. So, for example, I hypothesize that Koreans in Korea who may experience extreme poverty and Korean Americans who have relatively higher socio-economic status may both use a deferring style as a way of coping with marginalization.

can lead to better understanding of whether people use religious resources in integrated ways related to their situations. Pargament (1997) describes the contributions of research on religious coping:

It [religious coping] bridges a deep psychological tradition of helping people take control of what they can in times of stress with a rich religious tradition of helping people accept their limitations and look beyond themselves for assistance in troubling times. (p. 9)

This theory helps pastoral caregivers understand situational dynamics and draw upon both resources of psychology and religion without unnecessary criticism of the respective disciplines.

Positive and Negative Religious Coping

As this review of research on religious coping demonstrates, religious coping can function in either positive or negative ways. A key to evaluating positive or negative religious coping is to measure how it is integrated within the personal context of a person's life (Pargament, 2007). The notion of integration is quite relevant for understanding Korean American religious practices. In the context of living with multiple marginalities, religion needs to be evaluated based on whether it liberates and empowers the marginalized so that they can experience the full potential that God has given them. The proclamation of the religious message of hope and grace will remain empty if it fails to address the personal context of each immigrant and their communities.

In that regard, the notion of positive and negative coping can be a down-to-earth approach to evaluating religious practices, especially when such evaluations are part of the ministry of pastoral care. While Korean Americans rely upon religion as a coping resource, more rigorous efforts to connect the religious message to the coping process

and evaluate how it directly addresses issues of marginality can enhance pastoral ministry. For instance, when a careseeker struggles with the personal injustice she experienced in interpersonal relationships with her congregation, how can religion provide a positive coping method, which integrates religious teaching into her personal life story? If religion is practiced in abusive ways, how can it be monitored, confronted, and corrected? In times of conflict, religion can simply remain as an idealized form of religious teaching without getting messy, in terms of dealing with the reality of living within the context of marginality.

For instance, a Korean immigrant woman struggled with her religious obligation to tithe and the constraints of her financial situation in which she had a hard time making ends meet while raising a child as a single mother. She felt guilty for not tithing at times even though she was doing her best in order to support her child and the church. In a situation like this, the religious teaching of tithing can be oppressive when it is not elaborated in the context of a person who lives in marginality. In this situation, the story of a poor widow's offering (Luke 21: 1-3) can be interpreted literally, and, thus, impose a financial and moral burden. The pastoral situation of offering care to this woman raises significant questions about the operative theology and practice of church at deeper levels; is this interpretation positive or negative? If tithing is interpreted as a religious obligation without fuller understanding of the context of this woman's situation, it can lead to negative coping.

This kind of contextual problem raises the question of how to evaluate the role of religion in the process of coping. A significant contribution of research on religious

coping is that it provides evaluative guidelines for assessing whether religion functions psychologically in positive or negative ways in various contexts (Pargament, 1997).

Utilizing research and theories on religious coping can be a challenge to those who may idealize religion as a disparate external authority and take a passive stance toward it without having any notion of how religion can function in positive or negative ways.

People can be helped to evaluate their religious practices based on how they are integrated and to what extent they lead to positive or negative coping. Pargament (2002b) summarizes research findings on what kind of religious coping can be positive and negative.

Positive religious coping methods include benevolent religious appraisals of negative situations, collaborative religious coping, seeking spiritual support from God, seeking support from clergy or congregation members, religious helping of others, and religious forgiveness. In contrast, the pattern of negative religious coping methods grows out of a general religious orientation that is, itself, in tension and turmoil, marked by a shaky relationship with God, a tenuous and ominous view of the world, and a religious struggle in the search for significance. Negative religious coping methods include questioning the powers of God, expressions of anger toward God, expressions of discontent with the congregation and clergy, punitive religious appraisals of negative situations, and demonic religious appraisals. (p. 171)

These findings make us rethink religion in terms of its pragmatic outcomes. For instance, what is the effect of religious coping when a clergy person gives spiritual guidance which is opposite to what the care seeker wants? What is the effect of premature forgiveness preached to a care seeker in times of internal turmoil after violence? As the first and second generations of Korean Americans experience conflicts in their value system, how can pastoral care enhance positive coping of both generations? How

can religious teaching be integrated into one's personal context as fully as possible, while maintaining a creative tension between one's daily life and one's religion?

These questions challenge us to rethink and reconstruct pastoral care in contextually meaningful ways. Understanding religious coping research and theory helps us admit that pastoral care can enhance negative coping at times by ignoring the complexity of the religious coping process. If a pastoral caregiver is not self-aware, religion can become another stress on top of other stresses.

Connecting Coping with Culture

Religious coping does not occur in a vacuum. It is a socially constructed process. In other words, people cope differently in different cultures. Thus, a coping method, which is helpful in one context, may not be helpful in another context. When I served as a chaplain intern, I experienced stark cultural differences in how people of various ethnic backgrounds coped with dying and death in the grief process. I observed that most Caucasian families tried to control their emotion in public places differently from African Americans, who often wail and express their emotion in public place. In Korean culture, emotional control is encouraged as a mature and virtuous behavior in ordinary times, yet in times of death people are encouraged to express their emotion publicly similar to the emotional coping of African Americans. So, people of different cultural backgrounds cope differently. Particular cultural systems make different ways of coping normative. Cultural influences shape not only "emotion-focused coping" but also "problem-focused coping" which are attempts to control or manage a stressful situation (Aldwin, 1994, p.

208). While Caucasians are reported to use more direct problem solving, Korean Americans tend to use more escape-avoidant coping (Bjorck et al., 2001).

As such, different religious coping styles reflect socio-cultural differences. The coping of those who are marginalized can be even more complicated because the context compounds the problem. The coping of those who are marginalized is different from the coping of those who are in the dominant culture. For instance, while a divorce can simply be a stressful event for those who enjoy the privileges of being part of the dominant culture, divorce can exacerbate the experience of oppression for those who are marginalized (Hobfoll, 1998). Divorce can be a direct or indirect result of poverty, abuse, and other experiences of discrimination occurring in oppressive socioeconomic system (Poling, 2002). In reality, many people lack the resources of time, energy, and finance needed to instigate the divorce process.

Thus, considering the socio-cultural context of coping is essential if one is to move beyond an individualistic approach to understanding coping. In relation to coping with marginality, different religious coping styles need to be understood in relation to larger cultural systems. Who is most likely to use a deferring coping style—the marginalized or the dominant? The deferring coping style is more likely to occur among the marginalized, who cannot change the surrounding oppressive system and who often choose to endure oppression silently. The deferring coping style can be a form of learned behavior for those whose self agency has been subjugated. Thus, the prevalence of deferring coping styles among the first generation Korean Americans should be understood within the larger socio-historical context of Korean and Korean Americans.

In relating coping styles to the culture of Korean immigrants, it is essential to understand the role of self agency in both the social context of marginalization and the heritage of a collectivist culture; such an understanding helps one unpack the practical (pastoral) and moral implications of religious coping for Korean American Christians.⁴⁰ How does the larger socio-cultural context sanction and encourage a particular type of coping—especially a deferring coping style, which can result in negative coping in many situations? How does a certain coping style contribute to either positive or negative outcomes? How can Korean Americans claim and develop their self agency by negotiating and balancing cultural demands and personal needs? In that process, what is the role of religion as “the search for the significance” through discovery, conservation, and transformation? How can a pastoral care giver use theories and research on religious coping in the Korean American context? How can Korean Americans continue to draw upon their religious faith in positive ways?

In order to address these questions of religious coping and the larger cultural system of Korean Americans, I will explore some key cultural concepts such as the notion of the interdependent self, indigenous emotional dynamics of *jeong* and *han*, and, lastly, the possibility of transforming *han* into a positive force for change for personal and social levels as seen in the indigenous religious ritual of *han-pu-ri*.

⁴⁰ The concept of collectivism vs. individualism is a heuristic device for explaining the general characteristics of cultural differences. The first generation is more oriented toward a collectivist culture, while the second generation is more oriented toward the individualism dominant in American culture. However, due to the bicultural nature of many Korean Americans, collectivism and individualism are co-existent and can cause conflict.

Interdependent Self (Uri) and the Orientation of Deference

In the Korean language, people often refer to themselves by using the pronoun *Uri* (We) instead of *Na* (I), for instance, our son, our daughter, our husband, our wife, our church, our school. The prevalent use of *Uri* as a pronoun is an example of the “collective orientation” of Korean culture. When I was attending an elementary school in Korea, my whole class was punished together because someone in OUR class stole money from a friend’s wallet during break time. OUR teacher was angry and insisted that this incident was not simply the fault of one individual but of everyone. This incident was interpreted as a failure of *Uri* and, thus, WE should all feel ashamed, be responsible, and punished together. This kind of collective punishment provoked the one who stole the money to feel ashamed and guilty and take responsible action for his wrongdoing. On the following day the teacher said that the one who stole the money came to her after school and asked for forgiveness. Some students complained about the unfairness of collective punishment but nobody verbally questioned or challenged the teacher. So, the notion of *Uri*—the sense of collective identity—is quite strong in the operation of the Korean mind.

This kind of collective orientation is one of the fundamental differences between the Korean interdependent self and the Western independent self. This difference is applied to cultural orientation in individualism and collectivism (Hofstede, 1980). While individualism is giving priority to “personal goals,” collectivism emphasizes “subordinating personal goals to those of the in-groups” (Singelis, 1994, p. 580). Korean American culture is described as a collectivist culture and social behaviors based on an

“orientation of deference” are observed everywhere (Song, 2004). It is common that people often defer their decision to others in making a choice, especially when higher authority figures are involved—i.e., the older, teachers, pastors, and other authority figures. Even a year’s difference in school grades can have significance in Korean culture—i.e., younger students show respect to senior students. This power system based on age and social hierarchy can be used abusively. This attitude of deference appears even in choosing a restaurant for lunch. Koreans often say, “I can eat anything; you go ahead and choose.” This is a cultural behavior, which demonstrates the virtue of politeness by considering others first.

This orientation of deference is related to the notion of the interdependent self and the self-in-relation to others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Singelis (1994) summarizes the characteristics of interdependent self.

An interdependent self-construal is defined as a “flexible, variable” self that emphasizes (a) external, public features such as statuses, roles, and relationships, (b) belonging and fitting in, (c) occupying one’s proper place and engaging in appropriate action, and (d) being indirect in communication and “reading others’ minds.” (p. 581)

The boundary of the interdependent self is different from the one in the West (Tseng, 2004). The concept of the interdependent self implies that “the person is not separate from the social context but more connected and less differentiated from others” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 227). Kwon (2001) says that while boundaries between self and others are emphasized in the concept of the independent self, relationality is emphasized in conceptualizations of the Korean self. In the interdependent relational dynamics of Korean selves, the claim of individuality based on the concept of the Western notion of

boundary is not culturally desirable because it goes against the cultural expectation of “fitting in.”

In a Korean cultural context, there is a typical social behavior, called *noon-chi*, which literally means “measuring with the eyes” in order to “fit in” to collective norms

It [Noon-Chi] refers to an intuitive capacity to size up and evaluate another person or social situation quickly. With *noon-chi*, one develops heightened awareness of, and sensitivity to, another person’s nonverbal cues, such as gestures, facial expressions, voice, intonation, speech patterns, and body language. In contrast, describing a person as lacking *noon-chi* is a derogatory remark. It implies that the person is insensitive, uncouth, unmannered, and uncultured. (Kim, Kim, & Kelly, 2006, p. 153)

Noon-chi refers to the need to “read the mind of others” without explicit verbal communication. Those who do not have this capacity for *noon-chi* are not able to grasp nuanced social cues in the complexity of relational web—i.e., knowing whether one should talk or be quiet, sit or stand, leave or stay. *Noon-chi* is a cultural behavior in which one is keenly aware of public eyes in the web of interdependent ties, in which relationships are more implicit, subtle, and ambiguous. In this system, it is crucial to find one’s place in the social hierarchy. For instance, during a fellowship lunch after Sunday service, a Korean American youth sitting next to me was rebuked by his father because he was too outspoken during the conversation among adults. The expression of his thoughts to other adults was interpreted as disrespectful. In particular, the “honorific” language system of Korean demands a highly sophisticated awareness of social exchange, and assertiveness is often discouraged (Song, 2004).⁴¹ As such, conflicts can arise from

⁴¹ Korean honorifics vary according to social distinction. The Korean language also distinguishes social differences with special noun and verb endings. The relationship

cultural expectations between the Western notion of assertiveness and Korean American notion of *noon-chi*.

However, the cultural practice of deference in a collectivist culture should not lead one to assume that Korean Americans do not have any sense of self agency. The Korean American self operates differently from the American self and self agency has more to do with controlling oneself internally.

On the contrary, it [the interdependent self] takes a high degree of self-control and agency to effectively adjust oneself to various interpersonal contingencies. Agentic exercise of control, however, is directed primarily to the inside and to those inner attributes, such as desires, personal goals, and private emotions that can disturb the harmonious equilibrium of interpersonal transaction. This can be contrasted with the Western notion of control, which primarily implies an assertion of the inner attributes and a consequent attempt to change the other aspects, such as one's public behaviors and the social situation. (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 228)

The difference between the Western self and Korean American self lies “in the locus of preferred activities” (Aldwin, 1994). The interdependent self is keenly aware of others as a part of its identity and tries constantly to modify behaviors to fit into the collective (external) norms while controlling (internal) attributes. Thus, in the cultural system based on the interdependent self, it is difficult to seek help in private matters such as family conflicts and emotional problems because such matters are understood in terms of the loss of *chae-myon*—“the loss of saving face (or honor)”; self agency is directed toward the protection of the interdependent self at the expense of individual sacrifice. Kim, Sherman, and Taylor (2008) assert that Westerners seek social support more openly than Asians due to cultural differences related to individualism and collectivism.

between a speaker and audience is crucial in Korean, and the grammar reflects this honorific language system.

People in the more individualistic cultures may ask for social support with relatively little caution because they share the cultural assumption that individuals should proactively pursue their well-being and that others have the freedom to choose to help according to their own volition. In contrast, people in the more collectivistic cultures may be relatively more cautious about bringing personal problems to the attention of others for the purpose of enlisting their help because they share the cultural assumption that individuals should not burden their social networks and that others share the same sense of social obligation. (p. 519)

As such, the Korean system of collectivist culture is based on high sensitivity to and awareness of others. In such a system, who is most responsible for being highly sensitive and aware of others? Socio-historically, it is Korean women who have been forced to play the role of care taker. Boyung Lee (2006) criticizes values inherent in Korean patriarchy based on “communalism” that socialize women to be dependent and powerless; internalizing such self images makes them avoid conflicts at any cost. In other words, this structure of the interdependent self can be oppressive to the marginalized among the marginalized and make it difficult for them to claim self agency. Women who claim autonomy or independence are often seen as “selfish”; such criticism avoids having to engage in a critical elaboration of the power structures of the cultural system (Tseng, 2004).

I contend that a deferring style of religious coping is a social construct which historically results from the internalization of collectivist values that locate the impetus for change within external agents. In this system, individual voices are often suppressed, such that some collective norms are harmful to individuals. For instance, a Korean American Christian woman could not share her status of divorce with others because she felt that it could bring disgrace to herself as well as to her family because she is not an individual but a part of larger social unit consisting of her family. The public notice of

one's divorce can be a shaming experience for the whole family. The negative dimensions of the interdependent self can be extended to family, church, other organizations, and Koreans as a whole.

In this system, a deferring style of coping can be encouraged because individual choice can bring more harm and disgrace than deferring to the larger system. The larger cultural system can supersede individual choice without explicit evaluation of cultural norms—how they affect individual life and to what extent they limit the fullness of life. The social climate can be antagonistic to individual choice, making it easier to accept external authority rather than choosing to “go against wind” (Pargament, 1997). The Korean culture, religion, and its community can be like the wind, and going against it can be oppressive to the well being of the marginalized.

The conflict between culture and individual seems to be more complicated as Korean Americans become more diversified as the 1.5 and second generation Korean Americans adapt to American culture rapidly. Within family, church, and other institutions, people disagree with each other based on different norms and authorities which originate from different socio-historical backgrounds and acculturation levels. In dealing with with-in group differences—especially differences caused by intergenerational and intercultural gaps—there is opportunity for a creative space where the benefit of both Korean and American can be fully appreciated and integrated without canceling each other out.

It is important to acknowledge that two cultures can co-exist without canceling each other out. Samuel Lee (2006) disagrees with a linear model of cultural

identification, which normalizes the view that Korean Americans should choose to be either Korean or American. He suggests an orthogonal model, which makes them identify themselves not as “either-or” but “both-and” in their own experiences, needs, and cultural identification. In other words, they can be fully “who they are” independent to the two ends of continuum. Lee (2006) asserts,

Persons who suffer most in a bicultural environment are those who lack identification with any culture, that identification with both Korean and American cultures is a source of strength, and that identification with both cultures has additive and positive effects on one’s mental health status....Cultures do not have to be seen in conflict. Highly bicultural Korean Americans, in fact, function effectively in both Korean and American cultures. The main problem is not in one’s “mixed” or “dual” (orthogonal) cultural identification, but in his or her weak cultural identification and the societal pressure that defines in monocultural ways what it means to be American. (p. 296)

Conversely, Korean American identity can embrace the reality of being both Korean and American fully regardless of the degree of acculturation.

While being aware of the power structure of a collectivist culture, which entails marginalization among the marginalized, we should avoid the danger of extreme forms of individualism, in which the dynamic of interdependent relationality is lost, since such relationality is at the heart of notions of the Korean self. We see the negative consequences of individualism, in which the narcissistic self can become the center of one’s world. The notion of interdependence challenges extreme forms of individualism and the myth of self-actualization can be positive. For instance, as Aldwin (1994) says, “Cultural beliefs in fate, where they do not lead to passivity, may aid in absolving an individual of an undue sense of failure or incompetence or in warding off depression” (p. 210). The notion of the interdependent self teaches the wisdom of acceptance and harmony with others as a helpful coping method in situations in which change is not an

option. Yet, the moral implications of a collectivist culture should be considered seriously so that the voice of the individuals is not subsumed in the name of collective good. While learning to respect personal choice, Korean Americans need to embrace the values of communion through mutual caring continuously.

A key is openness to cultural differences not only between different cultures but also within the Korean American culture. Cultural orientations are quite different depending on generational differences, acculturation levels, and family backgrounds. For instance, a Korean teenager who came for crisis counseling described Korean culture not as communally supportive but as authoritative. She felt that her voice was completely lost in her Korean community. She cried out for “her independent voice.” Yet, another Korean American teenager was resentful for her friends who do not have any cultural understanding of and respect for being Korean. Thus, it can be misleading to understand Korean Americans as a homogeneous group without respecting and appreciating vast differences among people. Minor and subtle difference within a group can be more difficult to communicate and thus can cause more complicated problems. It is critical to assess what is operating positively or negatively in the bi-cultural experience of the careseekers and offer pastoral care accordingly.

Interdependent Emotion: Jeong

Understanding the Korean American self as an interdependent self sheds light on how the larger culture influences how an individual copes with a stressful situation. The emotional dynamics in the interdependent self can be understood through a Korean indigenous term, called, *jeong*.

Jeong refers to emotional bonding, a special interpersonal bond of trust and closeness... *Jeong* encompasses the meaning of a wide range of English terms: feeling, empathy, affection, closeness, tenderness, pathos, compassion, sentiment, trust, bonding, and love. Koreans consider *jeong* to be an essential element in human life, promoting the depth and richness of personal relations. With *jeong*, relationships are deeper and longer lasting. In times of social upheaval, calamity, and unrest, *jeong* is the only binding and stabilizing force in human relationships. (Kim, Kim & Kelly, 2006, p. 152)

Jeong in its Chinese written characters is composed primarily of three words: “heart, vulnerability, and something arising” (Joh, 2006, p. xiii). *Jeong* is related to a feeling of togetherness that transcends individual difference. *Jeong* is about “we” rather than “I,” and “ours” rather than “mine” (U. Kim, 1994). *Jeong* is a relational dynamic that enhances mutual care and support, particularly in times of stress and negative events.

In the Korean American context, the church provides this caring network of *jeong* which often enhances the authentic selfhood of Korean Americans related to the experience of the interdependent self. *Jeong*—the communal sense of love-affect in social relationships—is essential in order to keep a cohesive sense of self (You, 2002). The need for *jeong*-relationship, I think, seems to be at the heart of the Korean American church and it has significant implications for religious coping.

However, *jeong* can be a source of oppression when it fails to recognize the ways in which power differences can exacerbate marginalization. In the name of the collective good that is generated by the emotive bond of *jeong*, an individual’s choice and freedom can be limited. Korean language reflects this dynamic. *Jeong* is not always positive; it can also be expressed in negative way. *Goun-Jeong* is a positive *jeong*; *Goun* literally means “beautiful.” *Miun-jeong* is negative; *Miun* literally means “hating.” While *goun-jeong* is love affect which is based upon a positive relationship, *miun-jeong* is a mixed

emotion of hating and loving affect. *Miun-jeong* is often experienced by the powerless toward the powerful. For instance, many Korean women, historically, have been expected to endure their suffering and passively expect a better future even when their husbands mistreated them by having extra-marital affairs or abusing them. However, when their husbands regretted their behaviors and returned, women had to accept their husbands. In this power system, they developed the complicated feeling of *miun-jeong*, an ambivalent feeling toward their husbands.

Socio-historically, Korean women have been forced to accept this role of forgiving without addressing the need for change through empowering self agency and transforming evil. Without confronting and bringing the oppressors to justice, the oppressive dimension of *jeong* was imposed upon women. In such a context, a deferring coping style is the most viable option. If religion employs and encourages the powerless to carry on the practice of *jeong* without the awareness of abuses of power, it can double the burden of the marginalized and result in prolonged suffering.

Interdependent Injustice: Han

Chung Hyun Kyung (1998b) shares a painful story of her two mothers—a family story of *han*. Her birth mother was “a Korean version of a surrogate mother,” “*ci-baji*,” literally translated as “seed-receiver.” Since her parents did not have a child over the course of twenty years, her father decided to have a child who can inherit the lineage of family through *ci-baji* and their parents hid the fact from her until the time of her adoptive mother’s death. She met her birth mother for the first time after the death of her adoptive mother and heard the story of *han* that she lived with—hatred, shame, loss, and

social ostracism. She also realized the *han* of her adoptive mother, who was obliged to allow her husband to have another woman and lived with envy, hatred, resentment, and a sense of incompleteness. Both her mothers were “victims of a male-defined family system” (1998b, p. 62) and could not live as women to the fullest extent. Chung Hyun Kyung retrieves a strange memory of her adoptive mother when Kyung was seven years old. One day as she traveled to her hometown, in the countryside in Southern Korea, she watched her mother scream, sing, and do naked dancing in a forest. She was shocked and embarrassed and could not understand why she was acting in such strange way until she understood the *han* of mother. The naked dancing of her mother in her hometown, a place where she thought she was fully alive was the very expression of life that has been oppressed yet sustained her to continue to survive.

Han is an indigenous term that describes the wounds of the heart in the context of evil. *Han* historically has been used to describe the unbearable suffering of the marginalized.

Han can be defined as the critical wound of the heart generated by unjust psychosomatic repression, as well as by social, political, economic, and cultural oppression. It is entrenched in the hearts of the victims of sin and violence, and is expressed through such diverse reactions as sadness, helplessness, hopelessness, resentment, hatred, and the will to revenge. (Park, 1993, p. 10)

Han arises from the larger cultural system of interdependence, in which an individual is subsumed under the social obligation of obedience to external authority. The notion of interdependence through *jeong* has neglected to take into account the oppression that results from marginalization. *Jeong* can be distorted and misused if the larger cultural system of injustice is unanalyzed and hidden.

As *jeong* includes both hate and love, so is the case with *han*. “When hate gets stronger it becomes *won-han*, when love gets stronger it becomes *jeong han*” (Lee, 1994, p. 37). *Won-han* is hate (revenging)-*han*. It is an aggressive emotive energy which is released by taking revenge against the object which caused *han*. *Jeong-han* is love-*han*. Even though *han* remains embedded in the deepest part of soul, *jeong-han* does not activate a destructive behavior of taking revenge against the object which causes *han*. *Han* appears either as *won-han*, an active form of *han* or *jeong-han*, a passive form of *han*. While *won-han* is related to aggression, anger, and violence, *jeong-han* is related to depression, anxiety, and somatized forms of mental illness.

Won-han is an important theme in folktales, in which *han* is released through a chain of revenging actions of violence and murder. If *han* is not released as such, the *han*-ridden people take revenge upon the oppressors even after death through their supernatural power. In Korean religious belief, those who die with unjust cause or without completing the full story of life cannot go to the other world (heaven) but wander around the world doing harm to others as a form of revenging and releasing their *han*. *Han* is a strong energy that needs to be released; otherwise, *han* remains inactive (repressed) due to the unjust power structure but never disappears. *Han* can remain in the form of an “acquiescent spirit” but can be expressed in the form of “aggressive emotion” (Park, 1993, p. 20). Ultimately, *won-han* seeks justice and completeness through resolving *han*.

Jeong-han, on the other hand, is more internalized. Rather than externalizing *han* through the action of revenge, it is repressed, and can be described as tangled, and sunk

in one's soul. *Jeong-han* is related to Korean culture, in which emotion is not directly expressed. The lack of a proper outlet for emotions may lead to the accumulation of negative emotions and also may cause *han*. *Jeong-han* can be problematic if it remains a passive coping method, when change is possible and there is a better option. *Jeong-han* can be the result of "learned helplessness" due to the internalized experiences of marginalization. Especially, *jeong-han* brings profound feelings of shame—the feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, and nothingness. Shame leads to behavior patterns of avoidance, withdrawal, and passive coping. It may result in a developmental arrest of identity (Son, 2006). In dealing with *jeong-han*, it is important to evaluate to what extent one's self agency is empowered for change.

The suppression of *han*, in both *won-han* and *jeong-han*, can cause *hwa-byung*, an anger syndrome. DSM IV defines *hwa-byung* as "a culturally unique mental illness which includes "insomnia, fatigue, panic, fear of impending death, dysphoric affect, indigestion, anorexia, dyspnea, palpitation, generalized aches and pains, and a feeling of a mass in the epigastrium" (DSM-IV, 1994, p. 846).

Historically, the suppression of *han* is related to the cultural system of Confucianism, which emphasizes a set of relational patterns based on a hierarchical structure and restricts the expression of emotion. In order to cope with the constraints imposed by Confucianism, those marginalized within the hierarchy of Confucianism, especially Korean women, have practiced Shamanism. A shamanistic ritual called, *han-pu-ri* is used to release *han*. Chung Hyun Kyung (1998a) calls *han-pu-ri* a liberating ritual, which empowers the marginalized to gain their voices. It is an essential coping

method of releasing the deep wounds of heart. Through this ritual people can express their repressed emotions deeply embedded in their story of experiencing injustice.

Transformative Coping: Han-pu-ri

Han-pu-ri, the release of *han*, is one of the most important themes in the landscape of Korean religiosity practiced in Shamanism, which is an old indigenous practice of religion. The meanings and significance of *han-pu-ri* as a religious ritual have been explored within Pentecostalism and *Minjung* theology. Pentecostalism is very much like Shamanism in valuing the release of *han* through spiritual healing. In Korea, the success of the Pentecostal movement is related to the context of Korean *minjung* who want to release their *han* through speaking in tongues and hearing messages that empower them to overcome their poverty and current life problems. Spiritual uplifting in the practice of Pentecostalism brings a conviction and hope for a new reality of material blessing, health, and spiritual well being (Kim, 1999). Suh (1981, cited in Kim, 1999), one of the founders of *minjung* theology, states,

Tongue-speaking is indeed the language of *minjung*. It is those who have been ill, failed in business, suppressed by their mothers-in-law and by their husbands who receive the gift of tongue-speaking. So it is possible to state that through speaking in other tongues *minjung* feel the release of *han*, and as a result they can live comfortable lives. (p. 134)

In contrast to Pentecostalism, *Minjung* theology focuses on *han* as the transforming energy for social change. Nam Dong Suh (1983) began the project of *Minjung* theology as “the theology of *han*.” He states,

Let us hold in abeyance discussions on doctrines and theories about sin which are heavily charged with the bias of the ruling class and are often nothing more than the labels the ruling class uses for the deprived. Instead, we should take *han* as

our theme, which is indeed the language of the *minjung* and signifies the reality of their experiences. (p. 68)

As such, *Minjung* theology emphasizes *han* as the heart of theological construction for change. *Minjung* theology, as a political theology, addresses the social dimension of *han*. It shifts the focus of theology from sin to *han*, from sinner to “sinned-against” (Park, 1993; Park & Nelson, 2001). It corrects the traditional theological discourse which has privileged the voice of the dominant and trivialized the experiences of the marginalized as if they are inferior ontologically and epistemologically. *Minjung* theology demonstrates that *han* can become a pathway toward liberation from oppression.

While the approach to *han* in Pentecostalism failed to understand the other side of *han* as a transforming energy for social change, *Minjung* theology did not address the other side of *han*: how to care for persons in the experience of *han*. The idealization of Marxism carried the message that social change can liberate the inner life of an individual. That is one of the reasons why the majority of Korean *minjung* has been drawn to Pentecostal movements rather than to *minjung* theology (Kim, 1999, p. 134). While personal change without social change is an illusion, social change without personal change cannot happen. “The care of persons” should go hand in hand with “the care of world” (Graham, 1992). Pastoral care should include goals of social justice. Transformation requires both “inside out” and “outside in” changes.

While *han-pu-ri* is essential in coping with the experience of marginality through personal or communal expressions of *han*, we should remember that the release of *han* can not be the same as the transformation of *han*. If the release of *han* through *han-pu-ri* ends in deference of *han* to God or other external objects such as the ideal of social

justice without the empowerment of self agency, *han* would remain simply at the level of the release of *han* and fail to move to the next level of correcting and transforming relational injustice. To gain one's voice fully requires more than a psychological catharsis or a mountaintop spiritual experience or blaming social injustice; it needs the constant effort of coping with the reality of marginality through the intentional process of coping through discovery, conservation, and transformation of the sacred, such that one's experience of the sacred continues to be congruent with one's story. In particular, for the marginalized, the transformation of the habits of mind, limited visions of life, and the very structure of internalized oppression is a fundamental part of coping that moves beyond the release of *han*.

Han is at the heart of transformation for the marginalized and it can be used in either negative or positive ways. *Han* is a strong emotion that brings either destructive or constructive consequences depending on how it is directed. Jae Hoon Lee (1994) states,

On the one hand, it can enrich the subject's emotional life by mixing and condensing various ingredients of feelings to create the most subtle and sentiments and moods. On the other hand, it can endanger the subject's emotional life by intensifying a certain feeling to an almost unbearable degree. (p. 3)

Han is not an emotional reaction to a single event; it is an accumulated and tangled emotional construction, which results from oppression and marginality over a certain period of time. Because of its historicity, it is hard to tease out the complexity of it. However, the narrative of *han* can be reconstructed through the ministry of genuine care, and this deep wound of heart can be touched, revealed, reorganized, and transformed. *Won-han* as a negative expression of *han* can be understood as a gift, which gives new insight about the connection of aggression and injustice, and it can be transformed from a

destructive emotion to a creative emotion that seeks justice through the participation in the work of God (Lester, 2003). *Jeong-han* can be transformed from depression to hope, from passivity to activity by claiming self agency for change through the reconstruction of its story. Lee (1994) states, “Immature *jeong-han* contributes to the status quo by giving up all hopes and the desire to create a new reality, whereas mature *jeong-han* contributes to the creation of a new reality by realizing its hope based on reality” (p. 38).

In this process of transformation of *han*, the theology of marginality can empower self agency with those whose voices are privileged by the pastoral caregiver who, as co-creator, collaborates and stands with them, in partnership with the divine. The experience of marginality can be appraised not simply as a “spiritual trial” but as a “divine invitation” for participation in and actualization of the kingdom of God, in which justice and mercy overflows. Thus, *han*, as the sense of injustice, can lead the marginalized toward a larger vision of social change, because *han* is the very expression of longing for relational justice and love. In this process, the support of a faith community who shares not only the common experience of marginality but also a common vision of transformation is essential.

Conclusion: Toward Collaborative Coping

The cultural orientation of deference in a Korean American context can encourage passive (deferring) religious coping without considering the larger sociopolitical context of an interdependent system which can be the very source of oppression and the resulting *han* of the marginalized. I argued that the deferring style of coping can be problematic,

when it ignores the social evil and disempowers self agency; accordingly, it conflicts with the moral vision of the Christian message of liberation. On the other hand, utilizing a self-directing coping style may not be culturally suitable within the Korean American context because it assumes an “independent self,” which is quite different from Korean and Korean American anthropology of an independent self in this historical time.

Thus, I propose a collaborative coping approach as a guide in constructing a model of pastoral care to Korean Americans who are looking for a positive way to cope with their marginalized status in the United States. This approach, I believe, is relevant and meaningful to the Korean American context for four reasons. First, empirical research demonstrates that collaborative approach is most often associated with positive outcomes in general as well as in the Korean American context. Second, it is a theologically integrated approach, which acknowledges human freedom and choice and attempts to empower self agency, while being fully aware of the finitude of our being. Third, it brings together the benefit of both collectivist and individualist approaches, the significance of both interdependence and independence. Fourth, it is a practical model that enables Christian faith in practice of justice in personal and communal levels. In this approach, the identity of Korean American Christians is emerging through the process of coping with the experience of marginality by collaborating with God in the context of the faith community. Particularly, self agency is part of collaboration with God. It is neither self-sufficient nor self-negating. It embraces the reality of both human freedom and finitude. Being fully aware of both limitation and possibility can bring the acceptance of reality in times of limitation and the transformation of oppressive reality in

times of possibility. In this model, God is not simply an ultimate object to which people can defer their final vindication but the co-creator who is actively resisting and transforming evil by empowering the marginalized and creating the divine order of true relationality.

CHAPTER 4

A COMMUNAL CONTEXTUAL NARRATIVE APPROACH TO RELIGIOUS COPING

In the previous chapter, I reviewed both positive and negative religious coping related to the Korean American cultural context. While there are many positive aspects of religious coping among Korean Americans, there are also areas of negative coping that need to be challenged. I described a major problem, which arises from their experience of marginalization through the immigration and settling process, as the lack of self agency related to (1) living at margins of society as immigrants and (2) their cultural orientation of deference and (3) the authoritarian style of religious leadership. Religion is understood as the norm and authority that prescribes human experiences. Lack of self agency can prohibit Korean immigrants and their families from integrating their personal narratives with religious narratives.

In addition, the Korean American community struggles with conflicting norms between collectivist and individualistic cultures across the generations according to different levels of acculturation. Those cultural gaps cause both internal conflicts in the development of personal identity and interpersonal conflicts in community. An essential task is to negotiate differences at both inter-personal and communal levels, while developing a cohesive story as Korean Americans as well as Korean American communities.

In order to address these challenges, I propose a communal contextual narrative approach to pastoral care, which, first, challenges the limitations of passive (deferring) ways of coping that disengage personal narratives from religious narratives and, second, encourages a collaborative coping model, which emphasizes the partnership of human agency with divine agency in the context of faith community. A primary goal is to empower the marginalized to find their voices and construct authentic narratives, which reflect their authentic existence as the subjects of their life. In this process of narrative reconstruction my proposed communal contextual narrative approach encourages Korean American immigrants to weave their stories with sacred (biblical) stories in a collaboration process, and experience transformation of their marginal experiences as a part of the larger story, that is, the so-called, *Uri* (We) story. Here, *Uri* includes three parties in collaboration: person, community, and God. I will reconstruct the collectivist notion of *Uri*, which neglects the voices of persons on the margins, by elaborating a communal understanding of *Uri* in which each person is respected for his or her own voice and develops a communally-grounded sense of self agency in the healthy exchange of influencing and being influenced.

This chapter begins with three vignettes which provide thick descriptions of the conditions of Korean immigrants.⁴² Following the analysis of these vignettes, I will develop a communal contextual narrative model, which 1) empowers Korean American

⁴² I have drawn upon my experiences in Korean-American congregations to construct these composite vignettes, in which the identities of persons and congregations are disguised. In addition, I have used several novels about Korean Americans. These vignettes will simply be used for illustrative purposes; these descriptions cannot be generalized to describe all instances of which Korean American Christians experience marginality.

immigrants as they claim their own agential power in light of larger narratives of God and 2) deconstructs dominant and destructive narratives and 3) reconstructs alternative narratives, which are liberating, transforming, and life-giving. Lastly, I will introduce the work of Asian (Korean) American feminists, focusing on their use of personal narratives as a method of empowerment, and illustrating how one can use contextual biblical reconstructions of Tamar's story (2 Samuel 13: 1-22) and Martha and Mary's story (Luke 10: 38-42) as examples of how to integrate conflicting experiences into positive life-enhancing narratives that enhance positive coping.

Three Vignettes

A Man in the Process of Dying

Eun, a Korean immigrant male, was diagnosed with metastasized cancer and expected to live for only a few months. He had several conversations with me while I was doing my Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) residency. One day, he came to the emergency room because he was not able to walk due to fierce pain in his back. He did not consider this back pain too seriously and thought it was chronic pain caused by long hours of physical work over the years. As he heard that the cancerous cells had spread throughout his spinal cord and other organs, he panicked and felt overwhelmed. He had immigrated to the United States 10 years ago in order to begin a new life, with the hope of giving his four children a better education and career opportunities. He had run a small grocery store while serving as a deacon in a local Korean American church. Like many other Korean immigrants who run small businesses, his major income source was

the long hours of labor provided by family members, especially his wife and himself. Like many other Korean immigrants, he had never obtained a health insurance policy. After receiving this shocking news, he went through a long period of denying his illness by upholding a belief that he would be miraculously healed by having a stronger faith in God, the God who brings supernatural healing.

During his hospitalization, he began to write his life story every night, a kind of autobiography that he had always wanted to write but could not do until then. However, his story was not about his past; it was about his future dreams which were not realistic and doable; for instance, he had grandiose ideas, for the unification of Korea, and fantastic schemes for missionary work. He seemed to go through alternating emotions of hope and depression, yet he did not express his emotions while sharing his unrealistic ideas. Unfortunately, his faith was not connected at emotional and spiritual levels; instead it generated his grandiose ideas. When he talked about his past, it was focused on his achievements and the reputation that he used to have. However, he missed or ignored the relational dimensions of his story—his own life as a person in relation to family and others. His focus was on what he had done but not who he had been. It took a while for him to accept the reality of death. To him, the harsh reality of death came to him too early and did not make sense at all.

This is a story of *han*. His life as an immigrant was devoted to works—specifically what he could do to support his family so that they could live out his ideals. That was part of the destiny and duty of being a Korean father. He dreamed of a better tomorrow and must have believed that his faith would be sufficient, even in the face of

terminal illness. He asked questions like how God could allow this tragedy to happen to him. He could not understand. God should bring supernatural healing and interventions so that he could overcome this nonsensical reality. However, he experienced God as silent and he finally had to face the reality of his death.

I remember what he wrote on the cover page of his journal, “I will awaken the dawn” (Psalm 108: 2). He wanted to see the rising sun that overcomes the darkness of his life, an image of the profound feeling of *han*. To him and many other Koreans, the image of dawn is one of their most cherished images, depicting for them the fullness of life with the very first hour of day. But his life ended abruptly and his story stopped. I wondered as a young seminarian what faith means in times of death, especially as *han* still remains unresolved.

A Man with Frozen Memories

In a novel by Katherine Min (1993), *The One Who Goes Farthest Away*, Kyong-Su, a first generation Korean American man, visited Korea for the first time after a couple of decades of living as an immigrant. He was surprised by the dramatic changes he found; most of all, by the changes he saw among his old friends. He felt that he had remained in his memories of the past, while his Korean friends had changed completely. The memory of his past was both vivid and fixed on the day that he immigrated. He realized the irony of the fact that he was the one who remembers the most about the past, saying, with a deep sigh,

America was a country where there was only the future. From the day he had arrived, with twenty-five dollars in his pocket, he had been swept forward into tomorrow and the next day, awed by the driving possibilities of life without

tradition, without the past. There were no memories for him in America. (Min, 1993, p. 845)

While Kyong-Su remembers the past more vividly than his friends in Korea, he does not have many cherished memories of living in America. He feels that he has two different time zones and feels estranged from both worlds. Song (2004) states,

Interestingly enough, the longer Korean immigrants stay in America, the greater the cultural gap becomes, not only between Korean immigrants and the Korean community, but also between Korean immigrants and mainline American society. (p. 24)

In this “dual cultural lag phenomenon” (Song, 2004), the memory of the past is conserved as the most significant. In experiencing uprootedness, the first generation immigrants tend to conserve (hold onto) their tradition deeply. The less acculturated people are, the more likely they will have a strong desire to conserve their tradition.

A Man Experiencing Religious Conflicts

I had an opportunity to provide services as an interpreter to Hyun, an elderly Korean American male in his 70s at an investigation committee meeting dealing with his false charge against a church member. He claimed that he was physically assaulted by a church member during a congregational meeting. Yet, all the evidence, including a videotape recording of this incident, demonstrated that he had made a false charge; in spite of this he insisted that he was a victim. He even appeared to be “paranoid” in his strong conviction of victimhood.

Throughout the interview, he expressed his sense of marginalization in his congregation. As the congregation went through an intensified conflict, he felt that he did not receive due respect from the church, especially, from the younger generation,

including a young clergy member. In such conflict, he interpreted this disagreement as a lack of respect according to Confucian traditions, and he likely felt ashamed. Such lack of respect toward the elders is considered to be a lack of basic human virtues. He seemed to appraise his experience in Confucian terms and at the root of his hurtful feeling was the experience of deep shame.

This deep emotional wound was also expressed directly to the investigative committee members. He felt ashamed because his ethnic pride was attacked by simply sitting in this meeting surrounded by European Americans without any Korean members. The sense of shame and resentment was intensified, as an investigator challenged him with a nuance that confirmed the falsity of his charge. Hyun expressed his anger toward this investigator by challenging him, saying his way of asking questions was rude. He felt that he was overpowered not simply by the investigators but also by the white Americans. He seemed to read racial overtones into the meeting, while avoiding the essential issue that he should be accountable for his behavior.

He seemed to feel marginalized by both Korean and American worlds. He had lived in the United States for over 40 years. He felt lost and his feeling of victimhood arose from both worlds. This feeling may have been compounded by the challenges of his aging process. He said to me, "I want to go back to Korea. I have no reason to be here." To Hyun, Korea seemed to be still a home in his memory where he could experience a sense of belonging and feeling at home. Yet, he did not realize that Korea is not the country he has preserved in his memory any more. He was stuck in-between without a clear sense of direction for his life.

At the end of meeting, the committee encouraged him to make a step toward reconciliation with his conflicting party as well as the whole congregation by doing public confession and mending the relationship. However, he did not accept the invitation for reconciliation. His pain was much deeper than it appeared. In this process, his theology did not help him make a leap of faith. He was stuck in the world of in-betweenness and was not able to move toward a level of transformation, which included confession, forgiveness, reconciliation, and spiritual growth. His situation was simply disgraceful to him and the grace of God was not available to him as a transforming agent that could change his situation.

While being aware of the issue of justice in this case, I wonder whether the congregation had missed an opportunity for pastoral care toward transformation and reconciliation before this case came under jurisdiction of the denomination. My question is: what are the meanings he has given to this conflict, which he so tenaciously maintains? How can he be helped, on the one hand, to conserve such meanings while, on the other hand, to experience transformation? How was his sense of sacredness desecrated or lost? How can religion function as a transformative agent in this kind of situation? How can the Korean American congregation address the issue of marginality within its own community and in relation to the larger society? How can the Korean American community address the concerns of both pastoral care and relational justice in the experience of marginality?

These vignettes demonstrate the significant challenge of making sense (or story) of the experiences of marginalization in the process of coping. A critical problem is that

as they experience crises related to their identities as Korean American Christians, their narratives become problem-saturated or frozen without drawing upon the transformative dimension of sacred narratives. In the following sections, I will focus on the issue of problem-saturated narratives of Korean immigrants as a part of a negative coping process and propose a communal contextual narrative approach to pastoral care, which can help them integrate their personal narratives with biblical narratives in transformative ways.

Saturated Narratives and the Problem of Coping

These three vignettes represent the experiences of Korean American immigrants whose life stories became problem saturated as they experienced crisis. To Eun, a diagnosis of cancer disrupted his future story, which he wanted to write—a story of a better tomorrow. He was lost between past and future stories. To Kyong-Su, travel to Korea disrupted his story of the past, which was frozen since his immigration, and made him realize that he did not have significant memories of living in the United States. To Hyun, religious and legal conflicts threatened his life story of being honored as an elder and yielded a sense of marginalization from both Korean and American worlds.

To Korean immigrants, crises can exacerbate the sense of marginalization such that they may construct their life stories in negative ways without fully integrating theological resources, which can transform their experiences positively, such as the theology of marginality discussed in Chapter 2. In times of crisis, the continuity of narrative is disrupted, and its direction gets disoriented. The negative construction of story, then, eliminates coping options that can foster transformation.

In times of experiencing the acute sense of marginalization, the stories of Korean Americans can easily become “problem-saturated.” The Korean language describes such a condition as “the blockage of *Ki* (Spirit)” in the story. If one’s narrative is saturated, *Ki* does not flow into story and the lack of *Ki* can lead to negative emotional responses such as helplessness and hopelessness. Human crisis involves a crisis of story and the crisis of story is fundamentally a spiritual problem. It results in the loss of purpose and meaning, which holds one’s story as an authentic narrative. Crisis is a time “when the purpose of life is called into question” (Pargament, 1997, p. 234).

However, a crisis can turn out to be an opportunity for growth, if one can creatively integrate negative experiences into a coherent narrative. As seen in the vignette of Hyun, his crisis could have been transformed into an opportunity for spiritual growth as well as the development of unity within the congregation through forgiveness and reconciliation, if his faith empowered him to see and activate the transformative dimension of religion beyond the dimension of conservation. Instead, he was stuck in negative marginality with an incomplete and broken narrative, without positive coping resources. In times of crisis, it is important to evaluate the needs for both conservation and transformation of the sacred, as Pargament (2007) notes,

On one level, change is the focus; old objects of significance must be relinquished and replacement must be found. On another level, continuity is the central issue; in the midst of loss and change, a way of life must be sustained. (p. 235)

Conservation and transformation are two dynamics that function like ying and yang providing checks and balances that keep religious coping positive. Hyun chose to conserve what was most significant to him—the “truth” of his victimization and his

honoring—in a fixed form as his core narratives were threatened. If religion is simply conserved, when transformation is a necessary part of an integrated approach to coping, it can result in “unhealthy spirituality” in the forms of psychological defenses, narcissism, and perfectionism (Fukuyama & Sevig, 1999, pp. 89-91). Conservation in a negative form can be found when religion is used as a moral code that functions as a sort of “proof text” for the sake of maintaining self-pride and justification, while fostering a judgmental attitude toward others. It is unfortunate to limit religion to such a restricted range of coping. Pargament (1997) states,

If there is one common criticism of religion, it has been of the failure of religion to encourage change in the world when change is possible. Religion has been accused of ignoring, avoiding, or submitting to reality when personal action is possible to bring about change. (p. 9)

While understanding the needs of conserving significance as a basic need for security, new possibilities that enhance transformation should be considered so that a problem-saturated narrative can receive *Ki* (spirit). The problem-saturated narrative accompanies “difficulty in moving into the open-ended future with hope and faith” (Gerkin, 1984, p. 33). As one’s story reaches the point of impasse and loses its vitality, it is important to rediscover the hidden or lost dimensions of religion—the possibility of transformation. A time of crisis is a moment when the work of doing constructive theology can make positive change, defined by Jones and Lakeland in this way:

[We] put our creative energies together and make theology... It is a collective endeavor from its beginning to its end. And our goal is to be *constructive*. We are not interested in merely describing [or retrieving, or applying] what theology has been; we are trying to understand and construct it in the present, to imagine what life-giving faith can be in today’s world. In our case, that structure is an inhabitable, beautiful, and truthful *theology*. (Jones & Lakeland, 2005, p. 2)

In the vignette of Eun, the process of engaging in constructive theology was not part of his experience. His theology encouraged him to have “false” hope by ignoring his symptoms and focusing his entire energy on the possibility of a miracle. His false hopes were subsumed in his present and “finite freedom”, which should have been exercised within the limits of his situation and abilities (Stone & Lester, 2001, pp. 259-260). He could have used his precious time to have deeper conversations with his family and reflect upon his life in a more realistic yet faithful and authentic manner. His theology of false hope gave him temporary relief from the shadow of death, yet it failed to integrate his experiences into the larger narrative that includes divine narratives of hope in authentic ways. He could have dealt with the issue of grief differently. While it was not possible for him to return to the earlier stage of health, he could still have found “new ways to be spiritually connected” (Doehring, 2006, p. 69).

In the vignette of Hyun, his theology was narrowly defined and tended to conserve his Confucian values of relational ethics in a formalistic way. Thus, religion functioned only to conserve his values. It did not promote positive coping, creative interdependence, and transformative self-agency. It kept him marginalized, and added to the pain he experienced as a marginalized Korean American man. Yet, transformation, the other dimension of religion, was inactive. He was not able to embrace the message of transformation, which could have occurred through the Christian act of reconciliation. He chose to keep his honor by conserving his fixed form of beliefs, when he could have taken another pathway of keeping his honor by making a courageous step toward reconciliation.

A critical issue is how to create a unified and authentic story, capable of making sense of multiple dimensions of crisis that allow one to remain connected to a sense of the sacred in the context of living at margins as immigrants. How can pastoral caregivers help people conserve the significant meanings and ways of connecting with a sense of the sacred that they have cherished, while challenging them to consider new possibilities that allow for transformation by constructing a contextual theology that resonates with their experiences of marginality?

A Communal contextual Narrative Approach

The communal contextual narrative approach that I am proposing enhances self agency in ways that shape authentic relations with communities of faith, empowering people to construct authentic theologies. Authentic theologies are defined as “life giving” accounts that hold both human narratives and narratives about the divine in a creative tension in the context of faith community.

There are six assumptions in this approach that I believe are essential. First, story-making is a communal contextual process, in which a person participates by influencing and being influenced by larger narratives. Second, self agency is central to the process of changing and, thus, the empowerment of self agency is a primary task in the helping process. Third, narrative construction is a political process in which individuals and community need to deconstruct dominant and oppressive narratives and reconstruct alternative narratives that are life-giving. Fourth, story-making is an aspect of positive religious coping that integrates personal experiences into a cohesive narrative

that both connects with and makes sense of the sacred by weaving human narratives and narratives about the divine. Fifth, a communal contextual narrative approach helps persons and communities draw upon positive religious coping through conservation and transformation in contextually meaningful ways. Sixth, a communal contextual narrative approach helps persons and community creatively blend modes of interdependence and self-agency in a way that potentially transforms their marginalized social situation.

The primary goal of this approach is to support Korean American immigrants and their families as they continuously create their life story as part of a larger story described as *Uri* (OUR) story, in which both human narratives and narratives about the divine are woven together. This approach challenges an authoritarian style of pastoral care that leads to deferring coping and disintegrated or frozen narratives, and envisions a collaborative way of coping that encourages self agency in partnership with divine agency. Furthermore, this approach helps people transform their social reality of marginality by participating in the larger reality of marginality from the perspective of divine marginalization.

The Communal contextual Paradigm

The communal contextual narrative approach, first of all, is based upon a paradigm of pastoral theology and care which emphasizes context at “the front and center of Christian thinking about faith and practice” (Scalise, 2003, pp. 66-67). Patton (1993) is credited with first identifying this paradigm, in the distinctions he makes among three paradigms of pastoral care: classical, clinical, and communal.

The classical paradigm emphasizes “the message of God who caringly created human beings for relationship and who continues to care by hearing and remembering them” (Patton, 1993, p. 5). In the Korean American context, the classical paradigm has been dominant, and is similar to the “moral instructional approach” of Jay Adams (Wimberly, 1994). In this approach, biblical texts are understood literally as the norm and authority without relevant reference to modern developments within biblical criticism and other cognate disciplines. Yet, the emphasis on the message and the proclamation can be an “authoritarian” and “forceful” way of imposing singular religious truths regardless of contextual differences. While the message should be respected as the source of authority, which calls people to repentance and change, it can be used in abusive ways that bring unnecessary burdens such as neurotic guilt and perfectionism.

The clinical paradigm describes the trend developed in the modern pastoral care movement in North America as a reaction to authoritarian forms of the classical paradigm of pastoral care. It emphasizes “the persons involved in giving and receiving the message of care” (Patton, 1993, p. 4). Clinical pastoral education represents this shift in its emphasis on psycho-dynamic processes between care giver and care receiver, and its use of a Rogerian approach of “unconditional positive regard” (Rogers, 1995). My own interest and commitment to pastoral care has grown in the milieu of this paradigm, especially through the training offered through CPE in the United States. As I was struggling with the influences of authoritarian religion in my own faith journey, the clinical approach to pastoral care captured my attention and relieved my religious anxiety, because it emphasized my own “person” at the center of religious experience. I was

fascinated with the notion of the “living human document” (Boisen, 1936), which emphasizes personal experience as an object of significant theological inquiry. CPE experiences at a hospital expanded my limited theological vision and deepened my self understanding as a person as well as a pastor. In ways similar to my experiences and observations, other Korean pastoral theologians claimed “the value of the focus on individual, intra-psychic and psychological processes within their local contexts where for centuries community and social concerns have subjugated the individual almost to extinction” (Larney, 2006, p. 52).

While the clinical paradigm has grown and pervaded the field of pastoral care in the United States and Canada, there has been growing concerns about the identity of pastoral care because the clinical paradigm seems uncritically to accept an individualistic approach to care based on modern psychology, which diminishes the role of theology and threatens the identity of pastoral care (Browning, 1976). In other words, in making the clinical paradigm pastoral care dominant, liberal pastoral caregivers often create a serious disconnection from their ecclesiastical traditions and the larger vision of social justice. Many pastoral theologians began to critique the clinical paradigm and its individualistic focus which limited a larger vision of social justice or the care of the world (Smith, 1982; Graham, 1992). The care of persons cannot take place naively without attending to the larger system of care.

Consciously challenging the limited vision of the clinical paradigm, proponents of the communal contextual paradigm emphasize “the caring community and the various contexts for care” (Patton, 1993, p. 5). In other words, the shift of focus moves from

pastoral care as a function of an ordained pastor to its “ecclesial context” and the “public, structural, and political dimensions of individual and relational experience” (Ramsay, 2004, p. 1). This self-critique of pastoral care began from this awareness that pastoral care cannot take place only in the small office of pastor or therapist. Without a larger vision of communal care, pastoral care cannot but remain at the level of naïve notions of individualistic healing.

The communal contextual paradigm is not totally new because pastoral care always has been communal and ecclesiastical historically, yet it is new because it includes postmodern sensitivities toward power dynamics based on difference (Doehring, 2006). In this paradigm, the image of the “living human document” is expanded into the image of the “living human web” (Miller-McLemore, 1996). This image of the “living human web” was introduced to the field of pastoral theology and care as a correction to the dominant image of individualistic care, which neglected systemic issues that overpower individuals. Suffering is not simply a result of individual pathology but the result of social evil in which people participate in one way or another. As we have seen in our discussion of marginality, the unjust system is the core of pastoral care problems. Without deconstructing the power dynamics in “cultural designations of normativity and difference” (Neuger, 2004, p. 65), pastoral care simply provides only a temporary relief of pain, unless care receivers have sufficient social privilege and status to construct their worlds in ways that support their personal healing.

The positive paradigm shift toward a communal contextual approach in pastoral care is indebted to the voices of the marginalized, who criticized racism, sexism, classism,

and other unjust social systems (Lartey, 2006). The context is no longer understood as a background to understand or explain the real problem but the very problem in itself. In that regard, Pattison (1994) asserts that pastoral care should draw upon the achievement of liberation theology more rigorously.

Liberation theology challenges pastoral care to become aware of its arbitrary limitations and its involvement in the structure of injustice, in the interests of pursuing wider social and political practice in the cause of human flourishing and liberation. (p. 5)

This critique of pastoral care is quite important for Korean Americans and their community, as they experience multiple marginalities. It is critical to connect pastoral care to contextual theological inquiry beyond the traditional functions of pastoral care, i.e., pastoral visits for the sick, offering funeral services, intercessory prayers, etc. Pastoral care for Korean Americans should be practiced within the communal context of marginality, while appreciating the insights and wisdom from earlier paradigms.

I observe that those three paradigms are co-existent in a Korean American context, even though the classical paradigm seems to be dominant. The clinical paradigm receives more attention as younger pastors receive CPE during their seminary years and Korean Americans need more psychologically-oriented care and counseling for marital, parenting, and other relational issues. A critical challenge that emerges is how to incorporate the communal contextual paradigm into the Korean American context. If the paradigm of Western pastoral care has been limited to care of person in a clinical paradigm, the paradigm of Korean pastoral care has been limited to care of person in a classical paradigm, in which a person is a passive receiver of the message.

Even though the classical paradigm has been dominant among Koreans, there have been contextual theological endeavors in the example of *Minjung* theology, which addressed the problems of social and systemic oppression in a context of military dictatorship during the 1970s in the struggle for social justice. *Minjung* theology claimed Jesus not as a savior to people but “a part of *minjung*” who suffers and resists evil with people (Kwok, 1995, pp. 33-34). Jesus, in other words, collaborates with other *minjungs* as a *minjung*. In this radical claim of the Gospel, a classical image of pastoral care as “shepherding” can be corrected and a social vision of care through the solidarity of the oppressed can be envisaged.

However, *Minjung* theology was not incorporated into the field of pastoral care due to a dualistic approach to pastoral care and social change. In addressing the lack of integration of social change into pastoral care, Korean feminist theologians have contributed to the integration of the two elements by implicitly constructing a communal contextual narrative approach. In their work, the limitations of *Minjung* theology (it did not explicitly address patriarchy) are addressed and corrected more concretely by describing the power dynamics of the patriarchal system and its impact on gender issues. *Minjung* theology attempted to bring about social justice in ideological and political levels in male-dominant ways without listening to the marginalized among the marginalized, the voices of Korean women. Later in this chapter, I will explore their work as a creative example of a communal contextual narrative approach, which can be used for Korean American immigrants.

A Narrative Approach: Empowering Self Agency

The emphasis on the communal contextual dimensions of care is related to a postmodern context, in which “master stories” can no longer be used in universal ways to describe local experiences. Postmodernity is a time in which “everything is becoming fluid and flexible, pluriform and contingent, fast and ephemeral” (Schweitzer, 2004, p. 4). In postmodern context, fixed singular meanings do not fully explore the multiple contexts in which people live. A narrative approach is intentional in privileging the voice of the careseekers among multiple voices, which are often oppressive and destructive. At the heart of a narrative approach is the notion that care seekers and their foundational communities are experts of their own lives.

In times of stress, we are often pulled towards anxiety and fear without clearly elaborating and evaluating the problem situation and accessing all of the available coping resources. For instance, I remember the anxiety that my wife and I experienced in taking care of our first baby, especially when he was sick. In response to our anxiety, which came from a lack of parental competence, our pediatrician said calmly and affirmatively, “You are the pediatrician for your son, who knows the most about him, so you can make the best judgment on your son.” His words brought a sense of empowerment and self-agency to us in dealing with our anxiety related to parental stress. Just as we needed such a reminder that affirmed our own expertise, people need a reminder that tells them that they are the experts of their own lives.

A narrative approach begins with what we do every day: speaking, listening, and creating each other’s story. Sarbin (1986) defines narrative as “a symbolized account of

actions of human beings that has a temporal dimension” (p. 3). In this approach, humans are defined as *Homo fabulans* (humans as storyteller). Humans are story-making beings and live “storied lives” (White & Epston, 1990). Humans continue to organize their life in narrative forms. “The narrating mind” threads life events into stories (McAdams, 1993, p. 27). We cannot imagine our lives without being storied. Especially in times of crisis, people tell stories “in order to make sense of what happened to them” (Doehring, 2006, p. 67). As such, a narrative approach is likely more natural compared to the clinical approaches typically found in the mental health field, in which the modality of diagnosis and clinical intervention is emphasized.

Bruner (1990) suggests that there are two modes of knowing: a paradigmatic mode and a narrative mode. The paradigmatic mode looks for reasons, logic, and proof. And the narrative mode is concerned with “human wants, needs, and goals” by dealing with the “vicissitudes of human intention organized in time” (McAdams, 1993, p. 29). In the Korean American context, a paradigmatic mode seems to prevail over a narrative mode in pastoral care by imposing religious teachings without much concern for individual and contextual differences. The predominance of a paradigmatic mode can fail to address the complexity of human experiences and result in the alienation of self from religious teachings. Gerkin (1991) aptly describes this dynamic:

It is necessary to get beneath the level of cognitive or reasonable logic to a level of experience that encompasses the intuitive, the emotional and affective life, and the relational affinities that emerge more from individual and communal living out of a story carried in the person’s imagination than they do from intellectual reasoning and/or logical disputation. (p. 21)

For instance, I often observed in a cell group meeting that while lay people share their stories among themselves in narrative modes, they change their mode of thinking to a paradigmatic mode in the presence of clergy and “religious” figures. Too often, religion is likely to be understood as a fixed form of belief system without contextual elaboration. This kind of dualistic approach to religion is problematic, for it makes religion remain at an extrinsic or superficial level. It is of paramount importance to develop a narrative approach that can help careseekers integrate religious teachings into their authentic narratives.

Koreans historically have had a rich tradition of story-telling and storying community. For instance, the “well” has been a symbol of communal connection and relationship and Korean immigrants have dug many wells in establishing churches (Pak, Lee, Kim & Cho, 2005, p. 68). The story of the Samaritan woman (Gospel of John, chapter 4), who was isolated from community and came to a well, which was a gathering center of the storying community, by herself under the scorching heat at noon, resonates deeply with the stories of Korean women, who experience isolation from their community. The emotional connection to this woman makes the story more alive by imagining the change that took place in this woman, who now comes to the well with other women for the purposes of sharing their lives together.

In contrast, a clinical approach is still foreign to Korean American immigrants. Its stereotyped view of mental health is often not relevant to understanding the lives of Korean Americans. Moreover, a clinical approach tends to neglect power differences between clinician and client and encourages careseekers to be the passive consumers of

clinical services. For Korean American immigrants, who live at the margins through immigration and inherit the culture of authoritarianism, what they need, first of all, is a sense of self-agency. Living in the mode of survival, immigrants can easily despise their own agency and internalize the dominant message, which maintains that they are second-class citizens. When one's story is heard and identified by others, she or he can be empowered (Hunsinger, 2006). Telling a story is not simply chit-chat; it is "the primary means of helping people, rather than as illustrations to help make a point" (Burnell, 2005, p. 33).

Narrative approaches are not new in the history of pastoral care in both classical and clinical paradigms. The Christian community, in a classical paradigm, has always been a narrative community, which tells and retells their story as a communal act of faith. As they gather, they always stand around the Word of God, and participate in the Eucharist, which ritualizes the story of divine love and grace (Anderson & Foley, 1998). The message is not simply a religious proposition but takes a storied significance that shapes the story of participants in relation to the larger story of God.

This characteristic use of narrative in pastoral care is also embedded in the modern pastoral care movement in North America, especially in the works of Anton Boisen (1936), who pioneered clinical pastoral education and provided the legacy of the image of the "living human document" as a guiding image of pastoral care and counseling. This metaphor reveals the suffering of human fellows, which comes from painful interpretations of life events (Gerkin, 1984). The story of the careseeker is the source of "doing theology," as significant as written documents are for theological

inquiry. The study of “the first hand sources of their knowledge of human nature” challenges theological understandings (Boisen, 1936, p. 10).

However, both the classical and clinical paradigms dismissed the primacy of the story teller as the agent of change. In the classical paradigm, human narrative can be described simply as the story of sinful humanity, which should be overcome and, thus, religious (biblical) narrative as a “ready-made” interpretation can override the narrative of the careseeker regardless of contextual differences. On the other hand, in a clinical paradigm, personal narratives, often focusing on the self actualizing individual, can be emphasized as the object of care, using psychological perspectives, while ignoring the transformative dimension of communal and divine narratives. By so doing, the clinical paradigm gives authority to psychology and psychologically trained professionals, who know hidden psychological truths underneath the symptoms of suffering. While the classical paradigm suppressed self agency by using theological language, the clinical paradigm caused the same problem by its universalistic use of psychological language.

Responding to postmodern challenges, a communal contextual narrative approach emphasizes the position of “not-knowing” of the caregiver and empowers the careseeker as the one who is the expert of his or her life (White & Epston, 1990). Pargament (2007) states,

Placing coping in this narrative frame shifts the emphasis from expert attempts to instruct others in a generic set of coping skills, to the person’s own attempt to construct an idiosyncratic self-narrative marked by resilience, resourcefulness, and hope. (p. 64)

In this approach, the careseeker is the author of his or her story, who is no longer in a peripheral position but who takes ownership of this story. A communal contextual

narrative approach fosters this notion of self-agency for coping and helps careseekers realize the undiscovered parts of their stories, which empower them through positive coping.

Narrative Construction as a Political Process

Narrative construction is a political process in which individuals and community actively engage in the process of both deconstructing dominant and oppressive narratives and reconstructing alternative narratives, which are life-giving. Narrative is not a matter of linking a series of different facts or events but instead is a matter of “constructed” reality (McAdams, 1993, p. 28). A narrative approach has three assumptions about the nature of reality: 1) “reality is socially constructed over time and in time”, 2) “reality is constituted through language and metaphorical speech”, 3) “these socially constituted realities are organized and maintained through narrative” (Anderson, 2006, p. 201). Neuger (2001) states that reality is socially constructed by “stories that are personal, familial, and cultural and the process of change takes place by generating new language and new interpretive lenses and thus create new realities” (p. 43).

In the process of constructing a story, a major problem is that people draw upon dominant cultural (religious) discourses and use them accordingly to organize their stories, when these dominant discourses may not be congruent with their life story. The process of narrative construction is political. In the construction of narrative, whose voices are dominant? To what extent has one’s voice been marginalized, trivialized, and shunned? According to Foucault, power, knowledge, and truth are not inseparable. Foucault (1980) notes,

There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. (p. 93)

Power is not only repressive but also “constitutive,” which means that “we are subject to power through normalizing truths that shape our lives and relationships” (White & Epston, 1990, p. 19). Whose voices are privileged as having the status of truth? What assumptions are embedded in the language that we use related to race, sex, culture, religion, etc.? The reality that we believe is a constructed reality created by normalizing practices of those with dominant power and it brings “damaging effects” that hinders one from living a life of one’s own design (Monks, 1997, p. 8).

The social analysis of power leads to a new understanding of “narrative multiplicity” in the story-making process. Language is a communal rather than an individual process and people live “within the context of a multiplicity” (White, 2004, p. 31) which causes ambiguities and conflicts. “The meanings that we attach to events are thus never singular, individual, or simply subjective, never outside the social, but intersubjective meaning within a cultural nexus of power and knowledge” (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007, p. ix). While these multiple realities are the cause of conflict and ambiguity, a new possibility of constructing one’s preferred realities is at hand. There is always more than one way to tell our life story, more than one voice to be heard, and more than one plot to be voiced. Narrative multiplicity implies that change is possible through the deconstruction of oppressive narratives and the reconstruction of alternative stories, which can be liberating and empowering.

Religious narratives also have multiple stories, which can be selected and privileged as part of a political process. In the process of deconstructing narratives, a critical question is whose voice dominates theological interpretations? How can the marginalized authentically claim their voices, which are believed to be affirmed and celebrated in divine eyes? To what extent can theology help them integrate experiences of suffering, individually and communally?

People use their implicit theology as a guiding theme of their story-making. Implicit theology is “embedded theology,” which is assumed in individual or communal belief systems without more explicit articulation of theological meanings of certain beliefs in the process of making sense of suffering (Doehring, 2006). For instance, a faith statement like “It is up to God,” can have various meanings in different contexts. In the context of domestic violence, this theology can be harmful because it reinforces the attitude of deference to God. If faith does not empower the victim to change the situation by taking appropriate action, the cycle of violence may not stop. When one’s implicit theology results in further suffering and is part of negative coping, it is important to make implicit theology explicit through “the hermeneutical labor” of deconstructing dominant and oppressive narratives and reconstructing life giving narratives. This is a process of doing “deliberate theology” in the process of pastoral care, as people become aware of their embedded theology, evaluate their beliefs, and construct new ones (Doehring, 2006, p. 112). By clarifying underlying narratives, careseekers can be helped to realize that they have participated in oppressive narratives, which do not support their authentic identity.

After identifying and deconstructing oppressive narratives, one begins to construct “alternative narratives,” which strengthen self agency by making careseekers the author of their lives in collaboration with their experience of God. By engaging with multiple voices, which have been repressed or trivialized, one can construct authentic theologies that are congruent with the experiences of the marginalized. In postmodern contexts, the domination of meta-narrative gives way to local narratives in which there is no single self but many selves.

A communal contextual narrative approach brings “the hermeneutics of suspicion” to dominant discourses and constructs new meanings from the story of the marginalized (Neuger, 2001). As person and problem are separated, self agency can be reclaimed. Their suffering is not the result of their failure or predetermined destiny. It is rather conditioned by relational systems, primarily from oppressive power structures. The marginalized do not have to use “deferring” as a preferred option for coping. They do not have to defer the authorship of their life story to other authorities. Hauerwas and Willimon (1989) say, “The challenge of Jesus is the political dilemma of how to be faithful to a strange community, which is shaped by a story of how God is with us” (p. 30). In the light of this larger narrative, the story of immigrants does not have to be one of negative marginality; rather, in the light of sacred narratives, it can be positively co-authored with their community and God, challenging distorted narratives and redirecting as well as reshaping individual stories toward the wholeness of *Uri* story.

Constructing Sacred Narratives

Story-making is a characteristic of positive religious coping that integrates personal experiences into a cohesive narrative around that which is experienced as sacred. From this view, life story includes “aspects of life as manifestations of God” (Pargament, 2007, p. 38). A narrative is not a mere accumulation of various events but an organic entity, which is in ongoing process of being woven as a unified story in meaningful ways. Polkinghorne (1998) says, “We make our existence into a whole by understanding it as an expression of a single and developing story” (p. 150). Pargament (2007) states,

As people begin to build their lives around the sacred, the sacred can begin to lend greater coherence to disparate thoughts, feelings, actions, and goals by superseding all other values, integrating competing aspirations into a unified life plan, and providing direction and guidance from day to day. (p. 73)

Religious narratives contain “core beliefs” which consist of “deep metaphors, images that point to the plots or directions of life” (Wimberly, 2008, p. 3). For instance, the story of Abraham and his descendants, who lived as immigrants and experienced divine blessing, is a deep metaphor that shapes the stories of Korean American immigrants. This identity is constituted by being repeatedly told, internalized, and enacted through rituals, which endow people with great power to shape individual and collective life (Rappaport & Simkins, 1991). Religious narrative is believed to be a way to connect with the sacred and this is a matter of faith. Here, it is important to distinguish faith from belief. While belief is often understood as believing “something unbelievable,” “faith involves more than believing that something is true; it also involves believing *in*, having confidence in, trusting” (Dykstra, 1999, p. 19). Faith is a primary theme in narrative approaches to care, which weave different events of life with coherent meanings

found in religious narratives. The loss of faith often involves the experience of disconnection from one's story.

The sacred meanings in story are challenged in times of crisis. They can be “desecrated” through violence against that which is perceived as sacred. For instance, the experience of domestic violence can be experienced as a desecration of the marriage covenant—one of the sacred meanings of marriage. Stories can also be ruptured through “sacred loss” (Pargament et al., 2005). As seen in Kyong-Su's vignette, the memory of the past has sacred meanings and the loss of it disrupted the sacred dimension of his story. For Korean American immigrants, the loss of sacred meanings related to their culture of origin and memory is huge, especially as they age.

In times of such crisis, a fundamental challenge is to claim their voice by cultivating the sense of sacred in their story. For instance, Kwon and Doehring (2004), in their qualitative study, demonstrated that Korean female victims of domestic violence experience disconnection from God, accompanied by feelings of abandonment and anger toward God. They were also disconnected from their faith community, which imposed a patriarchal theology with the message of “premature forgiveness” and “endurance” and, as they could not forgive their perpetrators, their spiritual pain was sharpened by feelings of shame and guilt. The idea of God as a benevolent God became contradictory to their experience of violence. Their stories were tangled and disorganized, and the central plot of God's love was misplaced. In times of sacred loss or desecration, the sense of the sacred was lost and God was appraised as the one who allows tragic events to happen to them.

Kwon and Doehring (2004) found that these victims of violence were reluctant to question their faith; for instance, they appraised suffering as their cross to bear. In other words, the question of “why me?” did not go deeper into the power analysis and reconstruction of religious symbols (Doehring, 2006). These women remained within the confines of patriarchy theology, which continues to imbue victims with moral anxiety, requiring them to forgive perpetrators; as a result, they suffered with shame and guilt. In their description of their experiences, their stories accommodate to the larger story by accepting the plot of patriarchal theology. It was found that “the crisis of faith resulted in specific alterations in their images of God, but not in a breaking of patriarchal religious symbols (Kwon & Doehring, 2004, p. 78). Korean female victims did not integrate Korean feminist theology into their experience and use it to interpret their experiences. In other words, there were available theological resources, yet they were not incorporated into their narratives in life-giving ways. The internalization of patriarchal norms often becomes second nature, and, thus, it is hard to separate “who they are” from the problem. They are to blame themselves because they are a part of the problem; furthermore they become the problem itself. However, the problem is not the person; the problem is caused by oppressive narratives which nonetheless function as sacred stories in their lives. Thus, a primary goal is to challenge the “subjugation process,” in which people passively accept the dominant norms and become caught up in their own problem-saturated story (Monk, 1997, p. 8).

In the case of desecration or sacred loss, how are religious narratives connected to personal narratives in life-giving ways? This problem is related to our narrating mind

which connects “experience and idea” and “the occurrence of events and a language of meaning for those events” (Gerkin, 1984, p. 53). Because a major problem of human suffering comes from the gap between event and its interpretation, we also can find a solution in the hermeneutical process. Human suffering is not merely the result of external stressful situations but of particular appraisals and styles of coping with it. Pargament (2007) asserts that “coping is a storied construction created and sustained within a distinctively human meaning-making process” (p. 64). Thus, when the significance of one’s story disintegrates, his story should be “reconfigured, reframed, or reauthored” (Lester, 2003, p. 101). To author a story is a hermeneutical process in which the larger narratives are woven together.

Conversely, an essential task is to see how human narratives and narratives about the divine intersect. Is there any disruption, disconnection, or disintegration? How does one’s theology operate in the integration process? What aspects of the human story are marginalized? Or, are aspects of the narratives about the divine marginalized? At the heart of problem is that people lose this power of storying, as they experience disconnections of their story from their authentic identity. They also lose sight of a view of God that calls them to co-create *Uri* (divine-human) narrative. As a result, they become confined to the oppressive meanings imposed by their external reality, which is interpreted by the dominant without allowing those who are marginalized to author their own life story. By weaving personal story with witnesses to the story about the divine, the marginalized can shed light on sacred meanings for themselves as well as with regard to the dominant culture. Poling (2003) states,

Every person and group forms its identity through story. But stories themselves tend to give only an official version of the past. Stories partially distort identity in favor of the ideological restrictions of those who are dominant. Persons cannot report latent structure in most cases. This is one reason why the voice of oppressed group must be heard. They are often the carriers of the suppressed stories that must be heard for the full identity of community to be known. (p. 165)

The reconstructed narrative often challenges established theology, which may have become oppressive and lifeless. Doing theology in this approach involves critically engaging both realities of human and divine stories. In that sense, theology is a process of re-storying. Theology without contextual elaboration of the human story is lifeless and human story without connection to the larger narrative about the divine is self-consuming without transcendental dimensions which have the ability to integrate a life story as a part of *Uri* story. When we weave together our particular human story and the most viable stories about the divine, we can be attentive to “another story that is not completely our own, a narrative that has the power to transform” (Anderson & Foley, 1998, p. 7).

Conservation and Transformation: Theological Tasks of Remembering and Imagination

A communal contextual narrative approach helps persons and community draw upon positive religious coping through conservation and transformation in contextually meaningful ways. The notion of narrative reconstruction is significant to Korean Americans and their community when they try to integrate their past with the experience of present time as immigrants, while imagining their future story. The key issue is how to conserve the past as sacred without rigidly being enslaved to the past or rejecting its memory and influences. Living with limited resources such as financial strain, less social capital, and less access to mainstream culture, they tend to have more conservative attitudes toward their life, which may limit their growth and integration. Pargament

(2007) alludes to the danger of “spiritual inflexibility” in which people adhere to “narrow beliefs and practices that are poorly suited to life’s demands” (p. 303).

Related to this problem, a communal contextual narrative approach can be beneficial by offering a tool for reconstructing the stories of Korean immigrants and their community. As in the vignette of Kyong-Su, many people may live day by day without having an opportunity to reflect upon their present lives and integrate them into a cohesive narrative with clear intentionality. On the other hand, future stories may be limited to imagining simplistically, with wishful thinking that “tomorrow will be better.” It is important to rediscover significant themes that penetrate past, present, and future, and articulate how they are remembered, actualized, and imagined in a certain direction (Morgan, 2002).

In a multicultural context of providing pastoral care to immigrants, it is always crucial to know the motivation of immigration—“Where they came from” (Warner, 2001). In providing pastoral care to Korean American immigrants, it is important to understand their pre-immigration history, whether they experienced financial or relational crises, or other life problems before immigration. What are the emotional components related to their past in Korea and their present life as immigrants? What themes are repressed or hidden? It is also important to know the legal status of careseekers and their immigration process—how they became naturalized; whether it was through family sponsorship, employment, etc.? Are there significant themes in their immigration process? How have they adapted and changed their family system in their acculturation

process? Where did they find strength in stressful times? Where is God throughout their story?

These questions connect them to their past and present time, and give direction to their life. How do they write their story? Do they list the facts of the past without cultivating deeper meanings? What is the nature of their future-oriented life, if one's story is more like the one of Kyong-Su? Is there any form of "illusion of control" designed to help them avoid fear and anxiety? How do they appraise their limitations and yet exercise their freedom? At the core of interpreting the past is the spiritual task of seeing the limitations of life. It is the appraisal of limitations as a gift that opens a space for maturity (Bjork, 2007).

Attempts to conserve the significance of the sacred can be done in rigid and inflexible ways. The story can be frozen without fuller connection to the larger story. This is related to the problem of having a "small God." In appraising the complexity of life experiences it is important to address the "breadth and depth" of one's religious tradition (Pargament, 2007, pp. 293-297). In the case of Eun, Christian faith was understood as if faith is to believe "something unbelievable" in times of terminal illness. This belief system, however, can accelerate more pain and guilt by imposing distorted perceptions that he does not deserve healing and miracles because his faith is "not good enough." By neglecting the complexity of life and failing to probe its meaning more deeply, he missed an opportunity to reconstruct his life story.

The tendency to conserve cultural values and traditional practices often causes conflicts with younger generations, as in the case of Hyun. The more they try to impose

their belief, the more disconnection they may feel. The significance that they cherish may not resonate with young people if their story is not communicated to their children at emotional levels. Furthermore, the second generation may perceive Korean culture as “authoritative” and “hierarchical” and they may have difficulty in connecting to their parents’ story through a process of empathy. Thus, they may feel ambivalent and even resentful toward the Korean ethnic identities of their parents. To Korean American children, the horizontal relationship, in which people share emotional needs with each other, can be more significant than relationships in which power differentials are emphasized. For example, a youth in my pastoral ministry shared his feelings of resentment and sadness that his parents could not understand him; they could not connect with him at an emotional level beyond the formal relationship of parents and children. His desire for a more authentic parent-child relationship was difficult to communicate and he felt helpless in knowing how to connect with his parents. Many Korean parents seem to assume their parental roles as “provider” and expect their children to see the parental *jeong* in their works and sacrifice without developing relational bonds more directly.

At the core of pastoral care for Korean American immigrants is the need to address the significance related to the sacred in contextually meaningful ways, while negotiating among the different norms and authorities that the Korean American community experiences. How can Korean Americans be fully who they are beyond the dichotomy of Korean and American? How can they embrace different voices without shunning other voices judgmentally as being “too Korean” or “too American?” Is it

possible to embrace both sides while accepting who they are as Korean Americans regardless of different acculturation levels? How can they use their experiences of marginality in positive ways?

Marginality can be transformed as a creative theme that integrates the disparate experiences of Korean immigrants and their families into sacred narratives if it embraces the tension of being both neither/nor and both/and by drawing upon the theology of marginality discussed in Chapter 2. Korean Americans belong neither to the past of Korean nor to the future of being American; they are authentically both Korean and American who live in the present regardless of how long they have lived in this new land. To live in the present means to fully embrace both past and future in the context of marginality; past and future are not opposite ends of a continuum but coexist as essential dimensions of living fully in the present.

Phan (1999), an Asian American theologian, suggests a theology of immigrants that draws upon two methodological forms: “memory” and “imagination.” Memory is not static data that reproduce an exact reality of past; it is “re-membering disparate fragments of the past together and forming them into a new pattern under the pressure of present experiences” (p. 114). On the other hand, imagination creates different possibilities beyond the limits of the past. Phan (1999) explains the dynamics of memory and imagination,

Both memory and imagination in their mutual interaction are indispensable tools for theology. Without memory, theology would be empty; without imagination, it would be blind. They are the equivalents of yin and yang, ever in movement, ever transmuting into each other, ever complementing each other, to capture reality in its wholeness. (p. 115)

It is important to understand life in an autobiographical sense by keeping in mind how present life has been shaped, while anticipating the future to be open-ended. The negative life experiences of the past do not have to determine their future. On the other hand, unrealistic optimism is also disconnected to the past. The focus should be on “the here and now” with the awareness of the possibility of change moment by moment. The choice of “the here and now” can change the future story and reshape the past story. History is not fixed but changeable. Phan (1999) explains the unique dimension of human memory.

For humans, time is not only *chronos* but also *kairos*, not only measurement of change but also moments pregnant with the promise of transformation. We who live in time do not experience the past as something irretrievably lost and gone but as truly present, effectively shaping our identity and our destiny. Similarly, we do not experience the future merely as something empty and unreal; rather, we experience it as lure and a challenge, inviting us to move forward to actualize our potentialities. (p. 128-129)

Reconstructing the Narratives of Korean American Immigrants from Women’s Perspectives

Korean American Women and their Stories

Among the marginalized, the voice of Korean American women is significant for the Korean American community, for they are the marginalized among the marginalized; this means that they are more privileged in bearing witness to truths that can be relevant and meaningful for marginalized people. Korean and Korean American women also attest to how they have coped with the experiences of marginalization by creatively and positively reconstructing their life stories through resistance and communal care. Their voices can be a guiding example of how the Korean American community can set forth

transformative practices using a communal contextual narrative approach. Korean and Korean American feminist scholars have found their voices by reflecting upon their experiences of marginalization and constructing alternative narratives, which empower their existence.

To Korean American women, it is more challenging to make a unified story of one's own in a patriarchal social structure, which still explicitly or implicitly promotes the idea of *namjon yobi*: 'men should be respected; women should be lowered' (Pak, 2006, p. 41). The major conflict of women's stories takes place between personal agency and the social roles of woman defined and given by a male-dominant society.

In a novel by Katherine Min (2006), *Secondhand World*, she describes the Korean immigrant family of Myung-Hee, a teenage girl, in which her father plays a dominant role, while her mother plays the role of husband's shadow and yet struggles to develop a sense of agency in her selfhood. One day, her mother begins to take an English literature class at a community college and this experience reminds her of her earlier passion for literature and makes her review her life outside of her family responsibilities and obligations. She ends up having an affair with her professor, a European American, who sees her as a beautiful woman and leads her to discover her body, identity, and story in new ways. Later on, Myung-Hee happens to find out about her mother's affair and reveals the fact of it to her father. Her father cannot bear the feelings of betrayal and eventually puts his house on fire, killing his wife and himself. Myung-Hee fortunately survives through a series of major surgeries.

This novel shows the conflicts within this woman's identity in dealing with both familial responsibilities as a shadow of her husband and a deep desire to claim her selfhood. Myung-Hee also struggles between her agency and familial values that expect her to be a "good" girl—a perfect girl in both American culture and Korean culture. In the eyes of this teenage girl, her father is a stubborn Korean male, who does not show his emotions, and her mother is a shadow of her father, who lives a secondhand life. Yet, when she discovers that her mother has had an affair, she feels betrayed and lost, even though she has sympathy for her mother, who does not appear to have an intimate relationship with her husband. Myung-Hee struggles with claiming her own agency as an American; on the other hand, she is ceaselessly told to become a Korean woman, who retains the image of a sacrificial and other-oriented figure like her mother. The conflicting message is this: "You're born here, but you are Korean" (p. 167).

Pak (2006) asserts that Korean women historically inherited the character or "imago"⁴³ of "warrior like household priestess" and "other-oriented, selfless self" in the context of patriarchy (p. 42). In a Confucian system, women's social roles were defined as "other-oriented" and in Shamanistic traditions they were expected to play the role of a priestess by offering prayers and performing religious rituals so that they can protect the family from disasters and bad luck. Having such characters or imagos, Korean American women's stories are easily merged with their family stories. Yet, as in the story of Myung-Hee's mother, Korean American women seek a unified story, which reflects a

⁴³ McAdams (1993) defines imago as "a personified and idealized concept of the self" (p. 122), for instance, the athlete, the sage, the soldier, the clown, the peacemaker, martyr, etc.

self that is congruent with the desires and powers of each individual without being subsumed in collectivist notion of *Uri*.

Pak (2006), through in-depth interviews with Korean Americans in the 1.5 and second generation (women in their 30s), found a unique developmental task for women, that of reconciling and integrating “the contrasting dual characters of their agentic work side with their communal family side” (Pak, 2006, p. 42). They struggle between “I” consciousness and “we” consciousness, which is played out in the dual roles of successful professional who brings honor to her family and sacrificial mother who continues the legacy of Korean women as an “other oriented” person (Pak, 2006, pp. 215-217). Pak (2006) points out an interesting finding: that ironically the 1.5 and second generation Korean American women said little about their mothers’ influence on their life, because they tried to survive in a male-dominant and individualistic American society.

From these three women, the picture that emerges about their first generation mothers is how they played the traditional Korean woman’s role so well that they were well “hid” from their own daughter’s lives. All of the women would agree that their mothers are incredibly strong women and made selfless sacrifices to take care of the family. However their mothers seemed to have transmitted the other-oriented tradition through everyday actions than through words, which escaped their daughters’ awareness. (Pak, 2006, p. 215)

As such, Korean American women, both younger and older generations, struggle to make sense of their lives in their own terms. The ironic message of what Korean American women hear is that they should be perfect in both worlds by converting their roles with flexibility and perfection. The younger generation struggles to survive in their careers by competing as minority women in a racist patriarchal system. The first generation women work outside of the home without much recognition of their “economic equality” and

continue to do a major part of the domestic work at home. Their economic contribution is often considered the duty of a mother for the family rather than an economic agent (Pak, 2006).

Living with the difficulty of dual roles is even harder for Korean American single mothers. A Korean immigrant woman who came to the United States eight years ago with her son after a divorce expressed her inner conflicts —she stated that she still feels guilty about the divorce yet has inner peace compared to before, thinking that she made the right decision yet feeling sorry for her son, because her son should not be raised without a father.⁴⁴ After immigration, she worked twelve hours a day for six days at a laundry cleaner and attended school at night in order keep her visa status legal. She is waiting for a green card through her employer’s sponsorship. She feels enormous stresses and suffers from the unjust treatment by her employer, yet she cannot make any complaint because of her fear of losing both her job and sponsorship. A time for liberation, she says, will be the day when she receives her green card and receives her status as a permanent resident, and is no longer an alien in this land. She mentioned Exodus 3: 7-8 as a passage of God’s promise for her.

The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

⁴⁴ This is extracted from an unpublished spiritual autobiography of a Korean immigrant woman.

She says, “This passage represents my oppression and crying. As my soul experiences freedom by encountering truth, I will certainly experience the day of liberation from the chains of my legal status (and maltreatment).”

The story of this woman shows the burdens of being a Korean immigrant woman, who should live as a strong woman by being an “other-oriented” person. She made a difficult choice for a new life in this new land out of her desires to care for her son. This is a moral strength that this woman has: “sensitivity to the needs of others and the assumption of responsibility for taking care” (Gilligan, 1982, p. 16). Even though she feels guilty because of the Confucian expectations of women, she can state, “I feel peaceful” because she does not have to deal with her irresponsible husband and unjust familial system of patriarchy. Even though she is going through a time of darkness, she expects the day of liberation that will eventually come true, and, most of all, she seeks for a deeper relationship with God through her experiences of suffering. This woman demonstrates the process of living as a blessed child of God while struggling to care for her child and becoming free from oppression. The strength that she holds onto is the message of hope that God is certainly on her side.

In a pastoral care context with Korean American women, in order to promote the fullest positive religious coping the empowerment of self agency is essential, and involves a process of naming dominant and destructive narratives that influence their lives. On the other hand, it is essential to find the strength of Korean American women and privilege their preferred narratives. What is the strength of Korean women? Chung Hyun Kyung (1991), a Korean American feminist, says, “Women’s truth was generated

by their epistemology from the broken body” (p. 104). Even though Korean women have historically experienced prolonged oppression, they demonstrated resilient faith and strength by claiming their privileged epistemology for accessing the divine narrative. In essence, they have moral strength by living the other-oriented life, through which they participate in the larger narrative—*Uri* story. However, the other oriented-life should be named and affirmed as a source of moral strength explicitly so that it may not remain a shadowed or secondhand life of being a male counterpart.

Jung Ha Kim (1999), a Korean American sociologist, demonstrates how “the hidden transcript” of Korean American women can empower their voice and help them integrate their identity on their own. She lifts up their voices and challenges the definition of power by twisting its meaning. A woman in an interview said, “Men make the rules in the house and the church and we women follow them. But making rules is not as difficult as trying to follow them.” Another woman said, “Men think they are the ones who take care of women; but in reality we take care of men. Men don’t know anything about women.” Another woman humorously stated, “God created women very strong. They can survive anything” (Kim, 1999, p. 209). As such, Korean American women have demonstrated that they already have their own voice which reflects an often paradoxical reconstruction of marginality, and this effort should continue as communal theological commitment for the transformation of marginalization beyond the private space to the public arena.

The local knowledge of Korean American women demonstrates their agential power in a paradoxical sense. In this embodied understanding of truth through “the

epistemology of broken body,” the very experience of marginalization provides first-hand material for theology; such an authentic theology reflects upon this embodied truth.

Chung Hyun Kyung (1998a) asserts, “The most dangerous thing for an oppressed people is to become benumbed through internalizing alien criteria and ignoring our own gut feelings” (p. 28). The oppression is that people not only lose their voices but also “the power to claim their own existence” (Lee, B., 2006, p. 347). At the heart of liberation is the process of gaining voices that have been suppressed, trivialized, and destroyed.

Paradoxically, clearly naming one’s own marginalization and exploring some possible positive elements in it provides a beginning self-agency that can serve as a base for both coping with marginalization and being liberated from it.

In regaining the voices of the marginalized, it is important to read Scripture from the margins (De La Torre, 2002). In a Korean American religious context, Scripture is mostly read through pre-modern lenses, which can limit the view of reality, like viewing in black and white rather than in color. In the example of the woman who experienced inner conflict between peace and guilt after divorce, a pastoral caregiver can help this woman expand the horizon of traditional biblical understandings of marriage and understand broader understandings of the Scripture in her own contextual terms.

For instance, Yang (2007) reconstructs Jesus’ saying about divorce in both an ancient Hebrew context as well as a contemporary Korean context. She emphasizes that Jesus’ saying was not about divorce (bilateral decisions in both parties) in a legal sense, but about the one-sided ownership of women’s sexuality by men and the misuse of repudiation. “Jesus’ saying is not a legal statement concerning whether divorce is

permissible, but instead a prophetic condemnation of patriarchal misuse of power in his society” (Yang, 2007, p. 266). As such, biblical understandings of divorce can be reconstructed in more contextually meaningful ways by deconstructing the dominant narratives of the Scripture and a Korean patriarchal culture and privileging God’s justice for women who were the victims of repudiation.

For the marginalized, it is important to realize the possibility of multiple stories that can be “rearranged, reedited, rejected, and reincorporated” (Culbertson, 2000, p. 59).

The more the careseeker’s story can become multilayered and complex enough to encompass the profound experiences of his or her suffering, the more the careseeker will be sustained and even transformed through that suffering. Conversely, when stories do not allow the full tragedy of suffering to be described, then a careseeker’s suffering will be exacerbated. (Culbertson, 2000, p. 68)

Hee Sung Chung (2004), a Korean feminist theologian, for instance, thickens the story of Tamar (2 Samuel 13), a victim of incestuous rape, through a feminist pastoral theological method. She reconstructs a biblical narrative of Tamar through a Korean woman’s perspective by imagining “multiple possibilities of Tamar’s life by playing with the gaps and in-betweens of her life” (p. 51). In the reconstruction process, Tamar becomes the author who synthesizes and integrates her conflicting experiences—being both a princess and a sexual victim—by developing her own identity and story.

This process interestingly begins by rediscovering and reconstructing the story of Tamar, in Genesis 38, who was a daughter-in-law of Judah and prostituted herself with Judah in order to claim her own voice and right. Tamar began to understand the story of Tamar in Genesis as a woman who claimed her voice in times of affliction and agony; by creative encounter with the divine story, a helpless sexual victim, who lived a prosperous

life as a princess yet did not claim her own agential power, becomes the author of her life by living her own life. Tamar's life changes by weaving human and divine narratives toward the larger *Uri* story. Hear Tamar's voice:

I was reminded of Tamar in Genesis. You know she was a daughter-in-law of Judah. Tamar was expelled because of her infertility and yet gained her position back again by bearing the son of Judah. Her name was same as mine. In the past, I was not happy to be named after her, since I often thought of her as weird and dirty. Yet, I realized that she had been so brave to overcome her fate. So, I began to pray, "May the courage of Tamar, a daughter-in-law of Judah, be with me!" (Chung, 2004, p. 54)

Interestingly, Tamar restories her life by identifying her story with Tamar in Genesis, who was thought as "dirty and weird" and transforms her negative situation into a positive one through the reconstruction of her story. As in this example, a biblical narrative can become a life-giving story as it is contextually expanded and elaborated by deconstructing dominant narratives and reconstructing alternative narratives. In this example, Chung creatively weaves human experiences and texts portraying divine narratives in a transformative way, in which Korean women, the marginalized, realize the direction and purpose of life in different yet preferred ways. An alternative story of Tamar ends with a commitment for solidarity with others by allowing David, her father, to include her story to be written in the sacred book.

David asked if my life could be written in a sacred book. I certainly agreed and begged to focus on writing all the details between Amnon and me. If everyone was sure of the death of the rapist, the terrible accident might not happen again, I thought! David ordered me to do so and my story was written in a book — part of which became the Bible later. Yet parts of my story were missing later in the process of reciting and writing, you know.... (Chung, 2004, p. 56)

Transforming Narrative: Reconstructing the Story of Martha and Mary (Luke 10: 38-42)

The reconstruction of biblical narratives from the margins can be liberating and empowering. Among many biblical stories, the story of Martha and Mary often receives special attention in a Korean American context because it is related to two aspects of the lives of Korean women: public vs. private space, career vs. domestic work, and self-assertion vs. other-oriented service. While Korean American women are expected to be Martha, a nurturing figure, they are also expected to be Mary, a silent and obedient figure, who sits at the feet of Jesus. While the social expectation of women is to serve in the way Martha does, Mary is idealized as a pious and obedient woman of faith. This story is a difficult text for the Korean American community, especially, for women. I learned to think of this story as being a story of conflict instigated by Martha, who was a complainer, disturber, and busy, while Mary was an ideal woman and disciple of faith. If this story is interpreted as the conflict between two different characters of women, it can be misleading. Dualistic and allegorical interpretations of Martha and Mary—Judaism vs. Christianity, justification by works vs. justification by faith, spiritual life of contemplation vs. action-oriented life—are misleading and can easily be oppressive (Gench, 2004, p. 73).

First, this text can be oppressive to Korean women who on the one hand, are expected to take the serving role of Martha, while Korean men seem to take it for granted that they will be the ones who sit next Jesus. Yet men are not even mentioned in this scene. They are privileged and free from the intricate power struggle over domestic chores that occur between Martha and Mary. While women are culturally obligated to

work to serve others, men have the advantage of sitting at the center of scene, implicitly aligned with Mary, receiving praise for making the “better choice” of practicing their spirituality. The danger of reading this text from the eyes of patriarchy is that it justifies socio-cultural systems without listening to the real voice of the person in context.

Second, if this text is interpreted from male perspectives, it can be simply interpreted as a quarrel between two sisters who have had the problem of sibling rivalry early on and bring shame to the family. The cause of this problem is simply interpersonal conflict. Or, the problem can be assigned to Martha and her pathology—*anxiety, impulsivity, and controlling personality, etc.* Where is their brother, Lazarus in this scene? There is no mention of him in Luke’s gospel, unlike John’s Gospel (John 11-12). The invisibility of Lazarus is similar to a Korean American context, in which men are invisible, while women take the burden of service and deal with the conflicts that erupt within this arena. “Kitchen” can easily become a battle ground behind the scene because the problem is not just about food but also about power struggles and justice.

How can this story be deconstructed in a communal contextual narrative perspective? What is the dominant voice which does not resonate with the experiences of the community, especially those who are marginalized? Biblical stories are not simply ancient texts but living texts, which interact with the very experiences of people. Rebera (1997) emphasizes that Asians need to read the Bible “not as a written text alone, but as a book that was born out of oral traditions, similar to their own” (p. 96). What is the purpose for which this text is written? What does it mean to be Martha for Korean American women?

It is important to understand the ways in which Martha has been demoralized. Isn't Martha considered a threat to men because she raises her voice even to Jesus? I had a similar experience in a conversation I had with my wife a long time ago. She sided with Martha and raised a question about what Jesus said to Martha. I did not agree with her; moreover I felt angry. I thought about this conversation later on and realized that Martha is a woman who threatens homeostasis—the comfort level that I have. It is likely that I have my own preferred interpretation of the text, which gives me privilege as a male. This awakening provoked another question of how this text can be reconstructed as a liberating story, not an oppressive one. How can women identifying themselves with Martha resist the dominant narrative which has shaped their identity and story? How can men use the story to reflect upon their gender roles?

First of all, it is important that Jesus did not demoralize Martha. He pointed out that she was stressed out due to “many preparations.” It was not a rebuke, although I have often heard this text interpreted as a rebuke. Jesus' saying, “Mary has chosen the better part,” is not necessarily about the person; rather it is a particular choice in a particular situation. Too much generalization about the roles of Mary and Martha can bring shame and a permanent judgment of how one is a bad person, rather than someone who has made a bad choice. If this text is read as such, then Jesus can be understood as challenging Martha to claim her own voice. She lacked her own voice because she identified exclusively with her social and familial role as older sister or matriarch. Jesus challenges her to claim her own voice by listening to how the divine story speaks to her story.

On the other hand, Mary can be interpreted as a woman who made her choice rather than taking the traditional role of woman as someone who takes care of domestic chores. She demonstrates a bold action in leaving her expected role of serving dinner in order to listen to Jesus. Mary is not a passive woman but claimed her own voice and place. Fiorenza (1992) notes “When contextualized in the life of lower and working-class women, Mary’s audacity in taking time out from work to sit idle and to relax in good company can have liberating effects...Such an act of reading is a declaration of independence and a way to say to others, “This is my time, my space, Now leave me alone.”” (p. 70). And “Jesus’ response assures that being apprenticed to him was “a better thing” than following the traditional dictates of society that often confined and limited women in public and private roles” (Rebera, 1997, pp. 102-103).

It is important to shift this story from a dualistic view about two different sisters to a communal story in which both Martha and Mary are affirmed. This kind of interpretation moves the focus from polarizing the roles of women into two categories to building up co-operating partnerships. Sook Ja Chung (1992) explores Jesus’ partnership with Mary and Martha as “women becoming Disciples for Partnership,” claiming:

I want to develop women's liberation into the action in community by interpreting this story as an example of Jesus' new community in partnership. Jesus' declaration about "the most important part" should be understood from the perspective of partnership. For Jesus the role distinction was not a big issue, but the broken partnership between Mary and Martha was. (p. 251, Cited in Rebera, 1997, p. 104)

In this reconstruction of the story of Martha and Mary, they learn to collaborate with each other as well as with God. The real concern is not simply about which roles they should take but about how they can collaborate together with God in the service of

the world. In a communal contextual narrative model, the image of “collaboration” is of the utmost significance. It is a “paradigmatic image” (Gerkin, 1984) that penetrates the theory and practice of this model. It takes two sides of collaboration: both God and faith community. Perceiving God as a co-creator is different from perceiving God as the object of deference. This applies to faith community, which is a living organism which continues to endeavor to “do theology.”

Conclusion

In this chapter, stories of Korean Americans demonstrated the problem of the blockage of *Ki* (life force) in story-making. In addressing these problem-saturated narratives, I proposed a communal contextual narrative approach to religious coping for Korean American immigrants and their children. By locating pastoral care in a communal contextual paradigm, the image and scope of pastoral care has been expanded from an authoritarian style of enacting the classical paradigm of pastoral care to a narrative mode of pastoral care. While multi-layered narratives can easily be the source of conflicts, Korean Americans also have an opportunity to re-author their lives from the very experiences of marginalization. Korean Americans can learn that they are the expert of their lives regardless of social restrictions by engaging with the sacred story of God, which empowers them to author life-giving narratives of their own.

Lastly, I reviewed the works of Korean American feminists and how they used personal narratives in empowering ways by implicitly incorporating narrative approaches. They demonstrated how to engage in a hermeneutic process of weaving human narratives with narratives about the divine in transformative ways. By so doing, they liberated a

limited understanding of biblical narratives and understood them within the larger story of God, which I envision as an *Uri* story in which person, community, and God collaborate. The metaphor of *Uri* story brings direction and purpose to the process of making sense of their immigrant living in the new land.

The communal contextual narrative approach that I have proposed emphasizes the firsthand experiences of Korean immigrants and their families as the source of change by privileging their voices in light of the theology of marginality. This approach helps Korean American Christians claim their agential power not from unhealthy attachment to a frozen past or an unrealistic future but from the very experience of marginalization and transformation of it through conscientious engagement with liberating religious and theological resources. By weaving their life stories as a part of larger story—*Uri* (divine-human) story—Korean American Christians can cope with their marginality in positive and transformative ways. In the following chapter, I will propose how to practice this communal contextual narrative approach to pastoral care with Korean American Christians.

CHAPTER 5

A COMMUNAL CONTEXTAL NARRATIVE MODEL OF PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING

In the previous chapter I described a communal contextual narrative approach to religious coping, which helps care seekers critically view their life story in a larger socio-cultural context and weave their story in light of biblical stories for the marginalized. In this chapter I will reconstruct the indigenous practice of *han-pu-ri* as an example of a communal contextual narrative model of pastoral care/counseling for Korean American families. *Han-pu-ri*, which literally means a release or untangling of *han*, is an indigenous Shamanistic practice intended to heal *han*. A primary goal of this model is to support Korean American immigrants and their families so that they can experience 1) an enhanced communally-grounded sense of self agency, 2) liberation from oppressive narratives, 3) the transformation of their story by co-authoring their life stories in partnership with God, 4) and re-membership with God and their community in communally enhancing ways.

In developing this model of pastoral care/counseling, first, I will draw upon narrative therapy approaches, which have been developed by White (1990, 2007) and other narrative therapists; narrative therapy will be used as a model of change. I will introduce some key concepts of narrative therapy in relation to postmodern approaches to knowledge from the perspectives of constructivism and social constructionism, and

describe the process of narrative therapy briefly. Narrative therapy approaches are unique in terms of its concern for the marginalized and how they can find their own voices as the authors of their lives.

Second, I will draw upon the “biblical narrative model” developed by Wimberly (1994, 2003, and 2008) in order to understand how to use the Bible in a pastoral care context with Korean Americans. Wimberly’s model emphasizes the role of the Bible for indigenous pastoral care/counseling for the African American community. This approach, I contend, can be relevant and effective in a Korean American context because Korean immigrants rely upon the Bible as the most significant pastoral guide and source of authority. This approach will help to tease out how biblical and theological resources can be used for pastoral care and counseling by deconstructing oppressive narratives and reconstructing life-giving narratives.

Third, I will explore the indigenous practice of *han-pu-ri* as a process of change. *Han-pu-ri* offers significant theoretical and practical resources for understanding how human and biblical narratives can encounter each other in creative and transformative ways and generate new experiences of empowerment, liberation, transformation, and communal re-connection. Especially, Chung Hyun Kyung’s (1998a) constructive theological method of *han-pu-ri* will be expanded to include aspects of narrative therapy and Wimberly’s biblical narrative model and will be reconstructed as a process through which Korean Americans and caregivers can collaborate.

By drawing upon these approaches, I will propose a communal contextual narrative pastoral care/counseling model for Korean Americans that includes these four

steps: 1) evoking sacredness, 2) naming and externalizing the problem, 3) re-authoring one's story, 4) re-remembering and reconnecting with the community and God. Even though this model is not a linear model, it can guide pastoral caregivers to understand the process of change and the unique characteristics in each step. First, "evoking sacredness" will be discussed as a process of building caring relationships, in which both careseeker and caregiver enter into the sacred ground of weaving human and biblical narratives. The image of collaboration of three parties—careseeker, caregiver, and God—will be emphasized as a guiding image of this model.

Second, "naming and externalizing" the problem is a process in which careseekers begin to name oppressive narratives in their own terms and externalize internalized dominant narratives, which hinder them from living the full potentiality of their communally-oriented lives.⁴⁵ I will discuss three oppressive narratives—racism, sexism, and cultural prejudice within Korean American community—as the narratives that are identified (through the process of narrative therapy) as objects of externalization.

Third, "re-authoring" will be discussed as a process by which Korean immigrants and their families can recruit the "untypical" and "unstoried" parts of their stories and weave them into their life stories. I will introduce Wimberly's analysis of the story of Job as an example of how to externalize oppressive narratives and re-author preferred narratives by privileging God-conversation, which affirms the voice of the marginalized fully. I will also offer a case study from Carlson and Erickson (2000) as an example of

⁴⁵ I want to emphasize the interconnectedness of the self within one's community in a Korean American context, and not imply that living to one's full potentiality or enhancing self agency will occur in an individualistic way as it does in a dominant Western Caucasian context.

how one's story can be re-authored by reconnecting with a sense of the sacred or God.

Lastly, re-membering will be discussed as a process of reconnecting with community and one's sense of the sacred or God. I will emphasize the communal aspect of the *han-pu-ri* model, which aims to strengthen community by helping careseekers re-member within their caring community and God in communally enhancing ways.

Narrative Therapy

Narrative therapy is a unique form of psychotherapy developed among family therapists in the 1970s and 1980s. In order to understand the theoretical foundations of narrative therapy, it can be helpful to explore how constructivism and social constructionism use postmodern approaches to knowledge. Narrative therapy is postmodern in its approach to knowledge and its understanding of the process of change.

Narrative therapy emphasizes the notion that our understandings of reality are socially constructed; as such, our sense of reality can be deconstructed as well as reconstructed. According to constructivists, the ideas that we have are not about the real world but are constructs (Lester, 1995, p. 31). There are no pure objective realities separated from subjective realities. From the constructivist point of view, the self is an agent that constructs "a sense of personal identity" and continues to engage with the process of "the dialectical dynamics of ongoing self development" with one's surrounding environment (Niemeyer, 2000, p. 209). In other words, the self is not simply reactive but also proactive in terms of seeking change. Citing George Kelly (1955), a founder of clinical constructivism, Neimeyer (2000) notes,

There are always some alternative constructions available to choose among in dealing with the world. No one needs to paint himself into a corner; no one needs to be completely hemmed in by circumstances; no one needs to be the victim of his biography. (p. 15)

In other words, everyone has a choice even in the most helpless situations. To live as human beings is to have choice—the choice to exercise their freedom. They can construct their life stories in their own preferred ways.

However, too much emphasis on choice does not reflect the whole picture of the human condition, because human freedom is “a finite freedom, exercised within the limits of our situation and abilities, our givens and past choices” (Stone & Lester, 2001, pp. 259-260). Theories of the self’s role in constructivism need to be tempered with theories of social constructionism, which emphasize the role of socially constructed social systems such as racism, sexism, classism, etc. While constructivists emphasize “personal-agentic functioning,” social constructionists emphasize “cultural linguistic discourses” in the narrative construction process (Neimeyer, 2000, p. 210). Social constructionism stresses “the person and context as a fluid process of meaning making in which one can hardly distinguish between the person as an entity separate from his or her context” (Doehring, 2006, p. 70). McLeod (2004) asserts that there are four areas of interest in social constructionism: 1) “how people act together,” 2) “how the power is used and manifested” 3) “how people use language to organize their experiences,” 4) “what cultural resources are drawn on in the making of meaning” (p. 352).

According to social constructionism, an individual can be likened to “communities of internalized others” rather than understood as a singular self (Parry & Doan, 1994, p. 5). There is no singular self as there is in modernist approaches to

knowledge, which represent an essentialist perspective; thus, there is no real self that is hidden and should be discovered, or is at the core and needs to be uncovered. According to social constructionism, the self is a fluid and socially constructed reality; the construction of self is a political process in relation to the cultural-linguistic environment.

By drawing upon postmodern approaches to knowledge, narrative therapy assumes that there are always better choices that can be made out of the multiple cultural discourses used to construct a sense of self. A key idea of narrative therapy is that “persons organize and give meaning to their experience through the storying of experience” (White & Epston, 1990, p. 12) and their stories can be re-authored in their own preferred ways. While no one can escape the cultural-linguistic influences that shape his or her sense of self, he or she can claim self-agency and resist negative and oppressive forces. The fundamental claim of narrative therapy is this: “changing people’s stories about their lives can help to change their actual lives...changing these stories often involves challenging larger social stories within people’s problem-saturated stories about themselves and their lives” (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007, p. xvii).

This postmodern understanding of self shifts the position of careseekers from being the passive recipients of dominant discourses to being active agents of change, who can “reposition” and “reclaim” their voices from a multitude of social discourses by constructing alternative stories (Drewery & Winslade, 1996, p. 42). Human problems are exacerbated when people draw upon the dominant narratives as if they were the only truths without recognizing the multiplicity of narratives available to them for dealing with their problems. Narrative therapy claims that “the meaningfulness” of answers can be

more important than “the factual truthfulness” of narratives that confer meaning (Parry & Doan, 1994, p. 2).

While social discourses contribute to one’s sense of self, each person also is an active agent for changing his or her narratives. By stressing socio-cultural influences on the constitution of selfhood, careseekers can embrace “many selves” as a means of experiencing liberation from the “constraining definitions” of a singular sense of self (Parry & Doan, 1994, p. 18). Citing Tappan (1999), Neimeyer (2000) emphasizes a dialectical process of narrative construction that moves beyond the dichotomy of psychological vs. societal constructions of self, saying, “[the] self is situated neither psychologically or socially, but dialogically—as a function of the linguistically mediated exchanges between persons and the social world that are the hallmark of lived human experience” (p. 118).

In a narrative therapy approach, any life event is considered as a “verbalized event” filtered through a particular set of language. Bruner (2004) notes, “Selfhood can surely be thought of as one of those verbalized events, a kind of meta-event that gives coherence and continuity to the scramble of experience” (p. 7). And in constructing one’s story, nobody can be neutral; he or she cannot but favor a particular view over another. Given this understanding, a primary task of narrative therapy is to liberate people from stories that function in oppressive ways so that they can legitimize their own stories (Parry & Doan, 1994, pp. 26-30). Freedman and Combs (1996) summarize this theory as follows,

A key to this therapy is that in any life there are always more events that don’t get “storied” than there are ones that do—even the longest and most complex autobiography leaves out more than it includes. This means that when life narratives carry hurtful meanings or seem to offer only unpleasant choices, they

can be changed by highlighting different, previously un-storied events or by taking new meaning from already-storied events, thereby constructing new narratives. Or, when dominant cultures carry stories that are oppressive, people can resist their dictates and find support in subcultures that are living different stories. (pp. 32-33)

Narrative therapy can be very effective in pastoral care to the marginalized, whose voices are oppressed by dominant narratives, which indoctrinate them with this message: “You are the problem.” Narrative therapy claims that the person is not the problem but the problem is the problem (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Making this claim and separating oneself from the problem is essential for liberation; this process is part of the unique practice of “externalizing” the problem in narrative therapy. Narrative therapists use what is called externalizing language, instead of internalized language. For example, a narrative therapist asks questions in the following way: “When depression enters your life, how does it get you to think about yourself?” (Carlson & Erickson, 2000, p. 73). By separating the problem from the person, careseekers begin to understand how the problem influenced them and what oppressive discourses operate around this problem. The problem is not the person but “the [external] power of cultural systems in shaping people’s lives” (Semmler & Williams, 2000, p. 53).

Once careseekers separate themselves from their problems, they can re-author their life stories. The unstoried parts of stories emerge and become the very ingredients of their new stories. With those newly found materials, they begin to re-author their stories in their own preferred ways. Through this re-authoring process, one can focus on “‘intentional states of identity’ in contrast to ‘internal states’ to reveal how one’s hopes, values, and commitments shape a person’s actions and affirm agency in his or her

preferred ways of being” (Ewing & Allen, 2008, p. 96). This process transforms self-negating identities into self-affirming identities.

As careseekers begin to re-author their stories, they begin to re-member with others authentically as the subjects of their lives. No longer in peripheral positions, they claim their own voices in their communities, which support and advocate for them. In this way, narrative therapy empowers a communally-based sense of self agency so that people can be inter-connected in more mutually enhancing ways. By reconnecting and belonging to this empowering community, careseekers can move from isolated beings to communal beings. In the next section, I turn to examining a biblical narrative model developed by Wimberly, which can be used within narrative approaches to pastoral care within a Korean American context.

Wimberly’s Biblical Narrative Model

How can the Bible be used within a narrative approach to pastoral care in a Korean American context? This is a crucial yet difficult issue. Korean Christians frequently identify their stories with the stories of biblical characters, compare their life settings with biblical settings, and juxtapose the plots of their life stories with the plots of biblical stories. Most of all, the Bible is a master story which guides their life. In a Korean American context, which strongly emphasizes the authority of the Bible in both theological perspectives and pastoral ministry, using the Bible creatively and in transforming ways is essential for pastoral functioning. When the Bible is used in authoritarian ways as a proof text to prescribe the final answers to careseekers’ situations

without contextual elaborations, pastoral care becomes life-limiting and even destructive. Reading the Bible in such limited and selective ways without considering contextual differences can be oppressive and misleading, and can, in terms of narrative therapy, reinforce social narratives that are problematic. How can pastoral caregivers use the Bible in theologically integrated as well as pragmatically effective ways that enhance a communal sense of self? How can they use the Bible more congruently by respecting the authority of the Scripture while using it to deconstruct problematic social narratives and reconstruct self narratives that enhance a communally based sense of self agency?

I find some possible solutions to this dilemma in Wimberly (1994)'s model of a "biblical narrative approach," which addresses the particular pastoral care context of African Americans that emphasizes story-telling as an indigenous form of caring and the Bible as the significant resource in the storied identities of African Americans. This approach resonates with a Korean American context to some extent due to the importance of an oral culture and the role of the Bible in the community of faith.

Wimberly (1994) contends that people privilege certain biblical narratives and interpretations over other stories and interpretations. That means there are also always unstoried parts of stories as well as new possible interpretations that can be chosen and privileged. Oftentimes, biblical stories are selected and interpreted without fuller exploration of their historical backgrounds, narrative structures, and other relevant information that can enrich the understanding of the texts. In a Korean American context, the Bible is often read as a premodern text without drawing upon various methods of biblical interpretation, which can tease out other dimensions of these biblical stories.

Reading the Bible in such a way can evoke a sense of the sacred but fail to address contextual interpretations that can enrich the contextual relevance of biblical stories. Because of the multiplicity of meanings inherent in biblical stories, some meanings that have been used in life-limiting and even destructive ways can be deconstructed, while new stories and interpretations can be woven into the life stories of careseekers in life-giving ways.

In order to illustrate this process, Wimberly (1994) presents the case of Restin, a 49 year old African American male who has been struggling with substance abuse. He was raised in what Wimberly calls a “not good enough” family and has internalized negative self-images, which have been bestowed by his family members. In terms of religious background, he was raised in the Pentecostal church and is quite knowledgeable of the Bible. While struggling with negative self-images, Restin identifies himself with the biblical image of the Gerasene demoniac (Luke 8: 26-39) who is possessed by the devil, and this identification reinforces his belief that he is worthless.

This biblical image is deeply connected to his personal mythology—“the symbolic and emotionally laden themes that make up the self and the self-in-relation-to others, which includes the internalized ideas of significant others” (Wimberly, 1994, p. 22). His personal mythology can be traced back to the time of his birth; he was not welcomed by his family. Deeply hurt and injured from the early years of his life, his negative personal mythology, which confers the belief that he is worthless, has been edified through negative feedback from family, school, and society in general. Restin has been alternating between this negative personal mythology and wishful thinking of a

“better tomorrow.” Even though he has relied upon his religion for coping, the Bible and other religious resources have not been fully engaged with his life stories in more consistent and life-giving ways.

Wimberly finds that Restin’s identification with the demonic does not have to be all negative, because it includes the other side of the story—the hope that he can be healed as the possessed man was healed by Jesus. However, this side of the story remained simply wishful thinking. The problem was his “triumphalism”—“a belief that one can be freed from suffering by a magical act and that there is no personal effort needed” (Wimberly, 1994, p. 43). “He believed that God would do things for some people even when they did not cooperate with God. He felt that God was slow in responding to his need only because of his unworthiness” (Wimberly, 1994, p. 45). This deferring attitude hindered Restin from attending a drug treatment program; he wished for a kind of supernatural healing without his cooperation in the healing process.

In order to help Restin move beyond the endless fluctuations between the grip of his negative past and wishful thinking about tomorrow, Wimberly encouraged Restin to revise his negative mythology through “more consistent role-taking with Scripture.” By emphasizing that he should take an active rather than passive role more consistently, Wimberly helped him begin to see that his own participation was required for healing. Wimberly also helped him reconstruct his theology of grace by emphasizing “grace through faith” in which faith is understood as cooperation with God in the healing process. By shifting the focus from a deferring faith to a more collaborative faith, Restin was encouraged to claim his self-agency in the process of change. Citing Akbar’s

description of beliefs that exacerbate a deferring coping style and inhibit a collaborative coping style, Greider (1997) notes, “Once you begin to believe the divinity is somebody other than you, then you are put into a psychologically dependent state that renders you incapable of breaking loose until you break the hold of that image” (p. 90).

By emphasizing the other side of this biblical story of the healing of the man possessed by demons, this young man could begin to re-author his life story collaboratively with God. As the case study of Restin has illustrated, broadening the biblical stories using various interpretive resources such as biblical, theological, and psychological tools can help careseekers revise the negative influences of their personal mythologies and participate in the process of change as collaborating agents. Using the Bible in this way can be meaningful and effective for careseekers who are familiar with the Bible yet have not experienced its transformative power in life-giving ways.

Using the Bible in pastoral care has recently been capturing the interest of both biblical scholars and pastoral practitioners (Ballard & Holmes, 2006). Ironically, in a postmodern context, we are more aware of the need to “recover the insights of those who lived in pre-modern times” (Ballard & Holmes, 2006, p. 1). In a modernistic paradigm of pastoral care, the Bible has often been set aside and replaced by sources and norms from pastoral psychology.

The universal application of modernistic approaches using biblical (historical) critical methods can be not only irrelevant but also imperialistic to local communities, which often have different approaches to the Bible. Brueggemann (2006) criticizes the exclusive use of modernistic interpretations of the Bible that limit the Scripture to what

can be known through modernist “reasoning” which is a product of the age of Enlightenment. Such approaches often emphasize a search for some deep, core “original” meaning of biblical texts, which are used in exclusivist, universalist ways. Such modernistic approaches undermine the contextually-specific transformative power of the Bible for non-western communities.

It is important to draw upon the Bible more creatively for local communities in ways that continue to shape their identity through the Bible as the master (grand) narrative. Doehring (2006) suggests pastoral practitioners use trifocal lenses—premodern, modern, and postmodern approaches to religious knowledge—in ministry, because people have various religious experiences that draw upon all of these approaches. While a premodern approach to religion seems to prevail in the Korean American community, modern and postmodern approaches can be valuable resources as long as they can be contextualized to the needs of careseekers.⁴⁶ The historical movement through premodern, modern, and postmodern eras is not a linear process. For many people today, all three approaches are available, functioning rather like a mosaic in which all three approaches to knowledge coexist in confusing yet enriching ways. Ironically, the postmodern sensibility, which often initially seems to threaten people’s premodern experience of religion, can help people to “reconsider premodern approaches to the use of traditional church resources for the growth and development of persons” (Wimberly, 2008, p. 112).

⁴⁶ Often Korean Americans are drawing upon modern approaches to medical knowledge and an implicit postmodern approach to religion in terms of the syncretic ways they implicitly blend folk religious traditions with their Christianity.

In terms of pastoral care to Korean Americans, postmodern approaches to religion can work well within a communal contextual paradigm, in which the Bible is read as a sacred story for local communities. The Bible is understood not simply as an ancient text but as the living word of God, which can give contextually relevant and theologically meaningful guidelines for people in a postmodern era. Wimberly (2008) recently suggested such a model, which he calls the “Bible as pastor”:

This approach focuses on the ability of the Bible to draw people into itself and disclose a new plot for those who encounter it in ways that give meaning... The Bible functions as pastor when it discloses meaning, purpose, worth, value, dignity, identity and wisdom to people, who bring to the encounter between themselves, biblical texts and God, personal, communal, and sociopolitical questions and concerns about the meaning of life in a world of justice, oppression, and evil. The Bible as pastor is also about people being shaped and formed by the encounter between God and biblical texts so that they become virtuous people participating faithfully in the coming of God’s rule and reign on earth. (p. 130)

This model of “Bible as pastor” can be meaningful because it does not threaten the deep emotional attachment to the Bible that many Korean Americans have, while it helps Korean Americans approach the Bible with a more open attitude that can yield new meanings, purpose, sense of identity, and practical wisdom.

Having suggested ways in which a narrative therapy approach and Wimberly’s biblical approach can be useful in a communal contextual approach to pastoral care for Korean Americans, I turn now to examining the relevance of an indigenous spiritual practice that has a long history among Koreans. This spiritual practice, when combined with the process of change outlined in narrative therapy and Wimberly’s biblical approach, provides a contextually meaningful approach to pastoral care in the Korean American community of faith.

Han-Pu-Ri: An Indigenous Communal Contextual Narrative Practice of Healing and Liberation

Historically, the symbol and ritual of *han-pu-ri* has supported the marginalized, helping them find their voices by reconnecting them to self, others, community and a sense of the sacred. *Han-pu-ri* is a powerful symbol and ritual for both personal healing as well as social change. As discussed in Chapter 3, the tradition of *han-pu-ri* has been embraced in both Pentecostal religion for the purposes of personal healing and *Minjung* theology for the purposes of social change and liberation. *Han-pu-ri*, I believe, is a meaningful indigenous practice that can be used to illustrate how pastoral care/counseling using narrative biblical approaches can lead to personal and communal healing and liberation. I envision *han-pu-ri* as a process of change, in which the *han*-ridden are transformed to be the people of God, who join the call to co-authoring *Uri* story in collaboration with God and their faith community.

The practice of *han-pu-ri* focuses on the experience of *han*. *Han* can be described as a knot tangled in the inner world of the marginalized because of injustice and suffering. *Han-pu-ri* can be translated as either “the resolving of *han*” or “the untanglement of *han*” (Chung, 1991, p. 43). In a relational context, *pu-ri* means to “untangle” relational entanglement through healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation, and this is a visual image of resolving *han*. In order to transform problem-saturated narratives into life-giving narratives, the story of *han*, which is tangled with numerous accounts of the experiences of injustice and oppression, needs to be untangled. Through the practice of *han-pu-ri*, *han* can be named and externalized, and the story of *han* can be re-authored. As the story

of *han* is untangled, one can be re-membered with others and God. Through *han-pu-ri*, *han* can be transformed from a negative form of emotion to positive energy for change at both personal and communal levels.

In Korean Shamanism, there is a belief that those who die from unjust causes cannot go to the heaven; instead they wander around this world and harm other people in order to untangle their *han*. If their *han* is not untangled through revenge or other forms of release, the ghosts, which are the spirits of the *han*-ridden, cannot leave this world because their life stories are not complete. Instead of negative ways of resolving *han* through harming others, *han-pu-ri* untangles the *han* of the victims through religious symbols and rituals in a communal context.

Han-pu-ri is a dynamic process in which the story of the careseeker is fully expressed, acknowledged, and touched through encountering a sense of the sacred. By participating in *han-pu-ri*, the marginalized gain their voice by letting ghosts “speak out their stories of *han*” (Lee, 2004, p. 161). Religious symbols allow for the expression of deep wounds that human narratives cannot express fully and through this process the *han*-ridden gain their voice to name the problems that caused their wounds of *han*. The naming of *han* is a liberating process that separates the *han*-ridden from the sources of oppression. As the community hears the suffering of careseeker, other participants of *han-pu-ri*—family members and other caring neighbors—empathically share the *han* and enter into the spiritual-human drama of healing and liberation.

While *han-pu-ri* is a powerful source of healing at a personal emotional level, the communal experience of *han-pu-ri* can lead the participants to be aware of collective *han*,

of which they are also a part. This awareness can empower the *han*-ridden people to resist and transform social oppression. Chung Hyun Kyung (1991) asserts that Korean women have been practicing *han-pu-ri* for self-empowerment and resistance historically: “Gentle way of *han-pu-ri* have been through songs, dances, and rituals; and militant way of *han-pu-ri* have been developed by farmers, workers, slum dwellers, and women’s organized political movements” (p. 43). *Minjung* theology has focused on this characteristic of *han-pu-ri*, which empowers the marginalized to claim their agential power for resistance and transformation. *Minjung* theology manifests the positive and creative potential of *han* for liberation and transformation.

Through *han-pu-ri*, the story of *han* can address social oppression in personified languages. The story of *han* is a personal story yet a microcosm of social realities that the marginalized experience in their daily lives. Thus, this story of *han* becomes a story of *our* brother, sister, neighbor, and the very parts of the body of Christ. By locating *han* in communal contextual levels, *han* becomes politicized. The personal is political. Chung Hyun Kyung (1998b), for instance, as seen in the autobiography of her two mothers in Chapter 3, uses her story as a microcosm of social evil; in this way her story challenges and deconstructs social oppression and reconstructs her mothers’ story as the story of *our* mothers. As a Korean American feminist theologian, she emphasizes deconstructing what she calls the patriarchal “he-story” from the dominant discourses embedded in religio-cultural gender ideology and reconstructing “her-story,” which has been mutilated (p. 31). By lifting up stories of *han*, such stories become *our* (*Uri*) story.

As such, *han-pu-ri* aims to increase socio-political awareness and bring change, while expressing negative emotions and bringing healing. In developing a theology of *han-pu-ri*, Chung Hyun Kyung (1998a) emphasizes both the realities of “*han*” and the “active agent of liberation and wholeness” that the marginalized already have and carry within and among them (p. 31). That is, the agent for change is in the life of the marginalized; the role of caregivers and community is to support the marginalized as they realize themselves as agents of change rather than passive victims of social oppression.

Han-pu-ri is a practice that can be used as a model that addresses both personal and communal dimensions of healing and liberation. How can we reconstruct *han-pu-ri* as a model of pastoral care/counseling that supports the transformation of persons and community? Chung Hyun Kyung (1998a) describes three steps of *han-pu-ri* as a method of doing constructive theologies.

The first step is *speaking and hearing*. The shaman gives the Han-ridden persons or ghosts the chance to break their silence. The shaman enables the persons or ghosts to let their *han* out publicly. The shaman makes the community hear the Han-ridden stories. The second step is *naming*. The shaman enables the Han-ridden persons or ghosts (or their communities) to name the source of their oppression. The third step is *changing* the unjust situation by action so that Han-ridden persons or ghosts can have peace. (p. 35)

These three steps of doing constructive theology based on the practice of *han-pu-ri* can be incorporated into a pastoral care/counseling process of change, as I will demonstrate in the next section. This change begins with “speaking and hearing,” which is the process of empowering the *han*-ridden to gain their voices. As their stories are spoken to and heard by their community, their voices are no longer peripheral. Their voices represent the voice of God, which affirms their ultimate identity: “You are my

beloved.” They are no longer isolated beings but part of the community, which cares about their suffering. They begin to discover that truth is not found in external voices but in their own voices. The regaining of voice leads to the next stage of “naming,” in which they begin to define reality in their own terms without recruiting oppressive narratives. Naming is a process that privileges the epistemology of the marginalized in light of spiritual realities. The naming process then moves into the last stage of change at both personal and communal levels. This change is brought about by the integration of one’s narratives as preferred narratives; the subsequent change brought about by these narratives within the community arises from the increased awareness of the suffering of their members and the reparation of impaired relationships. From a narrative perspective, change occurs with the shift from problem-saturated stories to life-giving stories, which contain new liberating plots, themes, and transformed characters.

Besides offering a process for individual and communal change, the practice of *han-pu-ri* offers an understanding of pastoral caregivers as wounded healers. Shamans, as indigenous pastoral caregivers, are the ones who deeply understand the meaning of *han*, because they are most likely to live at the margins of society. For instance, Chung Hyun Kyung (1996) mentions her friend, Jiheh, who became a shaman, “a priestess of *han*,” who was rejected from the time of her birth by her father who deceived her mother into thinking that he was a bachelor, even though he was already married. “She was conceived by deception, rejected by her father, and raised with the [last] name of her mother, Jiheh embodied Korean women’s *han*” (p. 279). Shamans are “wounded healers” who transform their own suffering and use their person as a healing resource (Kim, 1991).

Clinebell (1984) asserts, “Only those who have discovered new life in their own depths can become spiritual obstetricians, aiding the birth of new life in individuals and in the church” (p. 15). Wimberly (2008) describes an authentic wounded healer as an “anxiety-free storyteller,” “whose wounds have been sufficiently addressed, so that the stories emerging from the healing of personal wounds can be used as narrative” (p. 113).

The nature of the wounded healer is found in a unique process of becoming a shaman—going through *shin-byung*, which is literally translated as divine-disease or spirit-disease. The DSM IV (2000) describes it as “a Korean folk label for a syndrome in which initial phases are characterized by anxiety and somatic complaints (general weakness, dizziness, fear, anorexia, gastrointestinal problems), with subsequent dissociation and possession by ancestral spirits.” This illness is interpreted as a part of sacred narratives, in which they are “called” to be the priests or priestesses of *han* for others. If they do not accept this call to become wounded healers, this illness would never go away and it will become a life-threatening illness. By interpreting this illness as a sacred invitation to become a community healer and weaving their life stories with sacred stories, they are transformed into wounded healers.

Like the image of the wounded healer in shamanism, a pastoral caregiver is the one who weaves human and spiritual narratives in the context of both personal and professional life. This is at the heart of pastoral identity. Even though he or she may not go through such dramatic and visible illnesses as a shaman, the pastoral caregiver is deeply aware of his or her own wounds in light of spiritual narratives. And the pastoral care giver is a bridge-maker who mediates human and spiritual realities. According to

Gerkin (1997), a pastoral caregiver has a dual consciousness of being “somewhere between loyalty to and representation of Christian story, on the one hand, and empathic attention to the particularity of life stories, on the other hand” (p.112). Through deep engagement with both human and sacred dimensions of reality, the pastoral caregiver offers a sacred space of healing.

In that regard, pastoral caregivers are the ones who help careseekers rediscover the possibility of weaving disconnected, fragmented, and lost meanings in their stories. In other words, pastoral caregivers are “story guides” (Wimberly, 1994). Richert (2006) notes, “Narratives may disempower by being fragmented and/or incomplete, by delimiting options, or by characterizing the protagonist as ineffectual” (p. 86). Experiencing the blockage of their stories, careseekers need someone who can truly listen to their stories so that they can find a new direction that connects their stories of past, present, and future in a cohesive meaningful unit.

A Communal Contextual Model of Korean American Pastoral Care and Counseling

By weaving together three approaches: narrative therapy, Wimberly’s biblical narrative model, and the indigenous practice of *han-pu-ri*, I propose a communal contextual narrative pastoral care/counseling model for Korean Americans that includes these four steps: 1) evoking sacredness, 2) naming and externalizing the problem, 3) re-authoring one’s story, 4) re-membling and reconnecting with the community and God. This model intends to guide the pastoral caregivers to facilitate the transformative process of the story of *han* of the careseekers by (1) exploring and privileging unstoried

dimensions of the careseeker's story that can empower a communally grounded sense of self-agency and (2) engaging biblical (sacred) stories and interpretation that can bring new liberating perspectives to their problem-saturated narratives. This model of pastoral care and counseling intends to reconnect careseekers to themselves, their communities, and God as *Uri* community.

Stage One: Evoking Sacredness

In the first stage of evoking sacredness, the careseeker and caregiver enter into a sacred space, the place of re-creation through the encounter with the divine. This stage sets the tone for the entire process of pastoral care and counseling that will follow. At the beginning, it should be clearly laid out that pastoral care/counseling is the collaborating work of three parties: the careseeker, the caregiver, and God; the image of weaving human and biblical narratives can be a meaningful image especially to visual thinkers. This image of collaboration can be expressed explicitly through prayer or using religious symbols and rituals. Prayer is an especially meaningful tool for pastoral care/counseling with Korean American Christians.

Entering into a pastoral conversation is a sacred process. The pastoral caregiver invokes the presence of the Holy Spirit—the source of healing and liberation—through his or her pastoral presence (Hart, 2002). This invocation helps build a “spiritual alliance”⁴⁷ in which both caregiver and careseeker commit themselves to work collaboratively with the Spirit. A biblical description of this spiritual alliance is found in

⁴⁷ I use the term “spiritual alliance” instead of “therapeutic alliance.” Spiritual alliance describes how both caregiver and careseeker align themselves with the work of the Holy Spirit. This term emphasizes the collaboration of three parties for co-authoring.

the Gospel of Matthew: “Wherever two or three come together in my name, there I am with them” (Matthew 18:20). The caregiver should, however, be careful not to over-spiritualize the counseling process because too much emphasis on the power of the Spirit can lead careseekers to adopt a deferring attitude rather than a collaborative attitude.

In this holy space, careseekers are encouraged to speak their stories. In terms of narrative therapy, a major task of pastoral caregivers in this stage is to help careseekers “come to voice,” a process in which they realize the loss of their “mother tongue” and are empowered to find “the language for realities that have been denied, minimized, and distorted by the dominant culture” (Neuger, 2001, p. 71). Through genuine relationship with caregivers who are fully present, careseekers can experience themselves changing from “nobody” to “somebody.” A primary goal in this stage is the empowerment of self-agency for change. In this first stage of evoking sacredness, pastoral caregivers create “an environment in which people can tell their stories, feel their pain and their joy, and then discover their competencies, and their faith in God who is the author and finisher of all our stories” (Burrell, 2005, p. 39).

In this first stage, empathy is essential because it creates a sacred space in which the dimension of transcendence and transformation is embodied in the relational context of care. Within a pastoral care relationship that incorporates techniques from narrative therapy, what does empathy do? It helps a careseeker hear that he or she is not the problem. Growing up in the milieu of conservative Christian theology, which emphasizes the doctrine of individual sin, Korean immigrants may internalize the message that they are the problem by equating being a sinner with being the problem.

The language of sin should be used carefully because it can increase a sense of shame and guilt, while decreasing a sense of self agency. In Jesus' time, the sick were considered to be sinners, who not only had problems but also were themselves the problem. Jesus challenged this notion of equating sin with disease and shifted his focus from sin to *han*. Andrew Park (1993) criticizes Christian theologies that have represented the voice of the dominant by applying sin in the place of *han* without considering the reality of the sinned-against in the context of social evil. Caregivers should be aware that they, as representatives of the church's authority, may overpower careseekers through the language of sin.

Caregivers should attend to *han* through empathy, as shamans embodied *han* redemptively in *han-pu-ri*. When the caregiver is deeply connected to the *han*-filled story of the careseeker, the Spirit of God collaborates in the process of healing and change and this spiritual alliance leads careseekers to be open to uncertainties and mysteries with the glimpse of hope for change. As the story of *han* is shared and understood, careseekers can see that they are not alone in their life journey; they begin to see the presence of God and their faith becomes engaged in the process of change that will follow in the next stages. The connection to the sense of sacredness through spiritually empathic relationships can empower the voices of careseekers so that they can move from a deferring attitude or false illusions of self-control to openness toward collaborative partnership. Empathy is a key to experiencing empowering (Doehring, 1995). Through the exchange of genuine dialogue, careseeker who are marginalized can

move from the old experiences of being overpowered to the new experiences of being empowered.

Stage Two: Naming and Externalizing

Once the careseeker experiences a sense of empowerment through the creation of a sense of sacred space and the formation of an empathic alliance, he or she can begin to name the sources of oppression in his or her life, which have caused *han*, and to externalize these internalized oppressions, which have enforced the idea that he or she is the problem. This kind of naming is a process that involves becoming conscious of socio-political systems of oppression and their influences on the life of careseeker at both societal and personal levels. In other words, naming is a process that moves the careseeker from naïve understanding of self to critical understanding of self-in-relation. As Friere (1997) says, “To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming” (p. 69). Naming is a process of “gaining clarification” about the sources of oppression (Neuger, 2001).

Once the source of oppression is named, the careseeker can begin to identify a problem that is now externalized. Externalizing is a kind of “antidote” to internalized and distorted self-understandings; by “objectifying the problems” one can be freed from internalized oppressions (White, 2007, p. 9). The process of externalizing is a process of deconstructing dominant stories, which have been assumed to be “truths”; this process brings new perspectives to their presenting problems. Externalizing is the process of “de-politicizing” the oppressive powers so that a “re-politicizing” process can take place

(Wimberly, 2003, p. 99). Externalizing makes it possible “for people to unravel some of the negative conclusions they have usually reached about their identity under the influence of the problem” (White, 2007, p. 26). By externalizing the problem, the careseeker can see the problem as “one aspect of life rather than the definition of the person” (Neuger, 2001, p. 44).

It is imperative to help careseekers name and externalize the social oppression arising from their social location as marginalized such naming gives them a special place that allows them to generate a powerful sense of self-agency. The experiences of marginalization may fortify an attitude of blaming the oppressors or society in general without strengthening self-agency for change. Naming and externalizing are different from blaming, which tends to defer the agency of change to others or God. Naming and externalizing is a practice of conscientization in which careseekers develop critical awareness of the political implications of marginalization and claim their own voices as the very source of change.

Externalizing is a process of liberating oneself from problem-saturated narratives and claiming separation from the chain of negative loops that disempower one’s sense of self agency. As one’s story is experienced as problem-saturated, one’s view of the world becomes narrowed. In times of crisis, negative events are often appraised using the question of “why me” and people struggle with the idea that “my” case is “exceptional” (Kushner, 1981). In such crises, people may catastrophize their situations without realistic understandings and evaluations. It is common for the marginalized to feel responsible for their status yet helpless in terms of how to change. Frequently, a sense of

shame—inferiority, degradation, and self-negation—is deeply seated within them. They may keep trying to change their situation but give up in despair.

It is critical to re-channel the experiences of marginalization into a deeper understanding of self-in-relation. While marginalization is indeed one of the products of social evil, the marginalized have an epistemological and moral privilege to name and externalize the evil and thus resist and challenge it concretely. As careseekers begin to separate themselves from the problem, they are able to have a more realistic sense of responsibility instead of maintaining an attitude that they just need to keep “trying harder.” White (2007) says, “If a person’s relationship with the problem becomes more clearly defined, as it does in externalizing conversations, a range of possibilities becomes available to revise this relationship” (p. 26). O’Grady (2005) states,

While there is certainly a sense in which taking responsibility for our lives fits with a notion of human agency and choice, the emphasis on personal responsibility frequently obscures the social context in which problems occur. This can result in individuals feeling responsible for factors that are completely beyond their control and issues of social justice are left undressed... Contextualizing problems frees people of the heavy burden of self-blame so they are more easily able to appreciate the hurdles they have been up against in their lives and to recognize and value the ways in which they have resisted problematic experience, often in the face of considerable adversity. (2005, p. 50)

Parry & Doan (1994) list five positive outcomes of externalizing that moves problem-saturated narratives to life-giving narratives.

- 1) It decreases conflict between people over who is responsible for the problem.
- 2) It reduces the sense of failure people have in response to not having solved the problem.
- 3) It unites people against the problem rather than against each other.
- 4) It opens the way for people to reclaim their lives from problems.
- 5) It liberates people to view the problem in new ways. (p. 53).

As such, the process of externalizing prompts careseekers to see the current experience of problem as the problem; it strengthens the sense of self agency and shifts the focus from the problem to the possibility of change. It is important to differentiate externalizing from blaming. One of the common criticisms of narrative therapy is that it may fall into a mode of blaming others or society in general. As a matter of fact, externalizing is not supposed to blame others or to weaken the individual's responsibility for making changes. Contrarily, by clarifying sources of oppression in a larger socio-cultural context and evaluating them more realistically, the careseeker can claim his or her self agency in making changes rather than blaming others or deferring responsibility onto others.

Externalizing Conversation. Externalizing requires critical reflection on self in relation to the world. It is important to use the skill of posing "externalizing questions" creatively in order to enhance the careseeker's sense of self agency. The role of the caregiver goes beyond offering comforting words. Caregivers do not avoid raising "hard" questions about unspoken or hidden dimensions of the story of careseeker, which can be re-authored in more empowering and life-giving ways.

White (2007) emphasizes the unique role of questioning that allows the careseeker to begin to see "the total landscape" of his or her life, which has been hidden under the influences of dominant narratives. Questions are not given for the sake of "filling in the blanks" in the narrative of the careseeker; externalizing questions bring new experiences, which have not been experienced before in other settings. This process enhances the careseeker's "agentic power," such that the careseeker gains his or her voice

more fully. Nichols and Schwartz (1998, cited in Abels & Abels, 2001) note that externalizing questions are “designed to help people realize that: (1) they are separate from the problems, (2) they have power over the problems, and (3) they are not who they thought they were” (p. 84).

In a narrative therapy approach, caregivers are not cast in a psychodynamic role of digging deeper into the intra-psychic structure of caregiver, as an expert who offers a better knowledge of problem and solution. Rather, the caregiver maintains a “not-knowing” position as a learner. Neuger (2001) notes,

[T]he counselor does not know where the counseling is supposed to go...The counselor wonders a lot with the counselee and questions come out of this wondering. This wondering is, of course, guided by the belief that the current problem-filled narrative needs to be deconstructed in order to loosen its power and in order for room to be made for alternative and preferred narrative. (p. 55)

This image of the caregiver assuming a “wondering” attitude can be disconcerting for careseekers, who may expect advice or a “quick fix” from the caregiver, who is supposed to be the expert. While teaching several counseling classes to Korean and Korean American students, I have found that the majority of students assume counseling is a process of giving advice and finding solutions. Without succumbing to pressure to give a quick answer, caregivers need to carefully listen to the careseeker’s story and raise questions that can lead to the experience of “wondering” together. This process can be a challenge for some careseekers, yet it can actualize the empowerment of the careseeker’s self-agency and eventually liberate them from sources of oppression.

For instance, in a qualitative research study with conservative Christian women, Ewing and Allen (2008) found that while these women considered patriarchy as a God-

given structure, they also have experienced incongruence between their religious belief and their actual experiences as women. Through the interview (questioning) process, these women had a new experience of engaging hard questions, which helped them reflect upon their faith more explicitly. Raising questions around the incongruence of their experiences of gender helped them shift from dominant patriarchal narratives to marginal narratives by making their covert ideas about gender equality more overt.

Ewing and Allen (2008) state,

[These] women also amplified their marginal narrative by telling their stories, acknowledging that they had experiences that were not congruent with their beliefs, and by feeling the tensions this incongruence created. Acknowledging how their contrasting beliefs and experiences affected them also created change by shifting the patriarchal narrative. Most of the women said that they had thought about these things before but had never spoken to anyone about them. Giving voice to their concerns, questions, and experiences served to emphasize the less dominant discourse. (p. 108)

Like this research study, the use in pastoral care of guided questions can generate a new experience of hearing marginalized stories that have not been recognized. By explicitly engaging hard questions and naming (evaluating) their conflicts in relation to dominant narratives, careseekers can begin to realize the other side of their story, which can strengthen self-agency and help them move toward the integration of conflicting stories.

The marginalized are often deprived of opportunities to have their own voice in “the evaluation of the consequences of the predicament of their lives”; instead, such evaluations have often been given primarily by parents, schoolteachers, therapists, and police (White, 2007, pp. 44-45). Freedman and Combs (1996) say, “We ask questions to generate experience rather than to gather information. When they generate experience of

preferred realities, questions can be therapeutic in and of themselves” (p. 113). The role of the pastoral caregiver is to offer “deconstructive listening”; that is, “listening for other possible meanings; deconstructive questioning to help clients discern the assumptions on which they have based their beliefs, feelings” (Nelson-Becker, 2004, p. 23).

Externalizing Racism, Sexism, and Cultural Prejudice. In Chapter 2, I discussed the context of marginality in three areas: racism, sexism, and cultural conflicts within Korean American community. Here, I will briefly explore how these three oppressive narratives can be externalized.

First, living in a racist culture, ethnic-racial minorities tend to see themselves from the eyes of those in the dominant culture, internalizing a sense of inferiority and considering themselves as second class citizens without realizing the global and local impact of racism (white supremacy). The essential problem of racism is that race is understood as a biological given rather than as a social construction. It is important to name the affects of racism at both systemic and personal levels.

In a case study described by Semmler and Williams (2000), Shirley, an African American graduate student, felt “depressed,” “intimidated,” and “inferior” in her relationship with her colleagues, even though she could not name any specific events that had racial tones. Through narrative therapy sessions with Williams, Shirley began to name racism as the problem that made her feel intimidated and inferior, from the time of her childhood onwards. She could think of several occasions that carved the message of her inferiority on her self-image. She began to externalize racism, the very problem that caused her depression. In other words, the cause of her depression was not rooted in her

personal deficiency but in the dominant discourse of racism. She began to hear a counter message from her family which described her as “capable and hardworking, [and as having] a competent sense of self” (p. 57). By examining how the dominant culture's narratives were dissonant from her own experiences, she began to free herself from the control of racism. Semmler and Williams (2000) list the possible questions that helped to externalize racism.

How was racism able to make its claim on your life? How did racism hinder you from recognizing your talents as an African American woman? How did racism trick you into believing that you lack courage and competence? How did racism recruit you into thinking you were inferior? How did racism manage to convince you to seek solace in depression? (pp. 57-58).

Through externalizing experiences, Shirley began to remember the moment when she resisted racist narratives by holding onto positive messages that she received from her family.

Besides exploring the effects of racism, the effects of sexism should be explored, named, and externalized. Many Korean and Korean American women struggle with their self image. For example, older women were not welcomed by their families, even from the time of their birth, because of their parents' preference for males. However, this is not just the experience of older women. A thirteen-year old Korean American girl described the unequal treatment that she receives at home compared to her brother. She says that her grandmother constantly orders her to do something for her brother. This experience is dissonant with her conviction that everyone should be treated equally regardless of gender difference. She struggles with the constant reminder that she is female and should be “other-oriented.” She may well internalize a negative self-image

by recruiting patriarchal discourses, and then blaming herself for not being as assertive as her peers in challenging sexism when she encounters it in her family.

This “other-orientation” can be oppressive because it essentializes the identity of women in the image of self-sacrificer. If women try live outside this social identity, they have to fight against such social conditioning. For instance, divorced Korean women are often stereotyped as having “strong” or as having “disobedient” personalities; this stereotype is commonly prescribed by dominant cultural discourses. Often, divorce becomes seen as a moral failure without considering the patriarchal context. It is dangerous to use labels that identify divorced Korean women as defiant. I have often heard from Korean students who see these women as having a “personality deficiency.” The notion of “personality” can be misleading because it essentializes one’s problem as an internal problem without connecting the problem to the larger social reality; such labeling makes careseekers blame themselves and feel responsible for the effects of external oppression.

It is essential to understand women’s identity diffusion as a result of social constructions of femaleness in patriarchal systems. Neuger (2001) lists a number of “double-binding or paradoxical messages” that are imposed upon women that should be externalized in counseling contexts; for instance:

- 1) “You are valuable as a woman because of your nurturing and relational capacities. As a culture, we value independence and autonomy.”
- 2) “You are created in the image of and likeness of God. God is male.”
- 3) “You need to be submissive, patient, and supportive in your family life. Why didn’t you leave your battering husband? You must, at some level, like the violence.”
- 4) “You are a welcome, valuable, and full member of the church. Your vocation is to support the work of the church from behind the scenes—not from the pulpit.” (pp. 45-46)

This list goes on and on. Caregiver should explore such double binding messages in the specific context of women's lives and their development. Once those problems are named concretely, women can claim them as externalized dominant messages, while privileging the marginalized voices within.

In addition to exploring the effects of racism and sexism, the effects of inter-generational conflict among Korean Americans can be explored. A narrow view of Korean American culture that alienates Korean Americans from one another should be named and externalized. A linear model of acculturation, which essentializes one generation's experience of Korean culture over another generation's experience, should be externalized. Korean Americans may experience a sense of relief when they externalize their current problems as "acculturation issue" instead of blaming each other for being the problem (Sue & Sue, 2003, p. 339). In counseling Korean Americans, it is important to hear their value systems in terms of how values are identified as being Korean or American. How do they view Korean culture? How do they view American culture? To what extent are their Korean and American values integrated? Especially, in family conflicts, it is important to shift from a mode of playing a blaming game to understanding larger cultural conflicts.

Stage Three: Re-authoring

As oppressive narratives are named and externalized, careseekers can begin to see his or her life from a new perspective. Re-authoring is the process of transforming the story of *han* to a story of liberation. While externalizing is a process of "de-politicizing," re-authoring is a process of "re-politicizing" which refers to "taking the process of

defining the self away from others and placing it within oneself” (Wimberly, 2003, p. 99). While listening to the story of careseekers, caregivers can help them see neglected, unstoried yet significant parts of their story and empower careseekers to reorganize their stories in new ways in what is called the “preferred story” or “unique outcome” that uses “exceptional” or “untypical” narrative dimensions that have not been storied explicitly. This dimension of story can be “a point of entry to alternative storylines” (White, 2007, p. 61). White (1990) notes, “Those aspects of lived experience that fall outside of the dominant story provide a rich and fertile source for the generation, or re-generation, of alternative stories” (p. 15). Unique outcomes can be anything that encompass “the whole range of experience, emotions, thoughts, intentions, actions and desires in the past, present or future that stands outside the dominant (problematic) story” (O’ Grady, 2005, p. 52). They are the “experiences that lie beyond culturally favored interpretations” (O’Grady, 2005, p. 47). Payne (2006) notes, “It is through the untypical that people can escape from the dominant stories that influence their perceptions and therefore their lives” (p. 7).

As a unique outcome is identified as meaningful, caregivers need to “facilitate the development of an alternative story in line with a person’s preferred desires, values, beliefs and intentions” (O’ Grady, 2005, p. 54). For instance, White (2007) presents a case of a young man, Liam, whose father abused him and his mother early on. Even after Liam eventually left his father, he continued to struggle with depression and suicidal ideas. However, in conversation with White, Liam discovered his life story as a survival story, not as a victim story, especially by remembering the significant theme that

underlies his life: a sense of justice and salvaging others in needs. During the sessions, White encouraged Liam's mother to give him accounts of how he protected her even when he was young. Liam had never thought about what he had done in relation to this theme of justice and the actions he took. This untypical story led him to remember another occasion when he helped his cousin who was also a victim of abuse. By recruiting unstoried yet significant moments, Liam came to realize that he had been living out his preferred story of justice and salvaging life, even though he never recognized it before. By "historicizing" (O, Grady, 2005, p. 53) such unique outcomes, he developed a plan to continue to resist injustice and re-author his life story of salvaging for others.

As the story of Liam illustrates, many people struggle with their past because they continue to author their life stories by recruiting dominant and oppressive narratives. As seen in the vignette of Kyong-Su in Chapter 4, Korean immigrants may live in the memory of the past yet without activating the most significant themes that have shaped their lives in positive ways. It is important to rediscover such significant themes and related events so that they can re-author their life stories in preferred and life-giving ways.

The past can be changed. In a narrative therapy approach, the past is understood as a series of interpreted meanings rather than a series of facts. The memory of the past can be fixed, distorted, or romanticized because Korean Americans live with a sense of uprootedness. The frozen narratives of the past may be a source of distress because they narrow one's view of life. The stories of what is "forgotten" need to be revisited and drawn upon for re-authoring.

White (2007) says, “Effective therapy is about engaging people in the re-authoring of the compelling plights of their lives in ways that arouse curiosity about human possibility and in ways that invoke the play of imagination” (pp.75-76). By emphasizing “new possibilities,” careseekers can understand reality as “a constantly changing reality—a dynamic process of being rather than something essential or hidden somewhere inside us” (Drewery & Winslade, 1996, p. 47).

The Book of Job: Privileging God-conversation over Dominant Oppressive Narratives. The story of Job attests to how Job privileged conversations with God while externalizing dominant oppressive narratives in times of his predicament. Wimberly (2003) states, “One way to view the book of Job is as Job learning to privilege conversation with God in order to move beyond the conventional wisdom” (p. 31). While Job’s friends challenge Job to repent his sins based on conventional wisdom by connecting his loss, misfortune, and disease with his sin, Job refuses their recommendations and continues to believe that God will eventually vindicate him. In this process, “Job externalizes the prevailing conversations that are part and parcel of his culture” (Wimberly, 2003, p. 30). Wimberly (2003) notes, “We become persons by internalizing the conversations in which we take part, but we become *holy* persons by giving conversation with God a privileged status over all other conversations” (p. 8)

Wimberly (2003) lists six levels of conversation in which Job deals with the question of theodicy—“Why do bad things happen to good people?” First, “Job recognizes that the prevailing ancient wisdom was inadequate to speak to his present situation of suffering and loss (Job 9: 1-35).” Second, “he begins to denounce the ancient

wisdom as part of the dominant conversation.” Third, “he begins to consider alternative conversations rooted in his belief that even though it appears that God has abandoned him, Job still trusts God.” Job says, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19: 25-26). Fourth, “this declaration of faith marks a transition period when a new conversation within Job begins to emerge and take initiative.” Fifth, “the new conversation gives way to direct conversation with God (Job 38: 1- 42: 6).” Lastly, “Job gives his conversation a privileged position above all other conversations” (Wimberly, 2003, p. 30).

By privileging God-conversation over other dominant cultural conversations, Job continues to cope with his suffering in authentic ways. Even though he does not understand the question of “why” in the primary appraisal, he continues to cope with his suffering faithfully. In making a secondary appraisal of “what shall I do?” Job relies upon God whom he believes will vindicate him. In Job’s story, while theodicy is an essential question, the secondary appraisal of how to cope with stress is as significant as the primary appraisal. In a similar vein, Kushner (1981) claims the merits of religion in times of tragedy lie not in giving precise answers to human suffering but inspiring with the question of “what am I going to do about it?” (p. 149).

Job’s story is not only related to the question of human suffering but also the problem of coping with ultimate threats to one’s physical, relational, cultural, and spiritual existence. Job not only survived his predicament but also resisted evil by relying upon the life-giving narratives about the divine—God is faithful and trustworthy.

What was the most significant coping resource for Job? It was his faith that sustained him in times of stress and bewilderment. His faith was not a set of dogmatic beliefs but part of an active sense of self agency that sustained him and helped him maintain his integrity, even when he questioned and became angry with God. His anger was a part of his faith, not separate from it.

Understanding Job's story as an example of re-authoring is meaningful for helping those who struggle with the question of why bad things happen to them. The story of Job is an "untypical" story compared to the conventional wisdom of the Books of the Proverbs and the Psalms, in which the righteous receive blessing and the wicked receive punishment. Job's friends used such theology in destructive and oppressive ways. In contrast to his friends, Job continued to externalize oppressive narratives and tried to author his life story with integrity. In times of unexplainable suffering, the story of Job can be a biblical resource that evokes the unstoried dimension of life by privileging God-conversation.

Privileging God-conversation is essential, not because God prevails in a phenomenological sense but because the careseeker's sense of God's trustworthiness prevails over other oppressive narratives. Privileging God-conversation helps to amplify marginal narratives.

The Case of Debbie. Carlson and Erickson (2000) present a case study of a woman called Debbie, who experienced sexual abuse and violence as a child, and suffered with life-threatening violence from her first husband. Even though she lived with her second husband and children happily for over ten years, a current event—in

which she was controlled abusively by someone—triggered feelings of worthlessness and guilt, as well as feelings of responsibility for the abuse. After this event, she returned to past events as evidence of God’s punishment. She felt that everyone was loved by God except her. She believed that she had disappointed God and she felt worthless in the eyes of God. Her sense of worthlessness was connected to the idea that God did not protect her at the time of her victimization in the past. After this event, she had fears of meeting anyone except her family members. She could not even go to church any more.

Debbie’s negative relationship with God was so powerful that externalizing and deconstructing conversations did not help her separate herself from the problem—the feeling of worthlessness. The sense of worthlessness in relation to God—how God thought of her—was a great barrier to her recovery from depression. A radical shift in the re-authoring process began as Debbie began to realize unique outcomes in terms of the language of God’s blessings in her life. Finding the blessing of God in the midst of her tragic experiences was still possible. Carson and Erickson (2000) say,

We have found that helping religious/spiritual people internalize personal agency concerning the blessing of their lives can be a powerful tool to fighting the destructive influences of the problem and helps open space for a preferred identity story about their relationship with God. (p. 74)

Even though initially Debbie had difficulty in finding unique outcomes, she began to name “untypical” stories that she had—the strength that she could stand up to her first husband, the blessing that she experienced with her current husband, the birth of her children, and so on. As she became aware of her unique outcomes in the form of blessings, Debbie was more empowered to have a sense of agency. She began to realize that she was not a passive victim in past experiences of abuse and violence; she found

that she had a sense of self agency that she believed was a channel through which she received the blessing of God into her life. She collaborated with God in her resistance to abuse and survived as a result of this collaboration. This shift changed her self-image from “being worthless” to “being loved” in the eyes of God. This change in her “relational identity” with God affected her relationship with her parents with whom she had been cut off for a long time. The re-authoring of her life story changed her real life.

Carlson and Erickson (2000) list helpful questions that can prompt careseekers to re-examine their relationship with God. Such questions are meaningful for Korean American Christians because they use the language of blessing—*Chuk-Bok* in Korean—which is embedded in Korean indigenous and theological perspectives on life. These questions can be modified in Korean American pastoral care and counseling settings.

- Can you tell me about a time when you have experienced being blessed by God?
- What was this experience like for you? How did you feel?
- How is it that you are aware of this blessing having come about in your life?
- What does it say about you that you noticed this blessing in your life and were able to recognize it when it came to you?
- Have you always been aware of God’s blessings in your life? If not, how have you become aware of the blessings God has given you?
- Did this blessing just simply come into your life, did it just happen? Did you as a person, or your belief, faith, or actions have any part in this blessing taking place?
- What might being blessed in this way say about you as a person? What do these blessing tell you about how God thinks and feels about you as a person?
- This blessing doesn’t seem to fit with [worthlessness’s] description of you as a person. What alternative description of you do these blessing fit with? Is this alternative description closer to how God sees you as a person?
- What does God see, feel, and know about you as a person that [worthlessness] sometimes does not allow you to see, feel, or know? (Carson & Erickson, 2000, p. 75)

Stage Four: Re-membering

Re-membering is the last stage, a stage in which careseekers are reconnected to themselves, their community, and God. Carson and Erickson (2000) say,

Re-membering is about helping persons find membership, or experience a return to membership with the significant relationships of their lives. These significant members can be people past or present, alive or deceased, relatives or friends, real or imagined, personally known or not, human or non-human etc. (p. 78)

Re-membering involves considering “who from the past may have noticed their preferred identity stories and how [they] might support the circulation of these stories” (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2001, p. xxxvi). By re-membering both internal and external communities, careseekers can have a sense of support from his or her community. A narrative therapy approach emphasizes “the conception that identity is founded upon an association of life rather than a core self” (White, 2007, p.129). White (2007) notes, “Re-membering conversation provides an opportunity for people to engage in a revision of the membership of their associations of life, affording an opening for the reconstruction of their identity” (p. 136). In this process, the careseeker is encouraged to recruit significant others including family, friends, anyone who are considered important to the person, including someone who is deceased yet is significant in his or her psychological world (Monks, 1996, p. 21).

In the re-membering process, it can be helpful for Korean Americans to recruit biblical figures as their imagined audience who can support them. For instance, for those struggling with sexual abuse and violence, recruiting Tamar (as seen in Chapter 4) into a supportive community can be helpful. For those families who struggle with interracial

marriage, recruiting Ruth, Naomi, and Boas can support them as they experience cultural conflicts. For Korean American families who struggle with racism, recruiting Esther, who stood up to the attempt of ethnic cleansing by Haman, can be empowering and liberating.

The Samaritan woman's story (John 4) offers a paradigmatic image of what re-membering is about. After her life story was re-authored through a genuine pastoral care relationship with Jesus, she was empowered, liberated, and transformed. She went back to her community as a changed person and reconnected with them. She was re-membered with her community, God, and with herself. For her the stage of re-membering involves going back to the well not as an isolated individual but as a part of a supportive community.

This image of the Samaritan woman, who re-membered with her community and God is the very image of *han-pu-ri*, in which the *han*-ridden are empowered, liberated, transformed, and reconciled with the community and God. As the Samaritan woman broke down the wall between the people and God through genuine encounters with Jesus, the *han*-ridden can be transformed into wounded healers for the *Uri* (OUR) community, who mend estranged relationships between God and people, and among people.⁴⁸

Conclusion

⁴⁸ In the following chapter, I will explore the role of *Uri* community as a re-membering community in pastoral care and counseling.

In this chapter, I have developed a pastoral care/counseling model for Korean immigrants and their families by drawing upon narrative therapy, a biblical narrative model, and an indigenous model of *han-pu-ri*. This model emphasizes the process of change in four steps. The marginalized 1) enter into a sense of a holy ground where their voices are empowered, 2) name and externalize oppressive narratives, 3) re-author entangled narratives of *han* by weaving unstoried dimensions of stories with biblical stories, and 4) re-member with community and God.

In the last stage of this model, I emphasized the communal connection of careseekers with the larger communities—both external and internal—so that they can move from being isolated persons to being communally reconnected. The communal contextual narrative model I have proposed involves not only individual transformation but the transformation of the community, which has been disconnected. In the next chapter I will explicitly discuss how the communal contextual narrative approach can lead to building up the community of care and transformation as *Uri* (human-divine) narrative community. The story of the careseeker's *han* is the story of *our (Uri) han* and it has potential to transform the community—from an exclusive self-serving community to an inclusive mutually serving community. As human narratives are woven with spiritual narratives through *han-pu-ri*, the community can experience the fullness of life. This community becomes *Uri (our)* community.

CHAPTER 6

ENVISIONING *URI* COMMUNITY

Throughout this dissertation, I have proposed a communal contextual narrative approach to religious coping, which helps Korean immigrants and their families experience a communally grounded sense of self agency so that they can continue to weave their life stories with stories about the divine, especially, the story of divine marginalization. I have argued that even though the experience of social marginality is stressful, it offers an opportunity for spiritual growth as their experiences are theologically integrated by drawing upon a theology of marginality. By weaving their life narratives with narratives about divine marginalization, Korean Americans can construct their life stories in psychologically cohesive and spiritually integrated ways in spite of social experiences of marginality.

In this chapter I will envision *Uri* community as a community participating in a divine-human narrative, in which person, community, and God collaborate as partners for authoring life-giving stories that reflect the full potentiality of life. A common criticism of the narrative approach is that while it can be liberating for individuals, it can be too focused on individualistic culture without considering the larger socio-cultural context (Doehring, 2006). The possible danger of a narrative approach—the potential of reinforcing the idea of individualism and relativism—cannot be considered lightly.

Narratives can end up simply as (distant) stories without enabling moral action and commitment in daily life. Scalise (2003) notes,

In order for narrative models to function effectively in ministry, strong interpretive bridges must be built and maintained between the Christian [communal] story and the diverse stories of those participating in the ministry. (p. 108)

Without the communal visions and efforts that connect human narratives with sacred narratives, the process of empowering self agency cannot go beyond the dominant narratives of individualism or self-centeredness that lead to isolation and the loss of vital relationality. Given the communal needs of Korean American Christians, a communal approach to pastoral care is essential.

Korean American pastoral care should be communal; individual change cannot be sustained without communal empowerment, especially given the isolating effects of marginalization. The community is not simply a context for change but the core ingredient of pastoral care. Within Korean American pastoral care this communal vision originates in the covenantal relationship with God, who has storied and embodied relational divine care and love. Korean American Christian communities are founded upon this communal identity and are called to build *Uri* communities. Within such communities, persons come with their own voices and weave their stories together in light of the larger story of God. If anyone in this community struggles with finding his or her own voice, this community conjoins together as an “externalizing” community, which resists oppressive narratives, and also stands together as a “re-authoring” community, which transforms the story of *han* into a story of healing and liberation. In *Uri*

community, the voices of the marginalized are affirmed as sacred as well as privileged; they are the very source of communal renewal and transformation.

In envisioning *Uri* community, first, I will draw upon the metaphor of the well, *woo-mool* in Korean, as the primary image of community. I will envision the Korean American church as the well, where people are healed and liberated through communal care. The Samaritan woman's story (John 4) is a paradigmatic story of *Uri* community; it is the place where she came to her own voice and re-authored her story in relation to the larger reality of God through her encounter with Jesus, who co-authored her life story as a life-giving story. The well is also described as the symbol of communal connection; the Samaritan woman does not have to come to and go from the well in isolation, avoiding being in the "public eye"; she returns to the village and invites others to the source of life—the eternal water. She became a leader who took the initiative for "re-villaging" (Wimberly, 2008) disconnected people.

Second, by drawing upon the communal contextual model of Patton (1993), I will discuss how the Korean American church can provide a ministry of remembering (conservation) and re-remembering (transformation). I will emphasize two elements of communal care: support and challenge. Lastly, I will suggest communal pastoral care strategies, which the Korean American church can draw upon in order to become *Uri* community: 1) intentionality: definitional ceremony, 2) overcoming *han* through *jeong*, 3) reconstructing indigenous symbols, and 4) late comers: the partners of God's grace.

The vision of *Uri* community will challenge Korean American Christians to reconsider the theological meaning of living as immigrants; they are called to care for one

another while resisting and transforming oppressive narratives and social structures. I will assert that the ultimate function of communal contextual narrative approach is to generate communal pastoral agents of compassion and justice, who embody the story of divine marginalization.

Back to the Well: Re-villaging

Korean immigrants live with the fear of “being forgotten”; this fear arises from a sense of alienation and estrangement. They feel disconnected from their homeland, yet they do not feel at home in this new land. They are vulnerable to falling into despair, isolation, and fragmentation. I often hear from Korean immigrants that they miss the relationships that they had prior to immigration, which fostered a sense of communal connection through *jeong*. In facing those challenges, they expect the church to function as a *jeong* community, which connects people through a deep sense of empathic (heartfelt) relationships. They need the vitality of life that is experienced through such communal connections and support.

As biblical patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob dug wells in new places, Korean Americans have dug spiritual wells (in the form of churches) from the beginning of Korean immigrant history. It is not an exaggeration to say that “when two Japanese meet, they set up a business firm; when two Chinese meet, they open a Chinese restaurant; when two Koreans meet, they establish a church” (Hurh & Kim, 1990, p. 20). The church functions as “a home away home” (Kwon, 2003, p. 324). This sense of “home” comes from *jeong*: the sense of *Uri* (we-ness).

While the Korean American church functions as a spiritual and social center of community, “*Uri*” can be used in exclusive ways. Jin Kim (2006), a Korean American pastor who serves in a multicultural congregation in Minneapolis, frankly shares his experience of an exclusive *Uri* community:

I confess that I am more comfortable around second generation Korean Americans because of our unique and shared experience. Because we do not need to explain this huge reservoir of shared experience, we can move immediately to building a personal relationship. With others, we need to explain the background of our *ethnos*, which significantly shapes our *ethos*. Frankly, that's a lot of work. (p. 44)

Narrowly defined *Uri* can maintain the status quo by excluding the marginalized among the marginalized in their communities.⁴⁹ When there is no critical awareness of the political implications of *Uri*—whose voices really represent *Uri*—in the communal context of the church, *Uri* can be self-serving and oppressive. If someone like the Samaritan woman is excluded from the community, it cannot truly be *Uri* community. While *Uri* as the collective sense of self offers an empathic sense of *jeong*, it can hinder Korean Americans from building the *Uri* community that embraces the voices of the marginalized among the marginalized by negating individual differences. Patton (1993) says,

Human relationality does not negate individuality—in fact, it requires it. Genuine and mutual relationships which are the community’s life are possible because individuality exists, because there are differences between persons, and because those differences are needed to fulfill and enrich the relationships. (p. 26)

⁴⁹ For instance, while Koreans may appear to be homogenous, they strongly maintain their provincial loyalties in all the aspects of social life such as politics, economy, and religion. The attitude of exclusive *Uri* can create destructive divisions in their communities.

In order to build the church as the authentic community of care, the Korean American church needs to rethink and reconstruct the meaning of *Uri*, which includes the diversity of individuals. In addition, as Korean Americans deal with social marginality in relation to the larger society, they can develop an attitude of exclusive *Uri* toward the larger society. Korean Americans as “late comers”⁵⁰ compete for scarce resources with other ethnic groups as well as other Korean Americans. In the parable of workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20: 1-16), while late comers were treated with divine mercy, they were rejected by other early comers. The early comers marginalized the late comers because they forgot the fact they also received divine mercy when they were at the margins. Similarly, Korean Americans can experience marginalization from the earlier settlers; the Korean immigrants who settled earlier can marginalize recent immigrants by using their power and privilege.

The Korean American church is not an exception; increases in the Korean American population have resulted in increases in the number of Korean American churches. Many churches try to survive by competing with one another. The church is stuck in the mode of survival and competition, which can lead to distortions in the vision of the Christian church as *Uri* community. Unfortunately, conflicts and splits in Korean American churches can exacerbate stresses coming from their experiences of social marginality.

⁵⁰ Jin Kim, in his sermon titled “The Last Will Be First,” addresses the issue of injustice for late comers based upon this parable at the 216th General Assembly of the PCUSA Worship Service in 2004.

While Korean immigrants deal with multiple experiences of social marginalization, they have to deal with the vertical dimension in community building—how to communicate and negotiate between Korean and American cultures with the younger generations. In cultural conflicts, what are the guiding norms for the Korean American community? How can the Korean American church negotiate between different cultural norms, and cultivate and enrich their religious-ethnic heritage without becoming fixated on the past, stuck in a frozen culture? In facing such challenge, the Korean American church ought to renew their heritage by constantly receiving the power of the Spirit (*Ki*), which renews their tradition in contextually relevant and meaningful ways. As the Samaritan woman asked Jesus, “Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it (John 4: 12)?” Korean Americans need to ask hard questions about how to negotiate between their heritages and the “new water” that can challenge, renew, and transform them (Pak et al., 2005, pp. 68-69).

What is the new water that the Korean American church needs? I contend that it is “the new life-giving relationship,” which Jesus had with the Samaritan woman (John 4); in this relationship, both Jesus and the woman broke the socio-cultural barriers of racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, and religious differences. The genuine encounter of their different stories—human stories and the stories about the divine—removed the internal psychological defenses shown in her cynical, sarcastic, and indifferent attitude, and led her to face her spiritual thirst and emptiness (Moessner, 1996). Before this, she remained in the frozen narratives of the past without claiming her self-agency for change; she was

completely isolated from the community. Her life story was disconnected—without direction, purpose, and meaning. Her faith was neither integrated nor collaborating; it was static and powerless. The change took place when her life story encountered the narrative about the divine. The transformative hermeneutical process enlivened her faith: the limited horizon of the past was expanded toward the transformative dimension of life, which had been oppressed by the dominant narratives. Her faith became dynamic, collaborating, and transforming.

In the same way, Korean American Christians should continue to renew this source of life by hermeneutically engaging with sacred narratives. The encounter of human-divine narratives heals and liberates. The story of the Samaritan woman attests to the change of her identity from a person at the margins to a community leader, who broke the old patterns of relationship, which was superficial, exclusive, and self-subsuming, by using her story of marginalization as the source of healing, liberation, and transformation. As Neuger (2001) notes,

[N]ot only do people create stories and plots in which they live and make meaning, but they are also characters in the stories and plots of other people, systems, and cultures. Change in the plotline or interpretive lenses of any of these (individuals, systems, and cultures) mean the potential for the transformation of all. (p. 232)

The ending of the Samaritan woman's story echoes the organic change of community as seen in the last stage of *han-pu-ri*—remembering with self, others, and God as discussed in the Chapter five. Gench (2004) notes,

[T]hough the story began with a notation that “Jews do not share things in common with Samaritan” (v. 9), it ends on a note of reversal, as the Samaritans invite Jesus to stay. As Jesus accepts their hospitality and remains (or “abides”) with them two days, “many more believed because of this word” (vv. 41-42). (p. 119)

The change takes place as the exclusive *Uri* community—either Jewish or Samaritan communities—becomes an inclusive *Uri* community where they share their life together in hospitality. A person’s changed story stirs up the conspiracy of silence in the matter of injustice and leads this community to become *Uri* community: the human-divine narrative community. The well is the symbol of *Uri* community where the isolated are reconnected with their community and God.

It is time for Korean Americans to “re-village”⁵¹ around the well—the life-giving relationship that takes place as we become the *Uri* community. The Korean American church should become the well of living water where broken relationships are healed and re-membered (transformed). Where can we find this source of new life? The source of re-villaging is within the community; it is the voice of the marginalized, similar to the voice of the Samaritan woman that is re-authored and re-membered with the larger story about the divine. As those voices flow into the life of communities, the community can be renewed, rejuvenated, and transformed as *Uri* community.

Weaving the Story of Radical Relationality Together

The Christian church has a unique identity as a divine-human narrative community; it generates sacred stories by weaving human experiences with biblical stories and other historical accounts of Christian traditions. Forming Christian identity is

⁵¹ Wimberly (2008) notes, “The concept of re-villaging rests in the notion that the village is that small communal network of persons linked together by a common biological, family, cultural heritage living in a particular geographical location where frequent interaction is a reality” (p. 13).

an ongoing hermeneutical process in which human narratives are challenged by and integrated into the narratives about the divine and vice versa. The participants of God's community share the common story in which "one's life is stitched into the larger narrative of the Christian story" (Gerkin, 1997, p. 108). Gerkin (1997) notes,

One of the fundamental structures of care that life in a community of faith can and should offer is a story or a grammar—a way of speaking about people's circumstances—that can connect people's life experience with the ultimate context of meaning contained in the Christian gospel. (Gerkin, p. 103)

The interaction of human and sacred narratives is the formational process of sacred identities as the people of God; this takes place through "the integration of person and tradition" (Hunter & Patton, 1999, p. 39). Thornton (2002) emphasizes "peoplehood" instead of individual identity (p. 59). The Christian community engages in the ongoing process of forming their identity as an *Uri* (divine-human) narrative community. In order to become part of narrative community a person needs "to adopt a certain grammar, a way of speaking, an interpretive schema that structures one's understanding of oneself and one's world" (Gerkin, 1997, p. 108).

What is the grammar that gives the Christian community a cohesive identity for the Korean American church? It is the sacred stories that attest "radical relationality" that God has initiated with humanity through the work of creation, redemption, and sustenance. Especially, it is the story of divine marginalization that makes divine-human encounters possible. This paradigmatic story shapes the identity of the Christian community. Patton (1993) notes, "[T]he church is a community in which a person may

know God in the context of communal relationships” (p. 27).⁵² In other words, the church is the gathering of those who experience a God who showed “radical relationality” attested in the divine marginalization. The church is called to enact divine marginalization through their communal life of caring and seeking justice by lifting up the stories of the marginalized in the community. Wimberly (2003) notes,

The most significant dimension of sacred identity formation is the reality of how fellowship with God enables us to embrace the suffering we are undergoing for the sake of partnership with God in redeeming world. Underneath the problem of the world is an unfolding plot where God is redeeming the world. (p. 124)

The Christian community has this conviction that they are called to share the partnership of redeeming the world by embodying radical relationality through their living as *Uri* community.

While the Korean American community deals with hardship of immigrant living, it is important to continue to co-author their life stories as the part of the larger story of God. They need to reorganize their life stories in facing the challenges of living as immigrants. From the time when they decided to immigrate, they have sought a better life and wanted to author new chapters of their lives. What is the essence of this better life? It can be understood as a more meaningful life. When Korean immigrants and their families experience the hardship of immigrant living, they may feel unhappy and the meaning of life can be challenged. However, “finding a life meaningful” does not always mean “being happy”; finding life meaningful may increase the chances of experiencing happiness but cannot guarantee it (McAdams, 1993, p. 267). Life can be meaningful

⁵² The word for church (*ekklesia*) comes from a Greek word, *kaleo* which means “I call, summon, or invite” (Fowler, 1987, p. 28).

regardless of extrinsic criteria of happiness such as success, wealth, power, health, etc. Intrinsic meaningfulness becomes possible when one lives his or her “myth”—the core story of one’s identity—that is “meaningful, unified, and purposeful” (McAdams, 1993, p. 267).

Korean American Christians can live meaningful lives by finding and living out their new identities as new marginal people in cohesive and unified ways. By identifying their life stories with biblical stories of those who lived their lives in light of divine marginalization, Korean Americans can weave their life stories as the sacred stories of the divine-human encounters. In fact, the biblical stories are not accounts of those who lived “happy” lives but those who lived “meaningful” lives beyond the external condition of happiness; this is also the case with the stories of Korean American Christians.

The Ministry of “Being With”: Remembering and Re-remembering

Patton (1993) locates a theological foundation of pastoral care in the characteristic of God’s relationality: “God is the author of community, creating it as a dimension of human relationality and being involved in it by enabling the mutual personal relationships that take place within it (p. 26). The Christian community knows God as *Immanuel*: “God-with-us.” The relationality of God is connected to the relationality of humanity in the doctrine of *Imago Dei*: the image of God in human being. Patton (1993) asserts that the doctrine of *Imago Dei* points not to a certain attribute or substance but to “relationality” in itself (p. 17). Bonhoeffer (1954) says, “Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we

may participate” (p. 30). The doctrine of *Imago Dei* echoes the Korean indigenous understanding of humanity: the word for human being, *In-Gan* in East Asia (including Korea) means “human between” (Kim et al., 2006).

These theological and anthropological perspectives form a foundation for a Korean American theology of pastoral care: “To be is to be with” (“esse est co-esse”) (Harris, 1996). To live as humans means to live with the vocation of “being with.” From Korean indigenous perspective, authentic selfhood requires *jeong* (the sense of we-ness). Without communal life, life cannot be wholesome. The meaning of “being with” goes beyond the physical dimension. Even though Korean Americans may be separated from family members and friends, they are connected through remembering one another. For Korean immigrants, remembering becomes a way of “being with.” While they continue to remember their heritage by building up the church as the center of village, they are also connected with memories that create an internal sense of community.

In that regard, “remembering” can be theologically meaningful and practically relevant for the Korean American community as they develop the ministry of communal pastoral care. Patton (1993) constructed the meaning of remembering creatively as the cornerstone of his communal contextual model of pastoral care. In his approach, the foundation of pastoral care comes from God, the One who remembers. Why does God remember us? Simply put, God remembers because God cares for us. Here, “care” comes from *kara*, a Gothic word, which means “to journey with” or “to be with” (Peterson, 2008, p. 2). God “is with” and “journeys with” humans through the divine-human community. In this understanding, to care (love) is to remember; to remember is

to care. In other words, remembering involves acts of care. In both the Old and New Testaments, God is described as the One who remembers the covenant of love made between God and human beings. Patton (1993) says, “[T]here is no more fundamental biblical basis for pastoral care than the Old Testament faith in the memory of God and the New Testament conviction that Jesus as the Christ is evidence of God’s remembering” (p. 29). In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, we see the ultimate care and love of God who remembers (cares) us.

The act of remembering is the call given to the Christian church, which embodies the act of remembering for the world. On the day before Jesus was arrested, he asked his disciples to remember him; he memorialized his relationship with them in the symbolic actions of the Eucharist and by washing their feet. The Gospel narratives of the last night of Jesus with his disciples are clearly woven with the theme of remembering and caring (loving). Remembering is intertwined with acts of care and love.

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13: 34-35)

According to this description, to remember is to live communally with care and love.

Patton (1993) calls the act of remembering “the vocation of caring” (p.17).⁵³ He describes the meaning of remembering for the Christian community, saying,

Because I remember I can care. Because I remember I can experience community in celebrating a God who remembers. Moreover, in the strength of knowing that I

⁵³ Vocation means “the response we make with our total selves to the call of God (acknowledge or unacknowledged) and to God’s call to partnership” (Fowler, 1987, p. 32).

am remembered I can express care for others through hearing and remembering them. (Patton, 1993, p. 28)

For the Korean American church, it is crucial to reconstruct the meaning of remembering. Remembering should be differentiated from simply missing the past in a nostalgic mood. Patton (1993) emphasizes the other dimension of re-membering: “actively fostering change” (pp. 51-52). He intentionally hyphenates remembering as “re-membering” in order to stress the significance of the dimension of transformation. Patton (1993) says, “[Re-membering] means to put the body back together. The opposite of remember is not to forget, but to dis-member” (p. 28).

Re-membering is concerned with transformation that goes beyond conservation. From this perspective of re-membering, pastoral care goes beyond the function of maintenance; it should challenge the status quo in which the community safeguards unhealthy patterns of past. When the Christian community stays in the fixed form of conservation, it can cause *han* among the marginalized of the marginalized, such as Korean American women.⁵⁴ The story of the Samaritan woman demonstrates that her relationship with Jesus, the pastoral caregiver, was not simply a matter of receiving comforting words; this relationship reached a deeper level, that of raising hard questions about her patterns of relationships: she was challenged to re-member false relational patterns and came to re-member her life stories. Before this change, she was forced to accept the false truth about her identity, bestowed upon her by dominant narratives of

⁵⁴ In chapter three I described the danger of *jeong* in a collective sense; it can justify injustice and pass the burden of maintaining community onto the marginalized among the marginalized. I described the example of the role of Korean women in familial and communal contexts.

sexism, ethnocentrism, false religious dogma, etc. The encounter of human and divine narratives challenges the notion of the single “truth”/falsehood that she is the problem, which has been engraved in her inner world. The radical relationality that she experienced with Jesus allowed her to re-member her story as the sacred story. Patton (1993) asserts, “Re-membered persons are those who can be seen and can see themselves differently from the dominant vision of that person and situation” (p. 7). The dimension of re-membering in pastoral care facilitates the process of change: from the stories of brokenness to healing, from fragmentation to reintegration, and from despair to hope.

The Christian community should raise hard questions about “relational justice” in order to become authentic communities. Without seeking justice the community cannot become a re-membering community that weaves human and divine narratives in wholesome ways. The ministry of re-membering should engage 1) socio-political analysis (or conscientization), which engages critical understanding of social identities which are produced in oppressive systems of power relations, and 2) Christian theology that challenges the politics of identity, which limits the full potentiality of life as a political theology. Thornton (2002), for instance, reconstructs the theology of cross as a political cross, which communities should share in the work of resistance and liberation in solidarity.

As such, *Uri* community needs both “support” and “challenge” (Neuger, 2001, p. 231). *Uri* community is an intentional community, which continues to engage with the ministry of both remembering and re-membering. It comforts and stirs; conserves and transforms; deconstructs and reconstructs.

Strategies for Communal Pastoral Care

Intentionality: Definitional Ceremony

Without communal connection and support, it is easy for careseekers to revert to the patterns of their past by adopting dominant narratives. Neuger (2001) emphasizes “staying connected” as “the active and dynamic process of connection and relationality that are necessary for the maintenance of counterstories and for the ongoing work of resistance to and transformation of dominant and oppressive forces” (p. 232). In order to support careseekers in the process of authoring their life stories in preferred ways, the community should offer space for communal empowerment, through which the participants can mutually enhance their stories.

White (2007) proposes a “definitional ceremony”⁵⁵ as a communal way of weaving counterstories with others: “Definitional ceremonies provide people with the option of telling or performing the stories of their lives before an audience of carefully chosen outsider witnesses” (White, 2007, p. 165). The definitional ceremony consists of three steps: 1) telling one’s stories; 2) hearing the retelling of stories from the audience (witnesses) about what they heard; and 3) responding (retelling) to the retelling. The essence of the definitional ceremony is the communal process of thickening counterstories together by maximizing communal aspects of storying-building. By recruiting witnesses who can support and stand in solidarity with the careseeker, this ritual provides “the opportunity for the person at the center of the therapeutic experience

⁵⁵ White (2007) adapted the anthropological work of Barbara Myerhoff (1982) who conducted her research in Jewish communities focusing on how elderly Jews could be empowered through communal ways of telling, retelling, and retelling of the retelling (pp. 180-184).

to see the impact and feel the reverberations of the person's words on those in witnessing positions” (Marsten & Howard, 2006, p, 106). Citing Myerhoff (1986), White (2007) says,

Definitional ceremonies deal with the problems of invisibility and marginality; they are strategies that provide opportunities for being seen and in one’s own terms, garnering witnesses to one’s worth, vitality, and being. (p. 181)

By linking narrative and ritual with the intentionality of empowering the stories of careseekers through communal process, the definitional ceremony helps both careseekers and participants experience a communally-grounded sense of agency.

This method of definitional ceremony can be modified and applied to congregational life in both small and large groups. By developing communal rituals like the definitional ceremony, the community can empower the marginalized so that their stories can be re-membered within both external and internal communities. The resulting sense of reconnection can build “a sense of solidarity with regard to the values and aspirations” that have been neglected or hidden in both personal and communal stories (White, 2007, p. 179). Thornton (2002) notes,

Solidarity engages people in recovering their corporate memory of when life was different. The recovery of that “different vision of life” has the power to reimagine our current circumstances and us. This process of retrieval stimulates our very desires and our longings for an alternative to what we are experiencing now. It leads us to actively seek release from all forms of imposed suffering. (p. 186)

The practice of definitional ceremony that takes place in small groups can impact congregational life. By acknowledging and privileging the stories of the marginalized, the Christian community can continue to live out its call to building up *Uri* community.

Overcoming Han through Liberative Jeong

Throughout this dissertation I have described human suffering in relational terms as *han*. *Han* is by nature a collective experience of suffering (Park, 1993). The story of a person's *han* is *our* story of *han*. What is the meaning of the story of *han* to the Christian community? How can the Christian community overcome *han*? The theological meaning of *han* is found in the radical relationship of God in the story of divine marginalization and the call for joining in this vocation of "being with" the *han*-ridden. When human limitations (individual and collective sins) foster empathy and compassion, people are drawn into the ministry of remembering (supporting) those who suffer with *han* and of re-remembering (transforming) broken relationships.

The story of *han* becomes the divine call for communal care and resistance. The story of *han* needs to be transformed such that it becomes the source of "a collective dynamic power" for resisting the oppressive narratives and systemic evil (Kim, 1991, p. 189). *Han* is not simply the sigh of the oppressed but a "political metaphor" for social transformation (Lee, 1994, pp. 5-6). How can we overcome *han*? The source of change can be found in *jeong*. Korean women historically have demonstrated the power of transforming *han* into caring and resisting through *jeong*. Hearing the story of others through the sense of communal heart-felt connection (*jeong*), they recognize "the commonality of *han* in others" (Joh, 2006, p. 52). This commonality, then, invokes a sense of justice and strengthens the heart for seeking justice in solidarity.

What is the transformative power that prompts women to care for each other in times of hardship? It is the radical relationality, in which they suffer and resist together

with others. Women demonstrate moral strength based on this relationality. Neuger (2001) says, “[W]omen’s unique tendencies toward and skills at building and maintaining relationships now can be seen as morally valuable and familially necessary, rather than being grounded in a lower developmental level and a more male-linked autonomy” (p. 233). Joh (2007) asserts that *jeong* is and can be stronger than *han* in the experience of marginalization.

Jeong, as practiced by and between women who are victims of patriarchy, helps them to form networks that not only help them survive such brutal victimization but also enable them to form solidarities that allow for the creation of movements to confront and resist various manifestations of violence. (Joh, 2007, p. 147)

Korean women carry this *jeong*, which bonds the marginalized together in caring relationship and in solidarity for social change. Based on the moral strength of women, Joh (2006) critiques traditional Christology for describing the suffering of Jesus as a passive form of “depressive *jeong*”; she reconstructs *jeong* as “liberative *jeong*.” Joh (2006) says,

The death of Jesus is not a result that Jesus did not have power to resist (Roman) imperial power but an intended choice for “a living by the way of the cross... [T]he power of new marginality is love, which is willing to suffer redemptively by accepting others unconditionally as Jesus did on the cross. (p. 73)

This reconstruction of the symbol of the cross from the perspective of “liberative *jeong*” challenges the Christian community to suffer and resist in solidarity with the marginalized. In a similar way, Thornton (2002) constructs the cross as the political cross through which the community transforms “passive suffering” into “passionate suffering” (p. 175). The story of *han* should not remain frozen in grief but become “the

fuel for action” (Thornton, 2002, p. 194). The Korean American church is called into the ministry of embodying divine marginalization through the practice of liberative *jeong*.

Reconstructing Indigenous Symbols: The Case of the Lakeshore Presbyterian Church

When Korean American Christians think of the future of their churches, they are filled with uncertainty. What is the destination of the Korean American church for the next generations to come? Who will inherit the tradition and legacy of Korean American churches? How can the Korean American church continue to establish their unique identities as Korean American Christians?

In building up *Uri* community for Korean American community, one of the most difficult issues is the gap between generations, cultures, and languages. Those gaps are certainly hurdles to be faced and overcome in building up *Uri* community, yet they can also be transformed into enriching resources. For example, the younger generation may feel disconnected when they cannot resonate with the story of their parental generation deeply. The young generation feels obligated to respect and appreciate their inheritance, yet may perceive Korean culture as “authoritative” and “hierarchical.” How can such generational gaps become resources?

Cha (2007), in his congregational study of the Lakeshore Presbyterian Church located in a suburb of Chicago, demonstrates a model of narrative community, in which both first and second generation Korean Americans see each other as a part of larger narrative. This church described the relationship between first and second generations using compelling narratives of “a parent-child relationship” in which the parental generation provides financial and emotional support, while the younger generation

continues the legacy of Korean American Christian identity by making their parental dream come to fruition through them (p. 263).

By contextualizing an indigenous metaphor as such, this congregation empowers both groups; letting the young generation raise their voice with a sense of responsibility while bringing due respect for the first generation without making them feel useless. By emphasizing “reversing roles”—parent generations as cheerleaders, young generation as the main players—both generations’ needs have been satisfied. This is a good example of how the Korean American church can co-author their stories together by overcoming conflicting narratives.

At the heart of the construction of this narrative is that theme of “filial piety” (*Hyo* in Korean), not as a rigid hierarchical structure but as their core identity that binds them together as Korean Americans regardless of their different backgrounds and acculturation levels. By reconstructing this indigenous core Korean value, two generations find a common theme that connects their stories. A young Korean American member of this congregation states,

We don’t speak Korean fluently but we are Korean Americans because of what we share with each other...When we talk about our struggle with our own parents and how our American friends don’t understand why we must respect and honor our parents and their wishes, we reinforce the idea that we are not Americans, even if we were born here, and that we are not Koreans like our parents are. (Cha, 2007, p. 269)

As such, the Korean American younger generation wants to hear affirmation from their parents’ generation that they are heirs of a Korean identity even though they may not speak Korean fluently and may live different lifestyles. On the other hand, the first

generation wants to hear that they are respected as the ones who have lived sacred lives that have brought blessings to their children.

In this example, we find that filial piety is not necessarily a hierarchical value that becomes a stumbling block to both generations. It is rather a “rich spiritual and cultural source” of connection under the umbrella of Korean American faith community (Cha, 2007, p. 270). As such, it is important to reevaluate Korean and Korean American values and history and see whether they can be integrated into their core narratives. Both Korean and American values do not have to be in conflict with each other; rather, they can be embraced in creative and enhancing ways. Korean American communities can enrich their story by engaging both Korean and American culture creatively.

As demonstrated in the case study of Lakeshore Presbyterian Church, it is essential to see conflict as a process of “differing” rather than “fighting”; conflict can be seen as “part of the creative process” (Kornfeld, 1998, p. 23). It is a common experience to feel as though one is wrong in times of conflict instead of feeling as though one is different. Kornfeld (1998) notes, “Groups that have a friendly attitude toward conflicts are more able to live cooperatively” (p. 23). The Korean American church should embrace the diversity of its members as a matter of being different rather than being wrong. Otherwise, it will remain a self-subsuming and self-serving organization without inheriting the sacred identity of *Uri* community, which privileges the voices of the marginalized.

Late Comers: Partners of God's Grace

Korean Americans are late comers to this land—the Promised Land that they dreamed about and continue to dream for. Certainly, being a late comer means having less privilege than earlier comers; yet, they are also beneficiaries who have received the hard won gains of earlier immigrants. While late comers live at the margins, they can enable the grace of God to be remembered and re-membered through their witness to the radical relationality of God. In that regard, marginality is a means of grace through which others can experience the call to become *Uri* community.

As the Korean American church matures, it is challenged to expand its concerns to the larger society beyond their own ethnic community. As the story of the Samaritan woman radically transformed her community, the stories of Korean American Christians can offer perspectives that expand the communal vision of life together. Park (2003) offers a multicultural vision of the church through “a model for enhancement” in which “each culture cares for other cultures by challenging their shortcomings” (p. 3). He asserts, “Diversity does not only mean to affirm what each culture is, but also to hold up what each culture can be.” That is, each culture is accountable for other cultures in terms of its role of enhancing others. Becoming a multicultural community is the ultimate destiny of the *Uri* community. Kim (2006) notes,

Not all churches can be multiethnic if the geographic context does not allow for it, but every church can be multicultural if we understand the term culture to encompass different generations, socio-economic backgrounds, education levels, etc. A local congregation ought to reflect the full diversity of its particular geographic community. I would go further and say that in accordance with our call to discipleship, that every local church in the world has a mandate to be as multicultural as possible. (p. 45)

Conclusion: Communal Pastoral Agents

The symbol of the well can be a meaningful image for Korean American Christians, as they continue to build their community as *Uri* community in the context of marginality. The Korean American church needs to re-village their community around the image of the well where the stories of the marginalized are both remembered and re-remembered in collaboration with God. God, the author of life, invites the marginalized to rediscover the source of life within their lives—the unstoried dimensions which can liberate and transform their lives into life-giving stories—and to commit themselves to co-authoring *Uri* (divine-human) narratives by weaving narratives about the divine into their particular life stories. What changes can be possible if this communal vision of gathering around the well is shared and practiced in the life of community?

Returning to the vignette of Hyun in Chapter 4, who came into conflict with the younger generation of the congregation, I can envision a scenario of pastoral care that involves a process of re-villaging. The problem was that his meaning system (or the plots and themes of his life story) was challenged by the congregational members of the younger generation and Hyun felt that their challenge was lacking in terms of respect (*hyo*-filial piety); he also experienced their challenge as threat to his core narrative, which was based on Confucian-Christian values. While blaming other church members, including a young clergy-member, he avoided taking full responsibility for his own behavior, which even resulted in a legal conflict. He remained stuck at an impasse because his pain was so deep; his sense of marginalization led him to feel self-pity, and adopt rigid psychological defenses along with a blaming attitude, and to experience

disconnection from God and the church, and a deep sense of shame. Instead of mending these broken relationships, he was stuck in negative marginality with an incomplete and broken narrative, which was in conflict with narratives about the divine, especially, the liberating story of divine marginalization.

How can he experience healing, liberation, and transformation in the midst of this predicament? How can pastoral care coax him out of his own cocoon of self-pity and self-protection and move him toward re-remembering his relationship with God and his community? How can he experience self agency, especially in terms of a communally-grounded sense of agency? What are the unstoried dimensions of his narratives that can give him a new direction, meaning, and coherence through life giving connections among his past, present, and future narratives? How can he reincorporate new dimensions of faith, which move him from this impasse to the vitality of life? Where is the resource for resilient faith, described in this passage of the Book of Proverbs: “for though a righteous man falls seven times, he rises again, but the wicked are brought down by calamity” (Proverb 24: 16)?

What is missing in this scenario? What could have made a difference for him and the congregation? Didn't the congregation miss an opportunity for pastoral care? He needed the kind of relational support and challenge provided by pastoral caregivers who could help him realize that there is a source of life in his life story. As his status changed from an elder in his congregation to “the most talked about man” in his community, he became isolated and was abandoned by his community. He felt marginalized from and abandoned by both Koreans and Americans. It is as if he comes to the well—the

religious and cultural source of faith that he had held—yet, it cannot really quench his thirst. He needs more than that: he needs divine grace which conserves as well as transforms his problem-saturated story. He needs pastoral agents who reach out and initiate a new level of conversation that includes both remembering and re-membering

What are the sources of new life for him? How can he dig deeper into the unstoried dimensions of life that need to come to the foreground? Where are the pieces of his life story that capture the dimension of transformation, forgiveness, and reconciliation? Where are the dimensions of blessing that he has experienced as a Korean American? Aren't there community members or outside witnesses who can share the liberating dimensions of his life story? Isn't there an opportunity to initiate a "definitional ceremony" for him so that this pains-taking story can become a source of life?

From the image of well in the story of the Samaritan woman, I can envision this vulnerable man being changed from a person at margins to a community leader capable of participating in healing and liberation. He can become an agent of reparation for the wounds that he has caused in others while his wounds are healed by the effort of communal reconciliation. His life story is not a single isolated one but can become a part of *Uri* story. This man certainly can become a communal pastoral agent who takes the initiative for building an intentional *Uri* community around the well where he experienced the true meaning of marginalization.

The experience of this life-giving well is found in fixed traditions of the past like the tradition of Jacob's well that the Samaritan woman held onto, which was not a life-

giving source. The well is a place where the stories of the marginalized are privileged, liberated, transformed, and used as the agents for re-villaging. The Korean American church should become the *Uri* community, where fragmented experiences of past are remembered and reconnected into communal stories of care, resistance, and transformation, and where people see a glimpse of hope for the future and cast out fears of living in the present.

How can the Korean American church become the *Uri* community? The Korean American community needs pastoral agents who bear witness to embodied stories of radical relationality that invite others to “come and see” (John 4: 29) the change that is taking place in the Reign of God. It is too naïve to think that the marginalized can seek pastoral care by themselves; when people are extremely distressed, they often do not have self agency to initiate their own change. In a Korean culture based on shame culture, it is especially hard for seek help by themselves (You, 1997). The community is accountable for taking the initiative for pastoral care. The church should reach out to those who cannot come for help like the Samaritan woman, who avoided the “social hour” when the well was busy and came to draw water in the heat of the day (Brown, 1996).

In the Gospel of Mark 2:1-12, a paralytic man was brought to Jesus by four people, who functioned as communal pastoral agents. Because the place was crowded with many people, they removed the roof above Jesus and dug through it then they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay down. These four people as communal pastoral agents took the pastoral initiative for the person in need of healing and liberation. Thornton (2002) describes communal pastoral agents as “having an understanding of

themselves as a corporate body, a communal agent of compassion and justice, active and involved in the wider community” (p. 182).⁵⁶

In the *Uri* community, the suffering of one person is a call for us to support one another while challenging the source of oppression together. The communal contextual narrative approach is based on the belief that even a small change can stir up the whole community and bring the transforming spirit (*Ki*) of God. The change of a person can have a “butterfly effect”: that is, “the flutter of butterfly wings in one part of the world can create vibrations that in turn cause massive weather changes in another part of the world” (Kornfeld, 2008, p. 18). Conversely, the voices of the marginalized are not peripheral but essential in God’s eyes. Thornton (2002) says, “[T]hose who experience injustice or endure unmerited pain are intimately related to a pain in the very heart of God” (p. 14). They are, indeed, the agents of transformation for *Uri* community.

Ultimately, the communal contextual narrative approach that I propose emphasizes “a communal agent of compassion and justice” for liberation (Thornton, 2002, p. 182). Korean American Christians are called to become communal pastoral agents who walk in compassion with those who are marginalized among the marginalized, overcoming *han* through liberative *jeong*, and resisting evil in solidarity with God and the people of God. The significant theological meaning of marginality is this; while marginality challenges our personal and communal living as the people of God, we can still choose to live as communal pastoral agents beyond our limitations and the reality of

⁵⁶ Thornton (2002) describes the ministry of the San Francisco Network Ministries as an example of how to become communal agents of resistance and transformation.

han. Living at margins is not a sign of weakness but the place where we experience a call to building the community of care and transformation.

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