ASIAN CHRISTIANITY IN THE DIASPORA

Series Editors: Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Joseph Cheah

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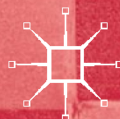
RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AMONG SECOND GENERATION KOREAN AMERICANS

Mark Chung Hearn



Asian Christianity in the Diaspora

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Asian American theology is still at its nascent stage. It began in the 1980's with just a handful of scholars who were recent immigrants to the United States. Now with the rise in Asian American population and the rise of Asian American theologians, this new community is an ever-important voice within theological discourse and Asian American cultural studies. This new series seeks to bring to the forefront some of the important, provocative new voices within Asian American Theology. The series aims to provide Asian American theological responses to the complex process of migration and resettlement process of Asian immigrants and refugees. We will address theoretical works on the meaning of diaspora, exile, and social memory, and the foundational works concerning the ways in which displaced communities remember and narrate their experiences. Such an interdisciplinary approach entails intersectional analysis between Asian American contextual theology and one other factor; be it sexuality, gender, race/ethnicity, and/or cultural studies. This series also addresses Christianity from Asian perspectives. We welcome manuscripts that examine the identity and internal coherence of the Christian faith in its encounters with different Asian cultures, with Asian people, the majority of whom are poor, and with non-Christian religions that predominate the landscape of the Asian continent. Palgrave is embarking on a transformation of discourse within Asian and Asian American theological scholarship as this will be the first of its kind. As we live in a global world in which Christianity has re-centered itself in the Global South and among the racialized minorities in the United States, it behooves us to listen to the rich, diverse and engaging voices of Asian and Asian American theologians.

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Mark Chung Hearn

Religious Experience Among Second Generation Korean Americans

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To my parents, Soogoon (Paul) and Kumhong (Karen) Hearn, the first to give me an image of God made flesh

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Abstract The chapter highlights the need for a new conversation partner to the religious studies of Korean American Christianity, one that consists of the voices of second-generation Korean American men. Hearn proposes that Korean American men need healing. Furthermore, as second-generation Korean American men heal, the communities in which they live and lead have different opportunities to the same. Hearn closes the chapter by locating himself and revealing the impetus and motivation for his work.

Keywords Korean American Christianity • Second-Generation Korean American • Han

Pastors and scholars have provided contemporary resources on Korean Americans and their religious experiences throughout the years. My hope is that this project is a resource that complements these conversations. This contribution is unique in that it explores in interdisciplinary fashion the second-generation Korean American religious experiences through the voices and experiences of second-generation Korean American men. There have been several resources by, and for, Korean American women and rightfully so; Korean and Asian American communities have needed them for our churches and in our theological and pastoral formation. You will find many

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of these resources throughout this book and in the bibliography. That said, there has been a dearth of explicit theological and spiritual resources for Korean American men to address important issues for men and the communities in which they live and lead.[1] Understandably, some may have concern over an explicit work for men. After all, we live in a patriarchal structure where an unwillingness to name the very power differentials that stem from gender discrepancies continues to favor an unspoken societal gender norm. From casual conversations to scholarly forums in which I have participated with Korean American women, the message of hurt, anger, disappointment, and resistance to patriarchy rings clearly and loudly in their voices. We, men, are indebted to the work of Asian American women who have gone before us pointing out systems of oppression and injustice, and within the church no less.

Michael Kaufman brings our attention to the notion of a "triad of violence."[2] We must address issues of violence toward others—particularly women and children, other men, and within our own individual lives, in order that we, and the communities in which we live, might exist more freely and peaceably. At the heart of critical feminism lies a commitment for a deep and true freedom for *all*. And in order for this freedom to occur in society and in our communities, men need to be aware of the issues that surround and influence them including issues of power, patriarchy, and violence. We must also move from awareness and education to action, rectifying broken relationships and systems in which we have been complicit. Critical studies are not politically free endeavors as they serve prophetic roles in deconstructive ways that often carry a price calling for change. However, the maintenance of status quo is neither politically free as it serves to continue existing structures. In this sense, this book, unapologetically, is an attempt to contribute to this freedom work.

To understand Korean American men and address various concerns and issues, an interdisciplinary approach is needed. As I propose throughout, second-generation Korean American men are complex sociohistorical beings who contend daily with others' interpretations of who they and their bodies can be. We cannot interpret Korean American men solely through a single lens. Rather, we need multiple lenses to comprehend the vast experiences and realities of Korean American men and the communities in which they participate. For this reason, I use resources from Asian American studies, sociology of sport, men's studies, spirituality, and religious education to dialog with, and inform, the semi-structured interviews I conducted with fifteen second-generation Korean American men,

ages twenty-five to forty-five, around their understanding of manhood and spirituality.[3] Furthermore, I utilized two other qualitative research methods, ethnography at Christ Church[4] and participant observation at various Korean American sports tournaments, both in the greater Los Angeles area, in order to gain a closer look into Korean American religious experiences and the significance of competitive sport among Korean American men, respectively.

Locating Myself as an Author

Some may wonder about my interest in this project, especially with a non-Korean last name. I am the youngest child of two Korean immigrants who came to the United States separately for different purposes during the mid-1950s to early 1960s. When my father first immigrated, he changed his name from Han to Hearn for various reasons. If he were to transliterate the Korean characters of his family name to H-A-N, he was doubtful people would pronounce it with a soft "a" opting instead for a short one as in the word "hand." He could have spelled his last name Hahn as many Germans did but in the 1950s, on the heels of World War II, this may not have been the wisest move in the United States. A secondary reason, but nonetheless important in light of the social discrimination Korean Americans and Asian Americans have experienced in this country, my father also changed his name for employment reasons. He did not want himself, nor his future family, to be prohibited from a job because of an Asian-sounding last name. At least on paper, we would be equals.

My parents eventually fulfilled their life and professional vocation serving the Church in its Korean American context. For over thirty years, they, as pastoral leaders, served Korean Americans in the Los Angeles area from the 1970s to the early 2000s. There were many times as a young boy that I remember my father taking me to Los Angeles International Airport to pick up a family that had just relocated from Korea and were needing some assistance getting settled in this new and foreign land. Somehow, they had been given our phone number and hoped this connection would be a portal to a new life. My parents did not call it this, but what I was learning then was social justice and social holiness. They gave me my first glimpse into faith in action and left indelible prophetic and pastoral images that stay with me today.

The healing and restoration of all people then carries me through this project. I find this no less true as an educator as I have found as an athletic coach, pastor, and consultant. I am reminded daily about how our world can use a good measure of restoration and healing. The stories of the men with whom I had the privilege of interviewing and building relationships with is an example of the pain, loss, and disappointment that exists among us. They carry great *han*, the unresolved angst, bitterness, and disappointment that needs resolution.[5] Yet, Korean American men do not only need healing for themselves; their communities need Korean American men to heal as well. This is not simply a personal and individual issue, but a systemic one. Men who do violence because they feel little sense of manhood in this country often commit violence to their families, churches, and eventually themselves. The restoration of Korean American men assists in the healing of their familial, relational, and church communities.

It would be remiss, however, to paint a portrait of Korean American men as simply pained and broken. Several of the men offered glimpses of their experiences that are hopeful for a renewed understanding and interest in one's internal healing and social relationships. I also do not suggest for our pardon from the responsibility of any destruction we have caused. We have, and continue to contribute, to the pain of many, including our own selves. I believe that as Korean American men work on the healing of our issues, we are in essence, working on becoming whole human beings who can better relate to women, to other men, and to our own selves. As I heard from several of the men, they have begun this journey toward freedom and wholeness claiming responsibility for the destruction in their lives and the lives of others. My hope is that you find by the end of this book an interest to understand, if not a willingness to engage, Korean American men and their healing.

Notes

1. I have yet to come across a work by a Korean American male author that substantially addresses the issue of patriarchy and gender among Korean Americans, while there are significant examples of women scholars doing so. A recent work that addresses the social construction of Psy, the Korean popstar who ventured into US cultural spaces, previously unreached by Korean Americans, is Joseph Cheah and Grace Ji-Sun Kim's recent book, *Theological Reflections on "Gangnam Style: A Racial, Sexual, and Cultural Critique"* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

A Korean American male scholar who addresses briefly the issue of patriarchy is Andrew Sung Park as he theologically discusses the effects of patriarchy in relation to the Korean concept of *han*. Another Asian American male scholar who has worked on issues of gender and patriarchy as these relate to religion is Antony W. Alumkal. These two, however, are clearly the exception rather than the rule. See Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993); Antony W. Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches: Race, Ethnicity, and Assimilation in the Second Generation* (New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing, LLC, 2003).

2. Michael Kaufman, "The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence," in *Men's Lives*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 4–17.
3. These interviews occurred from March 2011 to July 2011. As semi-structured interviews, I asked the men to consider two questions prior to the interviews which would begin each conversation: (1) What is your symbol of manhood and why? and (2) What is spirituality to you? With regards to the first question, I asked each man to bring an object that symbolized for them their understanding of manhood.
4. The names of Christ Church and the men I interviewed have all been changed.
5. Park, *Wounded Heart of God*.

CHAPTER 2

Situating Korean American Men in Asian America

Abstract Utilizing a social construction lens, Hearn situates Korean American men within US history beginning with Chinese migration to Hawaii. The chapter proposes that the seeds for Asian American male stereotypes and the racial discrimination Korean American men face today were planted during the arrival of Asians to the Hawaiian Islands and then to California. Hearn offers several different understandings of racism and how the media continues to perpetuate Asian American stereotypes. These stereotypes contribute to the ongoing construction of Asian American masculinity and subsequent racial discrimination toward Korean American men.

Keywords Korean American men • Masculinity • Asian immigration • Asian American stereotypes • Racial discrimination

A Social Construction Lens

Social construction theory argues that a person is a socially-constructed being, that is, a person makes meaning and can only be understood within a social web of fabricated meaning.[1] While a person's self-understanding is important, social construction theory argues that it is in relation to others that meaning is created for the individual and a society. A person exists not only in physical form marked by visible characteristics such as skin color,

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facial shape, and hair texture, but more importantly, it is what society confers upon the person that is significant. A black and white car with flashing red lights is only significant on account of the social interactions attitudes and understanding concerning police cars, police officers, and the law. A metal car with flashing lights now has meaning as it is understood within that specific locale and time. Social construction theorists, therefore, contend that meaning is created only within the context of shared understanding and interaction.

These meanings vary and shift depending upon the particular social and historical context. For example, Jews and Italians were initially viewed as distinct from Anglo-Americans during their initial immigration to the USA in the nineteenth century. These two groups, however, successfully achieved whiteness by distinguishing themselves from African Americans.[2] Similarly, the racial status of the Chinese in the Mississippi Delta region changed from near Black to near White.[3] Recruited as agricultural labor to the region as early as 1869, the Chinese were initially viewed as almost Black. However, their ascent to work that paralleled Whites thrust them into a category at the other end of the spectrum, that of almost White. Even into the 1930s and 1940s, the racial status of the Mississippi Chinese continued to change as they were viewed as neither White nor Black.

It is with this social construct lens that we begin to see the social, historical, and cultural processes and contexts that Korean American men face. These constructs carry influential power that shape who they are and how they live in society. These influences include institutions such as the home, work, school, and religion but also include media, recreation, and corporate history among other facets of social life.[4] With this in mind, what then is the Korean American context today?

A Brief Historical Survey of Early Asian America (1852–1910)[5]

To Hawaii

While no clear historical records remain, speculation abounds that Filipinos and Chinese migrated as early as the sixteenth century to particular regions in present-day Mexico. Some of these earliest Asians eventually landed in the bay area at the southern tip of Louisiana.[6] While the earliest date of migration is debatable, history records of the Hawaiian Islands provide a more accurate account. American businessmen recruited in 1852, one

hundred and ninety-five Chinese laborers from the Fujian province to work contractually on the plantations, the quickly-expanding business sites that needed a substantial workforce.[7] American businessmen turned to recruitment in part because the native population rapidly decreased on account of their exposure to American and European diseases. Furthermore, the businessmen noticed that the few Chinese, who were already present on the islands, were more efficient in their labor than were the native islanders.[8] The decline of the native population coupled with the impressions of Chinese laborers, left American businessmen to search for overseas alternatives. Therefore, over the next three decades, Chinese contract laborers, who were almost all men, were brought to work on the plantations.

Plantation owners realized their dependency upon the Chinese labor force and were concerned about their growing number. They began to implement a divide-and-control strategy to offset this concern, recruiting laborers from other regions of the world in order to minimize rising demands for higher wages and any potential shortage or strike by the Chinese.[9] Consequently, businessmen turned to the Portuguese and the Japanese as a way to "mix the labor races" and drive a wedge among them.[10] While there were Japanese laborers prior to the 1880s, it was not until 1885 that an official agreement was struck between Japan and the American, Robert Walker Irwin, to send the first group of Japanese contract laborers to Hawaii.[11] But within a few years, plantation owners became concerned with the increasing numbers of Japanese laborers, who had quickly surpassed the number of Chinese, since their arrival.

Owners eventually turned their efforts to Korea to maintain a divide-and-control strategy among the various ethnicities, bringing the first group to Hawaii in 1903. The annexation of Hawaii to the USA in 1898 prevented owners from countering increasing number of Japanese laborers with a renewed recruitment of Chinese laborers. Now under the jurisdiction of the USA, Hawaii was not allowed to bring in Chinese laborers under the 1882 Exclusion Act which legally prohibited any Chinese laborer from entering the USA or its territory of Hawaii, a first of its kind for the USA. The recruitment of Koreans in turn, was a calculated response to the growing number of Japanese as American owners understood the tense, political climate between the two countries. They reasoned that the Koreans would work against, rather than combine efforts with the Japanese, which would ultimately benefit the owners' ability to keep labor cost low and prevent any solidarity from occurring among the laborers.

The immigration of Koreans to Hawaii differed from the Chinese or Japanese in several ways. First, whereas the Chinese and Japanese established relatively large numbers (50,000 and 180,000 respectively), the Koreans numbered far less (under 8000).[12] This was mostly due to the quick halt the Japanese government put to Korean immigration in 1905 after it established a protectorate over Korea in the same year.[13] Japanese officials reasoned that if they could halt Korean movement to Hawaii, plantation owners would not be able to counter Japanese demands for higher wages with a different labor group. This was significant because Japanese laborers, looking for higher wages, were leaving Hawaii for California in significant droves. Japanese remigration to the mainland heightened the possibility of Japanese exclusion from it as white Californians became increasingly concerned about an influx of Japanese laborers.[14] Second, unlike the Chinese or Japanese who came from rural, agricultural areas, the majority of Koreans had lived in urban dwellings. Resultantly, many immigrants did not work in agriculture and therefore did not have the skills to succeed in plantation life. This expedited their movement off the plantations and back into the cities. Third, the immigrants came from geographically diverse regions of Korea. By contrast, the Chinese and Japanese came largely from the Guangdong region of China and from a couple of prefectures of southwestern Japan. Fourth, Koreans were a diverse group relative to the other two. The diversity included a mixture of class, region, and employment. On the contrary, because Chinese and Japanese laborers came largely from two regions and from the farming population, they were more akin to one another. Fifth, Chinese and Japanese laborers came under the contract-labor system prior to Hawaii's annexation. Koreans, on the other hand, could freely work for the highest bidder of their services since they arrived after 1898 and were now under US law which prohibited contract labor. This allowed Koreans more mobility than what the Chinese and Japanese initially faced.

A last major difference between the Koreans and their immigrant predecessors is noteworthy. While Chinese and Japanese laborers came typically as single men, husbands, and fathers looking to return to their homeland after gathering enough resources to pay off land debts and taxes, it was not uncommon to see Korean families make the trek together across the Pacific Ocean. A reason for this phenomenon can be accounted for by the role religion played. American Christian businessmen and Christian missionaries assisted plantation owners' recruitment of Koreans. Having more influence in Korea than the other two countries, Christianity was vital in presenting

Hawaii as an enticing and viable alternative to the economic, political, and religious difficulties in Korea. Advertisement continued to portray plantation life in a favorable manner and the solicitation of American businessmen was affirmed by Christian missionaries who had gained the trust of Koreans.[15] Furthermore, owners helped to establish Christianity on the plantations as a way to keep Koreans happy and productive, while also lessening the incentive to leave the grounds for urban areas. Combining religion and business served to market Hawaii as an idyllic destination for families, and persons of religious persecution. Christianity had not yet made an influence in China or Japan to the extent that it had in Korea.

To the Mainland

Rumors of “Gold Mountain” drew far more Chinese to the northern coast of California than to Hawaii. As did their counterparts in Hawaii, they came as sojourners, looking to strike it rich, and then return to their homeland with cash in hand.[16] There were over 20,000 Chinese who entered San Francisco in 1852.[17] However, as would become the pattern to systemically discriminate against foreigners, a tax was imposed to discourage international immigration to California and to lessen any economic competition for Whites. The flow of Chinese migration dwindled in 1853 to less than a mere 5000 due to the Foreign Miners’ Tax.[18] However, as the Central Pacific Railroad Company initiated their project to build the western section of the transcontinental railroad, they targeted their early efforts to the Chinese, thus bolstering once again, the number of Chinese migrants.

The Chinese faced considerable discrimination as they were all too often the target of prejudice initially aimed at Hispanics.[19] Though the Chinese in Hawaii were mistreated on the plantation, the owners continued to welcome them. No white working class existed on the islands, thereby making Chinese labor a greater necessity.[20] By contrast, the rallying cry of Californians was “The Chinese must go!” largely on account of two reasons, economic competition and racial prejudice.[21] Taxes on overcrowded living conditions and the requirement of the Chinese to shave their heads in order to demarcate them reflect the anti-Chinese sentiment they endured. Furthermore, the legal system prevented Blacks, American Indians, and the Chinese from testifying in California courts.[22] These measures would only be the precursor of what was to follow. In 1882, the US government passed its first act to ever deny a group entry into the

country based upon its race. The Chinese Exclusion Act would make its mark not so much in halting Chinese immigration, as much as in establishing a questionable precedence given its assertion as a country based upon freedom.[23] The USA was now a gatekeeping nation on the basis of race and economics.

As expected, Japanese immigration to the mainland increased following Chinese exclusion. From 1885 to 1924, there were 180,000 Japanese, migrated to the mainland.[24] Most of these initially tried their hand in railroad building but eventually made a mark in agriculture. One theory attributes this success to the timely entry of the Japanese into agriculture.[25] Nineteenth-century urbanization and industrialization increased the demand for fresh produce in the city. Coupled with the advancement of the irrigation system, this increase helped spur the Japanese to farming success.

Though the Japanese were thriving farmers, they too received their share of ethnic discrimination and racism.[26] Their discrimination, on the whole however, differed from the Chinese largely on account of the way the USA viewed their respective nations. In the eyes of the USA, China, on the one hand, was a weakening power. Japan, on the other, continued to draw the attention of US officials for they had demonstrated their military prowess in two wars, the Sino-Japanese (1894–1895) and the Russo-Japanese (1904–1905). Defeating the Chinese might have been expected as China previously showed signs of decline. It was the defeat of Russia, however, that made the USA vigilant of this rising power.

Because the USA's stance toward Japan was now guarded, they strategically assuaged the desires of the Japanese government. Two incidents illustrate the posture that the USA took toward Japan. In 1906, the San Francisco school board adopted measures to put all Asian children into one school.[27] This incensed Japan's government and raised controversy between the two nations. Japan claimed this act violated a previous treaty guaranteeing educational equality to that of other Americans. Furthermore, a move to integrate Japanese children with Chinese and Koreans was viewed disrespectfully by the Japanese government as they saw these two countries as lesser than their own for they had recently defeated one in battle and was now attempting to take over the other. The eventual decision by President Theodore Roosevelt to overturn the school board's pronouncement rescinded segregation for Japanese children but still remained for Chinese and Koreans. According to one scholar, the purpose of the school board's act for segregation was to push the fed-

eral government toward Japanese exclusion.[28] They reasoned that, if they could create controversy over something relatively innocuous—there were only ninety-three Japanese students in total—they would cause such a stir as to have the ear of Washington concerning developing racial, economic, and political matters throughout California

The 1908 Gentlemen's Agreement was designed to appease this growing anti-Japanese animosity. Crafted between the two nations, Japan agreed to halt its issuance of passports to migrant laborers to the USA while saving face from any potential exclusionary measures by the latter; they were aware of the Chinese Exclusion Act. The agreement was made to give the impression to the Japanese that the control of the flow of migration was in the hands of Japan's government and not of the USA. However, the curbing also allowed the USA to pacify, to a degree, the animosity Americans had with the Japanese and rising numbers of Asian laborers. The agreement was framed in the USA as essentially an exclusionary measure designed to keep out the Japanese.

Growing enmity toward the Japanese and other Asians would continue to be addressed through government legislation but also included the court system. Two landmark cases shaped the legal system and public discourse on the stance toward Asians in America. The outcomes of the 1922 *Takao Ozawa vs. United States* case and the 1923 *United States vs. Bhagat Singh Thind* case defined who was eligible for citizenship and on what basis. Takao Ozawa, who immigrated to the USA in 1894 as a student, filed for naturalization in 1914 on the basis that he had received an American education, worked for an American company in Hawaii, had married a Japanese woman who also was educated in America, and was a person of good, moral character, a prerequisite to citizenship.[29] While the court affirmed his standing of good, moral character, he was denied naturalization in the US District Court of Hawaii because he was not white. Ozawa appealed the case on the basis that his skin color was lighter than other Italians, Portuguese, and Spanish, who were granted citizenship. He was eventually denied citizenship by the US Supreme Court in 1922 on the clarification that a "white person" was synonymous with "a person of the Caucasian race."[30] Sucheng Chan points out the inconsistency of the US Supreme Court's reasoning as just a year later, Bhagat Singh Thind, an Asian Indian who had served in the US military during World War I, had his citizenship rescinded by the Court on the basis that though Asian Indians were technically considered Caucasian, he was not white.[31] While the Ozawa case used race and not skin color as the determining factor for citizenship, the Thind

case reversed this and used skin color to highlight what is known to the "common man" concerning the understanding of "white."[32]

Koreans were no less recipients of the ethnic antagonism directed toward the Chinese and Japanese. They endured accusations by white Americans who were unable or unwilling to differentiate between Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans. In some ways their experience as early immigrants patterned the Japanese, such as their success in agriculture. However, there were some marked differences. The Koreans did not establish their ethnic enclaves as did the Chinese and Japanese; there were too few of them. This raised concern when Koreans faced labor issues and ethnic animosity. They were unable to work within the confines of an ethnic community and therefore traveled to regions such as Utah and Wyoming to overcome legislative acts aimed at deterring their and other Asians' economic success.[33]

A second difference had to do with the perceptions Koreans had of their own immigrant status. While they did not see themselves necessarily as settlers in this new country, they also did not perceive themselves as sojourners. Rather they saw themselves as exiles, having no home to which to return on account of Japanese governance that had been negotiated between the USA and Japan in 1905.[34] This exile status would prove to be a rallying point among Korean immigrants as they politically organized and raised funds toward various independence movements designed to free their homeland.

A third difference was the development of institutional religion in the form of Christianity and the Church. The Church offered Koreans not only spiritual enrichment through religious gatherings, but it also provided them with an ethnic organization that served to help their social and emotional needs.[35] The Church offered opportunity for community building and became the institution that housed various independence movements. It propagated Korean culture through the sharing of food, traditions, and language.[36] Furthermore, it served as a social agency helping laborers socially network about employment and legal matters.

In sum, the immigration of early Asians to America was marked by trial and hardship. While circumstances in Hawaii were different than the mainland west coast, ethnic Asians in both settings navigated their lives within a context of ethnic antagonism. Asians maneuvered through the racial animosity thrust upon them by individual whites. They, however, had great difficulty overcoming legal court decisions and legislative acts that eventually barred all Asians in 1924 from legal entry into the country.

The Significance of Race for Contemporary Asian Americans

Race and Racial Formation

The events surrounding Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown Jr., and others over the last three years in the USA points to how race remains a significant factor in society. The reframing of race and racism through Michael Omi and Howard Winant's groundbreaking theory on racial formation shifted the notion of race from biological and cultural essentialism to a historically situated construction that produces meaning through social relations.[37] While people notice phenotypical differences, these differences are used arbitrarily to categorize people into racial hierarchies. In a previous theory on race, advocates reasoned certain traits as essential to specific races. All Asians, for example, are good at math on account of cultural expectations and biological DNA. In the new concept, race is socially and historically situated and thus, is constantly in flux. The earlier example of the racial "movement" of the Mississippi Chinese is a fitting illustration of this latter concept as they were seen at the outset as near Black and later, as near White.

It is notable that Omi and Winant do not advocate seeing race as mere illusion, as critics of social construction theory raise. Rather, they see bodily differences and the social conception of race as participating in a larger project they term, "racial formation theory."[38] Racial formation theory is the "sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, transformed, and destroyed."[39] The theory underscores how the process of arbitrarily categorizing persons on the basis of a shifting concept such as race, is a highly political act that is linked to social hegemony with practical ramifications. The Ozawa and Thind cases undeniably demonstrate this. Though categorizing people on the basis of race is not a problem in and of itself, it is what persons do with this categorizing that is often the problem; it can quickly turn into stereotyping and racism.

Racism

Racism is another term with several understandings. One way to understand the term is in what occurs in person-to-person relations, that is, individual racism. An act of racism occurs when a person spouts racially

derisive comments toward another individual. Racism of this kind is often depicted in the racially offensive joke or comment concerning a person or a group by an individual. The focus is upon the individual committing the act. Advocates of this sort view racism as existing only in individual, isolated occurrences and not at systemic levels.

A second way to comprehend racism is at the institutional level. This type of racism is built upon the idea that societal structures are constructed in such a way as to advantage some at the expense of others on the basis of race. Slavery and Jim Crow laws in the USA are two examples of this kind.[40] While these were blatant forms of institutional racism that most today would contend is racism, some critical theorists of the post-Civil Rights era argue that institutional racism also comes in less demonstrative forms including the rhetoric of a post-racial and colorblind society.[41] Colorblind racism is built upon the notion that since society has moved past the color line following the Civil Rights movement and particularly in its quest for unity, there are no unequal structures, only individuals who occasionally act upon their racially-discriminating beliefs.

The genius of institutional racism within the USA is to build a logic based upon the discourse of meritocracy. The unofficial motto of the USA is that hard work wins out. This philosophical foundation is even more deleterious when combined with two other aspects: (1) the belief that all start from the same starting point, and (2) that all have the same access to resources. The difficulty of these points lies in the absence of examining processes throughout the history of the USA that have constructed systems that set some ahead of others, based upon race.[42] Furthermore, these processes concretize in ways that limits the access of resources to some, while also creating a rhetoric that disadvantages these very persons. The language of neutrality is a good example. One scholar of color wonders why her darker skin color does not match the "nude" pair of hose or the "neutral" colored Band-Aid when she walks into a store to purchase these products.[43] The inability to view race as an important factor in the way society constructs meaning leads to institutional racism. For when race is combined with the argument of meritocracy, it can be deduced that certain races stand where they are in class because of their lack of will power and/or execution. This reasoning has very little, if at all, to do with unfavorable and unjust social structures.

A third type of racism is the ideological. This is akin to what one scholar calls "ethnocentric monoculturalism."[44] This type of racism is built upon the attitudes and beliefs that one's nation, and ethnic or racial group is

inherently superior to others. It is the undergirding assumptions that drive nations and groups to commit acts of violence toward others such as the Germans, the Ku Klux Klan and the Aryan Nation but also with non-whites who hold ideological attitudes toward other groups, such as some Far East Asians with Southeast Asians.[45]

A fourth type is internalized racism. This form occurs when persons of the racially discriminated group begin to believe the very narratives that keep them oppressed. Furthermore, the individual who internalizes this racism may actualize one's beliefs, distancing and distinguishing oneself from people of his or her own race.[46] This is witnessed in the Asian who makes the loudest Asian jokes or the Hispanic who says edgy remarks about other Hispanics.

Asian American Stereotypes

A stereotype is a "belief about a group of individuals" and is used in positive, neutral, and negative fashion.[47] I will focus on the negative use of the term to elucidate several contemporary stereotypes that are detrimental to Asian Americans. I take this approach because while a stereotype such as the *Model Minority* might be construed as positive, it is in effect, a latently dangerous stereotype with damaging effects on Asian Americans.

As early as the mid to late 1800s, Hollywood began to depict Asian Americans on film as the "Yellow Peril," a common stereotype placed first upon the Chinese and then on ensuing Asian groups.[48] The stereotype was based upon the fear that the incoming horde of the Yellow race would eventually overtake the social and economic arenas controlled by whites. Furthermore, they would add to its decline as their immorality was thought to infiltrate the very fibers of Western society. The Chinese were viewed as unclean, cheaters of ill-repute, and persons who would advance the moral decay of America.[49]

One component that contributed to this belief was the issue of Asian American sexuality. Historically within the USA, Asian men have carried two extreme sexual stereotypes. On the one hand, they are seen as hypersexualized men who not only crave sex, but sex with *white* women. Filipino men, for instance, were viewed as the "little brown brothers" who would steal away white women from under one's nose if white men were not vigilant.[50] The discomfort of existing relations between Filipinos and white women was one of the last straws that ignited various riots including the Watsonville Riot of 1930. Incensed with the belief that the Filipinos were

undercutting wages and becoming a threat to various labor unions, the height of this frustration culminated in a manhunt for Filipino men who danced with white women at a local hall.[51] This animosity toward Asian men was not unprecedented. The *Grizzly Bear*, the publication of the Native Sons of the Golden West, ran the question, "Would you like your daughter to marry a Japanese?" They would continue, "If not, demand that your representative in the Legislature vote for segregation of whites and Asiatics in the public schools."[52] This narrative has continued to shape the sex-craved stereotype for contemporary Asian American men as witnessed by the character of Long Duk Dong, an international student in the 1984 Brat Pack movie, *Sixteen Candles.* Dong, whose character name plays on a sexual innuendo for the male organ, became a pop-culture icon as viewers followed his first sexual encounter with a white American woman. While Dong's memorable line, "No more yanky my wanky!" thrust him into movie lore, it only reinforced the hypersexualized stereotype of Asian American men.

Ironically on the other hand, the stereotype of the asexual Asian man has equally plagued Asian American men.[53] This stereotype counters the hypersexual narrative by depicting Asian men as disinterested in their sexuality. It builds on the idea that Asian men neither have any interest in sex nor are the targets of any sexual desires and fantasies. Though the movie, *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle* (2004), is meant to be a parody of racial stereotypes in the USA, the script does not end in common Hollywood fashion. While Harold, the Asian American of Far East descent, finally "gets the girl" at the end of the movie with a prolonged kiss, the scene does not conclude with any further explicit sexual encounter as would be expected in a film with a white, male lead such as the *James Bond* series. While the life of James Bond is a stretch for the average male of any race, the point is that this has yet to occur over mainstream media with an Asian male as it has with white, black, and Hispanic males.

Asian American women have also had sexual stereotypes placed on them that parallel Asian American men but with a slightly different nuance. While Asian American men have been cast as either hypersexual or asexual, Asian American women have been stereotyped as fully sexual, whether in mystery or in docile obedience.[54] On the one hand, the Dragon Lady is akin to the sinister Fu Manchu, exotic and shadowy, yet dangerously intriguing. This stereotype was drawn largely from the character played by Ann May Wong in the film, *Daughter of the Dragon* (1931), and *Shanghai Express* (1932).[55] The stereotype is based upon the

idea that while the Dragon Lady is to be feared because of the strangeness that enshrouds her, her deviance and mystery lures into her captivity those who are curious. There is an undertone of deep sexuality to the character, though not blatantly so. On the other hand, the stereotype of the Lotus Blossom portrays on the surface, a much different appearance. Fragile, dainty, naïve and perfectly obedient, this image initially captured the fantasies of white American men through Miyoshi Umeki's role of a back-scrubbing lover of a white, American serviceman stationed overseas in the film, *Sayonara* (1957).

While Umeki helped to introduce the Lotus Blossom stereotype, it would evolve through Nancy Kwan's portrayal of the character, Suzie Wong, in the 1960 film, *The World of Suzie Wong*. Kwan's character would add an explicitly sexual and aggressive overtone to the stereotype, one that would further a growing enchantment with Asian American women. The combination of docility and obedience with an aggressive flare both on the dance floor and in the bedroom would make the Lotus Blossom an enduring stereotype for Asian American women.

The interesting point, however, between Asian American men and women concerning these stereotypes is how race and gender interlock in such fashion that differences are constructed between them. Though there is still the element of mystery among all of the Asian American stereotypes, the sexual stereotypes for women are viewed in a positive manner by those that produce and perpetuate the stereotype.[56] The same cannot be said, however, of the stereotypes for Asian American men and their sexuality. As noted above, they are seen as sexually deviant, either sex-starved or not sexual at all.

Two other stereotypes, the Forever Foreigner and the Model Minority, have also been destructive for contemporary Asian Americans. The Forever Foreigner stereotype (also called the "Perpetual Foreigner") occurs when Asian Americans, on account of their race, are not seen as fully American. Beginning with the Chinese, Asian Americans have historically faced accusations of unassimilability.[57] The early belief argued that Asians would never adjust to the demands of Western society and therefore, would not warrant full "American" status. This was largely based upon white Americans' views of the heathen Chinese's moral character. While this belief regarding the moral character of Asians continues to remain in similar form (e.g., Western culture as the standard of "normal" measure), Asian Americans who grow up in the USA, know only this country as their home, and are fully acculturated to Western ideals and practices, are

still not accepted by others as having full American heritage on account of their "racial uniforms."[58] Asian Americans of fourth and fifth generations continue to be asked the question, "Where are you from? No, where are you *really* from?" When Michelle Kwan, the heavily-favored American-born skater lost the 1998 Olympic gold to fellow American, Tara Lipinski, MSNBC ran the Internet headline: "American Beats Kwan," reinforcing the notion that regardless of the generation removed from immigration, Asians in America will not be regarded as fully American.[59]

Ironically, the Model Minority stereotype has often served as the yin to the yang of the Forever Foreigner stereotype; yet both are equally injurious. This stereotype bases its reasoning upon the belief that Asian Americans have achieved the success of middle- and upper-class, white America. Stats such as average household income and average level of education achieved are used to prove that Asians in America have fully attained structural assimilation. They, as immigrants, have used their strong work ethic to overcome any barriers to achieve the American Dream and in doing so, have become "Honorary Whites" in the process.[60] While this stereotype appears benevolent, a closer analysis reveals that this is perhaps the most devastating stereotype of the ones previously mentioned for it conceals two glaring points.

First, though it is true that some Asians in America have achieved a higher class level than other ethnic minorities including white ethnics, this is not true of all Asians. The stereotype casts *all* Asians into the same essence when viewed as a social construction; the term *Asian American* is a highly political word that does not capture the full diversity of Asians in America. Stacey J. Lee's study on Asian American youth in a Pennsylvania high school illustrates the internal diversity of Asian Americans.[61] While there are Asian American students that come from wealthy families, there simultaneously exists a group of Southeast Asians that struggle with their basic necessities. The danger of the Model Minority is that it compiles all Asian Americans into one category when in reality, it is a heterogeneous group with varying histories, cultures, and classes; not all Asians have achieved class success.

Second, the notion of the Model Minority as exemplified in the moniker, "Honorary White," is often used to pit Asian Americans against other ethnic minority groups.[62] We remember that this was nothing new as plantation owners in Hawaii used a divide-and-control strategy to pit Asian ethnic minorities against one another. As honorary white, a narrative is created around the relative success of Asian Americans in education and class. They are seen as exemplars of meritocracy and the American Dream, that

if you put your mind and will to it, anyone can be successful. Furthermore, Asian Americans are seen to have achieved success relatively quietly, refusing to organize in protest to the extent that other minorities have. The difficulty with the labels of Honorary White and Model Minority is that it does not take into account the structural obstacles that make it difficult, if not prevent altogether, some minority groups from achieving success. Moreover, the use of Asian Americans as an example increases the animosity that minority groups may have for Asian Americans which some have argued, is the buffer role Asian Americans play between Whites and non-whites.[63]

Conclusion

I have argued throughout this chapter that people are sociohistorical beings. While they may carry a measure of subjectivity, they also are individuals within a social matrix of constructed meaning. They are actors in the unfolding of their own lives. But they too are parts of a complex dynamic that imposes meaning upon them regardless of their agency. People will read meaning into others and in so doing, will uphold or deny privileges and opportunities based upon these interpretations.

Situating Asian Americans and specifically, Korean American men, within their sociohistorical context reveals a diverse experience that has been historically marred by racial and ethnic animosity and discrimination. We witness from the early immigrants to Hawaii and later to the mainland, common hardships endured on account of the immigration experience. However, we also discover from their stories the adversity they faced due to inequitable structures and beliefs aimed at them for the purpose of exclusion.

Though US policies have changed regarding Asians in America, studying contemporary theory on race poses a new problem, tacit racial discrimination notably through stereotyping. On account of stereotypes, a narrative is created regarding Asian Americans which become difficult to elude. They are the discourses that provide the hermeneutical lens through which Asian Americans are read.

Notes

1. Vivien Burr, *An Introduction to Social Constructionism* (London: Routledge, 1995); Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990).

2. Jennifer Lee and Frank D. Bean, “Intermarriage and Multiracial Identification: The Asian American Experience and Implications for Changing Color Lines,” in *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*, ed. Min Zhou and James V. Gatewood, 2nd ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 386.
3. James W. Loewen, *The Mississippi Chinese: Between Black and White* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 1–2.
4. Jay Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 9th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2007), 33.
5. I highlight two points with the term *America*. First, I understand the term to denote North, Central, and South Americas though I use it specifically here with the understanding of the USA. I am aware of the political and national issues surrounding this term, but I do this to keep consistent with the terminology of the resources I use. Second, I include Hawaii in this survey although the islands were not technically a part of the USA during the early period of which I write. I do so because of the vested business interests of Americans at the time and the ramifications these interests had on the eventual make-up of Asian America.
6. Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne, 1991); Barbara Mercedes Posadas, *The Filipino Americans* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999).
7. Ibid., 26.
8. Ronald T. Takaki, *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii, 1835–1920* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 22–23.
9. Ronald T. Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, updated and rev. ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998), 25–30.
10. Ibid., 26.
11. Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans*, 11.
12. Wayne Patterson, *The Ilse: First-Generation Korean Immigrants in Hawaii, 1903–1973* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press: Center for Korean Studies, University of Hawaii, 2000), 5.
13. While Japan severely lessened Korean migration, there remained a small trickle until 1915. See David K. Yoo, *Contentious Spirits: Religion in Korean American History, 1903–1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 36.
14. Patterson, *Ilse*, 5–9.
15. Ibid., 9.
16. Harry H. L. Kitano and Roger Daniels, *Asian Americans: Emerging Minorities*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2001), 21.
17. Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans*, 28.
18. Ibid.
19. Kitano and Daniels, *Asian Americans*, 23.
20. Takaki, *Strangers*, 179.

21. Ibid., 39.
22. Kitano and Daniels, *Asian Americans*, 24.
23. Significant numbers of Chinese laborers still entered the United States following the Exclusion Act for several reasons including the inability to practically implement a written rule, alternate entry through Canada and Mexico, the lucrative business of smuggling it afforded US officials, and the Paper Sons phenomenon. See Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration During the Exclusion Era, 1882–1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).
24. Takaki, *Strangers*, 45.
25. Ibid., 189.
26. Remarks directed at the Japanese demonstrated the sentiment toward them. Some examples were "Jap Go Home," "Goddamn Jap!" "Yellow Jap!" "Dirty Jap!" and "Japs, we do not want you." See Takaki, *Strangers*, 181.
27. Kitano and Daniels, *Asian Americans*, 60; Takaki, *Strangers*, 201–03.
28. Takaki, *Strangers*, 202–03.
29. Ibid., 208.
30. Timothy P. Fong, *The Contemporary Asian American Experience: Beyond the Model Minority*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2008), 22–23.
31. Prior to the Thind case, there had been previous instances of approved naturalization to Asian Indians based upon the technicality of race. These, including Thind's, were revoked based upon the 1923 verdict. See Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans*, 93–94.
32. Takaki, *Strangers*, 299.
33. Ibid., 270.
34. Woo-Keun Han, *The History of Korea*, trans. Lee Kyung-Shik, ed. Grafton K. Mintz (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1971), 447.
35. Yoo, *Contentious Spirits.*
36. Kitano and Daniels, *Asian Americans*, 130.
37. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994).
38. Ibid., 55–61.
39. Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 55.
40. Angelo N. Ancheta, *Race, Rights, and the Asian American Experience*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006). Ancheta provides a theoretical framework of the legal system in the United States as it pertains specifically to the legal history of Asian Americans.
41. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006).

42. Joe R. Feagin, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations* (New York: Routledge, 2000). Feagin, a white male, systematically analyzes the founding history of the United States. He argues that throughout US history, a system has been created that has privileged whites over non-whites. On account of this historical process, whites continue to enjoy these privileges.
43. Jacqueline Battalora, "Whiteness: The Workings of an Ideology in American Society and Culture," in *Gender, Ethnicity, and Religion: Views from the Other Side*, ed., Rosemary Radford Reuther (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 3–23.
44. Derald Wing Sue, *Overcoming Our Racism: The Journey to Liberation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 101.
45. There is an interesting discussion concerning who can be racist. Derald Wing Sue is representative of the theory that suggests that only Whites can be racist on account of the systemic and structural power they hold which allows them to act on any prejudice and discrimination. Sue argues that while minorities can be ethnically discriminating, they cannot be racist for lack of institutional power. Michael Omi and Howard Winant represent the opposing view which argues that all races can be racist for they all hold power to some extent in various contexts. See Sue, *Overcoming*, 30–31; Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 73.
46. Karen Pyke and Tran Dang, "'FOB' and 'Whitewashed': Identity and Internalized Racism among Second Generation Asian Americans," *Qualitative Sociology* 26, no. 2 (2003): 150–51.
47. Shunsuke Kanahara, "A Review of the Definitions of Stereotype and a Proposal for a Progressional Model," *Individual Differences Research* 4, no. 5 (2006): 311.
48. Timothy Fong, *Contemporary Asian American*, 195.
49. Takaki, *Strangers*, 104–08.
50. The term "little brown brothers" was first used by William Howard Taft who, at the time, was the first American civilian governor of the Philippines. While the term was initially not intended as a derogatory remark, it does reveal the paternalistic attitude that was prevalent during that era towards Asians and non-whites. See Kitano and Daniels, *Asian Americans*, 89; Takaki, *Strangers*, 329–30.
51. Howard A. DeWitt, "The Watsonville Anti-Filipino Riot of 1930: A Case Study of the Great Depression and Ethnic Conflict in California," *Southern California Quarterly* 61, no. 3 (1979): 291–02.
52. Takaki, *Strangers*, 201.
53. Jachinson Chan, *Chinese American Masculinities: From Fu Manchu to Bruce Lee* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Chan gives a good overview of the various sexual stereotypes of Asian American men.

54. Deborah Gee, “Slaying the Dragon,” VHS, directed by Deborah Gee, eds. Herb Wong, Deborah Gee, and Pamela Porter (San Francisco: CrossCurrent Media, National Asian American Transcommunication Association, 1987); Laura Hyun-Yi Kang, “The Desiring of Asian Female Bodies: Interracial Romance and Cinematic Subjection,” *Visual Anthropology Review* 9, no. 1 (1993): 5–21.
55. Timothy Fong, *Contemporary Asian American*, 198.
56. By making this point, I am not advocating in any way the production or the perpetuation of these stereotypes. The subjectivity of Asian American women is altered through their objectification on screen and in society. Rather, I am highlighting the difference of social meaning on account of gender and race.
57. Takaki, *Strangers*, 246.
58. Robert E. Park, “Human Migration and the Marginal Man,” *American Journal of Sociology* 33, no. 6 (1928): 890.
59. Timothy Fong, *Contemporary Asian American*, 231.
60. Mia Tuan, *Forever Foreigners or Honorary Whites?: The Asian Ethnic Experience Today* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 30–31.
61. Stacey J. Lee, *Unraveling the “Model Minority” Stereotype: Listening to Asian American Youth* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1996).
62. Nazli Kibria, *Becoming Asian American: Second-Generation Chinese and Korean American Identities* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 132–34.
63. Elaine H. Kim, “Korean Americans in U.S. Race Relations: Some Considerations,” *Amerasia Journal* 23, no. 2 (1997): 69–78; Claire Jean Kim and Taeku Lee, “Interracial Politics: Asian Americans and Other Communities of Color,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 34, no. 3 (2001): 631–37.

CHAPTER 3

Listening to Korean American Men Tell Their Lives

Abstract The chapter focuses on the narratives of second-generation Korean American men Hearn interviews. They narrate stories of struggle in the workplace and in dating and reveal a limitation imposed by society in their pursuit of their notions of manhood. For some of the men, their desire to become men, as understood in the USA, is severely hampered by existing and unspoken discrimination in the professional and social spheres. They are not able to achieve the normative gender scripts society deems valid on account of the structural and historical scripts society projects onto Asian American men.

Keywords Korean American men • Manhood • Workplace • Social dating • Discrimination

In his seminal book in Men's Studies, Robert Connell argues that studying masculinities is more accurate than studying masculinity. To make this argument, he lays out a typology of various masculinities which differentiate, between hegemonic masculinities and marginal ones. Though this distinction highlights racial difference, it does not nuance enough the various social locations among the marginalized.[1] Though Asian American males do engage and glean from the research of Black and Latino studies

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of masculinities, it would be incorrect to assume that they share the same social location. For many Asian American men, they do not possess some of the power that Black and Latino men in society possess. Historically, the political voices to which Asian American men turn when acts such as the Vincent Chin slaying are committed have been far less than Blacks and Latinos. Chin, a 27-year-old Chinese American was bludgeoned to death with a baseball bat in Detroit in 1982 when two white auto workers blaming *Japan* for the automobile downturn, killed him. Pouring salt on the wound, the two murderers were initially sentenced to three years' probation as the Asian American community was slow to respond politically. This is a far cry from the African American community having the voices of Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Jesse Jackson, and Al Sharpton and the Latino American community with Cesar Chavez, Antonio Villaraigosa, and pop icons such as George Lopez who have and will speak politically. Though it can be argued that the highest profile (even after the marital scandals) Asian American today is Tiger Woods (higher than political figures such as Senators Daniel Inouye and Leland Yee, and Governor Bobby Jindal), his Thai ethnicity and majority Asian race, are often trumped in media by his African American race, thus often rendering the former two invisible.[2] One can argue this is due to the historical patterns of the one-drop rule within the legal system of the USA. The rule states that a person is considered Black if they have just one drop of black blood regardless the majority of their race.[3] While the rule has since been made unlawful, it still culturally remains and may be a reason as to why the media and society view Woods as Black more than any other race or ethnicity. Furthermore, the issue of subjectivity and agency still remain. Tiger Woods, who self identifies as a "Cablinasian" (part Caucasian, Black, Native American, and Asian) and technically "more Thai than anything," is not seen as such.[4] His racial script is written for him by others.

Gender, Race, and Disadvantage

A summation of contemporary feminist critique is this: one's sex affects one's experience in life not because there is something inherently different between boys and girls, but because society expects and reacts to various sexes differently. Social construction theory argues that a person's gender (i.e., what one does to enact their sex) is in effect, limited to the ideals and expectations that society places upon this person. On account of this

limitation, a person is narrowed into fulfilling society's expected gender roles. A young male will be a boy only if he demonstrates certain traits and behaviors. Social construction theory, however, argues against the notion that a young boy will wear blue, play with cars, and show aggression not so much because there is something biologically inherent within him as a male that causes him to act in this way, as much as the position contends that a boy will do these because society has created certain expectations of boys that are reinforced in their reoccurring performance. Society creates a gender script that projects acceptable behavior. There is too much social pressure to give a boy a pink blanket, Barbie dolls, and exhibit non-aggressive behavior; the gender script does not allow for this. The parents, in this respect, are narrowed in their choices of what is legitimate and valid parenting. Furthermore, persons committed to a notion of *biological essentialism* (i.e., biological sex determines behavior such as aggression) may not have an understanding of an alternative gender script and when confronted with one, interpret it as deviant.[5]

What is one to do, however, with boys and men who do not exhibit these gender scripts? Moreover, what is one to do when society does not interpret and validate, on the whole, these gender performances upon those who enact them, as I heard among the Korean American men I interviewed? As gender roles inevitably change with the currents of society, what are we to make of the historical scripts of Korean and Asian men in the USA and what are we to make of the gender script now?

The previous chapter may give some clues as to how to answer these. Asian Americans have historically faced many stereotypes that have produced scripts through which they have been seen in the USA. For Asian American men, as it has been for Asian American women, these scripts have been further confined on account of gender. Stereotypes such as the Perpetual Foreigner and Yellow Peril have cast dark shadows over Asian Americans. The hyper- and asexual stereotypes have further narrowed this script for Asian American men. In addition to these, the Glass Ceiling or Bamboo Ceiling hypothesis provides another clue. It contends that while Asian Americans have average incomes comparable to those of white Americans and have surpassed Whites on average in professional jobs, they remain under-represented in managerial and upper echelon positions relative to their educational success, particularly in Corporate America.[6] Furthermore, while Asian American men may, on the whole, have an average income on par with white men, they have a lower average

income to comparable Whites "when occupation and industry are taken into account."[7]

Race in the Workplace

I asked the men in my interviews if and how they saw race as an issue in their workplace. Since the men were from various life stages and at different points in their professional careers, I was especially interested in those men who have worked in Corporate America and thus understand the dynamics of this culture. The younger men who had not worked in Corporate America tended to answer that race was generally not a factor although they acknowledged that it used to be one. In their view, times have changed and employers and coworkers look at the individual and not the color or race of a person. These men often exemplified the colorblind rhetoric and reasoning discussed earlier in Chap. 2, that if racism is experienced, it is an individual phenomenon and not a systemic one.

One younger male in his twenties who does work in Corporate America was a bit more ambiguous when discussing race and society. On the one hand, he felt that race is a factor "in the overall broad spectrum of society," but on the other, continued to give an example of this type of racism as the telling of "jokes or you know, just subtle phrases or the way people phrase things."[8] When I asked him about race and work, he shared that Asian Americans do have an advantage in gaining employment because the stereotype is that they "work hard [and are] very smart people" therefore the belief that employers are willing to hire them more readily than other races. I pressed him further to reflect on Asian Americans at the top levels.

Mark Umm, you're working Corporate America?
Chris Yes.
Mark Do you see that Asian males are being hired at the top levels?
Chris Some, definitely some.
Mark Men or women or both?
Chris Mostly men. But yeah, you do not see as many Asian American men even still in the higher tiers of the corporate ladder. I don't know if that's necessarily because of our racial discrimination. A lot of what I found out working in Corporate America is, a lot of people in the higher-ups, they do have some kind of time, whether it be through friendships or families, and it has nothing to do against not liking this or that worker. It's just [that] they're family or they're friends. They are going to have favoritism because of that factor. Asian American

> men who made it to the top on their own, I believe they are highly respected. They just have this demeanor about themselves saying you know, to show through their actions that they can get the job done and yet they don't demand respect. It's just something that you can see. It emanates from them. You know I'll work hard and I'll get the job done.[9]

Chris observes that Asian American men, though not substantially, have succeeded at the top levels. His reasoning is significant, however, as he believes that those persons in the top levels have come into these positions by way of social networking, either through friendships or family relationships. Contrastingly, the Asian American men who have broken into the upper administrative tier have done so because of their "demeanor" and the "respect" they command. Alejandro Portes argues that persons who possess social capital are those related to others who become the source of a person's gain.[10] Though one's financial and cultural capital might be somewhat lacking, if a person has the right contacts with influence and resources, then through these robust social networks, one's potential advancement are expanded and realized. For Chris, Asian American men who possess lesser social capital than Whites, rise up into upper administration because of hard work or something within one's character, not on account of their relational resources.

Several of the men pointed to the fact that they felt like they had to work harder in their jobs because of their race. When I asked Michael, who worked in a Fortune 500 company, to comment about race in the workplace he said:

> I think a Korean-American male working in Corporate America…[has] to prove [himself] even more than a white person, a white male….I don't think they respect you as much if you're Asian….You know I noticed [who the partners and executives were] and it did impact my work life. Sometimes you feel like it's unfair. You're doing just as much as another person is but he or she is getting the promotion and you don't.[11]

Charles, who has achieved director status at a Fortune 500 company, shared how he too feels the need to work harder than his peers in order to stand out and prove himself. He discloses that for a recent presentation he and a white female colleague gave, he had to do all of the "heavy lifting" preparing the presentation while she hadn't "lifted a finger" and yet she ended up receiving more credit than him.[12] Moreover, both Charles and Michael note that they work against Asian American stereotypes that

depict them as the hard worker who doesn't "rock the boat"[13] and is not the "finance guy."[14] Charles feels that he needs to go as far as making jokes about Asians to break the stereotype his colleagues may hold so that it helps to make them more comfortable and relaxed around his presence.

Several men in their thirties pointed out the difficulty of breaking into the upper ranks. I initially asked them if they had observed many Asian Americans in upper administration to which they all responded that they had seen very little. When I asked them why they thought this was so, they pointed to various reasons. Isaiah, who is also at the director level and wants to be president of a company someday, noted that he did not know of many Asian Americans who had climbed their way up the "corporate ladder working for 'the man'." Additionally, when Asian Americans were in the upper echelon, it was because of either having started their own company or having worked their way up in ethnic-specific niches and institutions.[15] He could only give me one example of an Asian American male who had achieved a Vice President position at Microsoft. Asking him to explain why this was so, he reasoned that the relative newness of Asian immigration has prevented an older and experienced critical mass from forming. That is, because Asians have not been here long enough and are only in their "forties and fifties" now, and this prevents them from advancing. Yet research from an executive research and consulting firm seems to debunk the idea of youthfulness as a deterrent for corporate advancement. Their research reveals that in 2008, anywhere from 77% to 82% of the CEOs of the S & P 500 companies were in two age brackets with the average age in their mid-50s.[16]

Charles reasons differently, implying that one's ability to blend into the dominant culture is what may be the key to advancement. He notices that the Asian American male in his company who has achieved upper level status could "almost be white." He detailed how the way he talks, his background, and his mannerisms make him look like he's a "part of the white community."[17] Furthermore, Charles offers that his company nurtures a fraternity feel where coming from a "certain school" and having a "certain background" puts you in a "club":

> So a lot of [being in the club] is [because of] your reputation, your relationship with the uppers, people that are in upper management. And a lot of it is like, yeah, a lot of white people.[18]

He further mentioned that the graduate school you have attended also puts you in a favorable position with those already in the club. When I

asked him if Asians have attended these schools, he replied affirmatively that they have and yet have been passed over for promotion for upper management or administration positions or worse, have been demoted for no apparent reason.

Michael pointed out the racial disparity of upper administration at his company:

> You can see…who the partners are and what race they are, the directors, and for the most part, they are not Asian. There are more non-Asian executives or [those in] leadership roles.[19]

He shared the belief that while people want to hire persons who are "good at what they do," "knowledgeable" and "hard workers." He also pointed to what sociologists call the homophily principle, [20] the idea that people like to be with people who are most like themselves, summed up best in the adage, "birds of a feather flock together":

> The people making those decisions [to hire], they choose people that they are comfortable with, that they can relate to and sometimes, I agree it's easier to relate to your own kind.[21]

While it is reasonable to want to work with people you have commonalities with, it becomes an issue of justice and equality of access when those at the top who have the power to hire and promote are different than oneself particularly in race and ethnic culture, and yet, similar to one another. The homophily principle and social capital theory work hand in hand to deter those who want to, from readily entering the elite tiers.

Abe, who works in the public sector, finds that one's reputation is perhaps the most important factor in upward movement.[22] Because promotion in his line of work weighs heavily upon recommendations, it behooves employees to build up their resume by working hard and showing extra effort beyond scheduled work hours. Poor performance casts a large shadow over a person's reputation almost certainly prohibiting one from any promotions. Though Abe reasons that there is less "club" mentality now than there was previously by superiors when an employee goes for promotion, it appears that reputation could still function in such capacity, especially in light of the aforementioned social capital theory. Caricatures of employees still travel by "word of mouth" thus making who you know, or at the least, who knows you, a major resource. Furthermore, Abe argues that one's ability to acquire inside knowledge about the procedures and

the protocol of becoming an employee in his work benefits entry-level persons. While this knowledge is often offered by their superiors, Asian Americans do not take advantage of this resource because they hardly know anyone in their line of work and thus are unaware of this capital. Therefore, while this inside information is available, according to Abe, Asian Americans have little access to it which produces a lack of what Pierre Bourdieu calls "cultural capital," acquired knowledge that results in improved status and power.[23] Furthermore, one sees how a person's low social capital negatively affects one's cultural capital.

Dating and Social Status

Another area where Asian American men may find themselves at a disadvantage is social status and dating. Though contested,[24] hypergamy theory (i.e., marrying up) suggests that Asian American women have a higher likelihood of advancing in social standing through marriage than do Asian American men.[25] The theory argues that in interracial marriages, persons will marry to "maximize their status by marrying the most advantaged individual with the highest racial status."[26] It is argued, however, that Asian American men do not carry the same social capital that Asian American women do and as a result, have a more difficult time marrying interracially, particularly with white women.[27]

When dating and relationships came up in the interviews, I was curious to see how the men viewed themselves in terms of race: "How do you see race playing into your dating relationships?" The men in their twenties saw that race was not a significant factor when it came to interracial dating. It is important to note that their reflections considered several factors including society, parents, and their own preference. A few of the men pointed out that American society is more accepting of Asian American men dating non-Asian American, most notably, white American women. Jimmy and Chris both mentioned that the Asian American male is now more socially accepted and even has a growing social appeal. Jimmy observes that Korean American men are seen by non-Korean American women as "very caring, very generous and very thoughtful, the ideal guy essentially…completely the opposite" of what he understands is a Korean American woman's perspective.[28] Chris shares a similar reflection stating that Asian men in America are seen more positively, basing this upon a recent surge in pop-culture:

> …you see more and more Asians, popular authors, actors, [and] singers coming up and having a much more positive influence for Asian males not only in America but around the globe. You know Rain?[29] You know he

> was considered the most influential person of 2008 or something like that. And you know you have actors like John Cho…[and] Daniel Henney who's considered to be one of the sexiest men alive…And you know, he's Korean American or part Korean-American and part Caucasian I believe. I think slowly those racial lines are coming to a close but it is a slow and steady process that's happening even now.[30]

What made Chris' remarks interesting is that he prefaced the above quote sharing that "a lot of times, society did give us Asian men a more negative and sometimes, even a more homosexual image."[31] He brought up a magazine that ran a centerfold article with a controversial heading "Metrosexual or Homosexual?" in reference to Asian males. Chris argued that by framing the headline in such a way, the article was posing a false binary script of the Asian male as either [metrosexual] or gay without any possibility of him as a heterosexual normative masculine person. John said something similar when he was explaining why he thought Asian males rank near the bottom in social standing. "I think I put them near the bottom somewhere…because I think they are the least…aren't they like asexual, Asian guys that are…just not desirable in any way?"[32]

When the men in their twenties discussed interracial dating in terms of their parents' preferences, they shared that although they understand their parents' desires for them to marry a Korean woman, their parents are beginning to be more flexible as these men have slowly begun to date non-Koreans. On account of society's gradual acceptance of interracial dating, they reason their parents too have altered their thinking to reflect this shift. Lastly, these men also do not see race as an issue in terms of their personal preference. Chris mentions that an ideal woman would be of no particular race, naming examples of Hollywood stars from various races to demonstrate his own impartiality and society's non-discriminatory preferences of beauty.

The men over thirty and one in his twenties, however, tell a slightly different narrative. While they do not hold to personal racial preferences (i.e., they would date women of various races), one's cultural tradition is a growing realization of importance to these men, particularly as they think beyond dating to marriage. Interestingly, all of the married men had Korean American spouses, again, possibly explained by the culture argument—their spouses would understand their own background better if they too grew up Korean American.

Though cultural reasons appear to be valid rationale in explaining the restriction of Asian American men to ethnic-specific relations, another reason arose from the interviews: they simply couldn't on account of perception (society's and their own) and social barriers. A few of them went as

far as to share that dating white American women vaults their social status. As I talked to Isaiah about race and dating and whether he believed Asian American males have equal opportunity to interracially date, he offered that "the Asian male, as a lot of us know, just has a stigma from the media, from the movies" which creates a large social hurdle to overcome.[33] The Asian male stigma consists of the:

> Kind of nerdy, small, Asian guy. You know he's good at math or good at some science thing but you know, not the cool guy. Not the main character right? He's always the sidekick, starting you know with Bruce Lee and the Green Hornet and you know, *The Hangover*. The guy [in *The Hangover*] is just like a goof and [he carries] all of the different stereotypes, thus the reason why the attractive white female is the Holy Grail of dating.[34]

I asked him if this status exists more with a white woman than if he were to date a Korean American woman.

Isaiah I hate to rate but…if the Korean girl's an eight and the white girl's a seven, I might take the white girl just because…that's almost a trophy girlfriend right? Like, "Hey, I can do this."

Mark Like you've made it?

Isaiah Right…that's the pinnacle for the Asian guy.…To be able to date a good-looking white girl…means that she's foregone all the other frat boys or other guys that she's used to growing up with and seeing. And there is still another caveat. You can't be a whitewashed, can't-speak-any-other-language Asian guy. You can't just be a white-bread Asian guy.…For me it only counts if you actually have some culture in you…because that girl would have to accept all of that, you know? She would have to accept the fact that you're not a third or fourth generation who speaks no language; you just look different. You have a parent that doesn't speak English and that she would have to try to be able to communicate with your parents, with your family members. Or imagine her at a family function.… So to be able to find that girl and package her up as a good-looking girl that wants to date *you*, that's a big achievement.[35]

Ken too shared the effects social stereotypes have upon Asian American men, particularly in the area of physical anatomy and masculinity. I inquired why he thought a "big penis," his symbol of masculinity, was such a significant feature in society.[36]

Mark Why do you think penis size is such a big thing in society? I mean why do you think that is the standard for most men…and not say, height or hand size?

Ken Yeah I think height is another one. There is definitely a discrimination [towards] height here especially in the United States. And that's why I think the Asian man struggles so much in his masculinity compared to other [races].

Mark Because of physical outward appearances?

Ken Yeah because we're stereotyped as having small penises and being shorter than most other guys. So in that case, nobody wants to date an Asian male…I think you see that. You see a lot of Asian women dating men from other [races] but not the other way around. You see it but not that often; but I think I've seen it more often these days. I read an article in *Time* magazine where the title was, "Asian Men are on a Roll" and there was a picture of an Asian guy with a white girl.[37] They were talking about how more and more women are finding Asian men to be the ideal partner.

Mark How did that make you feel when you read that?

Ken I was like, "Yeah!" (emphatically)....But I grew up with that stereotype…that I am an Asian and can only date other Asian women [and that] I'm not attractive to other cultures [or] other women from other ethnicities….Or like my friend, he said he dated a white girl and I was like, "Wow! You dated a white girl?"

Mark He was Asian?

Ken Yeah he was Asian. He was short too….I was like, "How did you pull that off dude?" I would love to date a white girl one time.[38]

John, in his twenties, reasons similarly that the lack of Asian male-white female dyadic relations is due to the perception of Asian males:

> My cousin was telling me about a project he did when he was in college, something about the way Asian males are perceived…as being the least masculine males…. Just the fact that you don't see the Asian guys with the white girls…says something about the way Asians perceive themselves or are perceived. So I just feel like there's girls that just would never go out with Asian guys.[39]

Charles, now married to a Korean American woman, grew up dating exclusively non-Korean American females and more specifically white females in junior high and high school because doing so would confirm

that he was different than other Korean Americans. This self-confirmation was particularly strong for Charles as he spent the majority of his life trying to prove himself among his friends. He admits that part of trying to date white girls was his rejection of anything Korean. Yet listening to him narrate his life story, it also appears that he needed validation and confirmation from society outside of Korean America concerning his social status, particularly as he moved from Koreatown to a predominantly white suburb right before junior high school.

Charles Throughout junior high and high school…I wanted to be associated with white girls….

Mark When you had a white girlfriend or you hung out with white girls, what did that do for you?

Charles It made me feel like a man.

Mark As opposed to if you would've dated a Korean girl?

Charles Yeah. To me, Korean girls weren't…as womanly as white girls. White girls were already…developed. You know they had bigger breasts….They were just more beautiful to me. Koreans were like, kind of weak, not attractive….I wanted to be associated apart from [the Korean crowd]. I didn't want to be like them because to me, they were just like another mold. They didn't stand out. I always wanted to stand out….I always felt inferior. I always knew I could never bring [a white girl] home and…my parents could have a normal conversation. It was always because of what other people, how other people saw me or felt about me. It was always [people's perceptions of me that] was more important than the relationship.[40]

While the Glass Ceiling and hypergamy theories are contestable, they appear plausible in light of the history of Asian men in America and the social standing they appear to hold as heard in the interviews. Yen Le Espiritu cautions, however, that while in a racialized context where Asian American men have historically and systematically been disadvantaged, they should also be studied by scholars as simultaneously holding both subordination and domination within US society.[41] One might observe from the interviews that on the one hand, Korean American men in later life stages, view society's perception of themselves as relatively insignificant compared to other racial men. Yet they too are not without some measure of social power and status. Some of the men, for instance, implicitly point out the

lesser status of Asian American and Korean American women in the workplace, society, and the family sphere. They point out that Asian Americans in upper company leadership levels are usually men, though they observe that this is changing to the benefit of Asian American women. Furthermore, the language some of the men used to speak about Korean American women when the interview turned to the topic of dating appeared to depict women as objects instead of subjects; the men are not any less beholden to a critique of their own complicity in oppressive subjugation. The challenge then is for those working with Korean American men to narrate a simultaneous story of agency and oppression in such a way that works for their own, and other's, internal freedom and systemic liberation.

Conclusion

Korean American men, on account of the racial and gender scripts historically placed upon them by society and their families of origin, face numerous obstacles that keep them from finding deeper meaning, integration, and validation of who they are becoming as men. Consequently, when opportunities to integrate socially normed practices and realities in their lives are limited or prohibited altogether (e.g., making it as a CEO of a large company), I contend they will look for these in other areas, even if it harms themselves and others. The stories these men share reveal the complexity of their lives in public and private spheres. I shift this peer into the lives of Korean American men to the world of Korean American church sports in the southern California area. As witnessed among the Chinese, Japanese, and Indian, ethnic-specific sports becomes a site of contestation. Here, Korean American men begin to feel like the hegemonic and heteronormative "man" the social script produces and norms.

Notes

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24. Colleen Fong and Judy Yung argue that people date and marry interracially for many reasons, not only on account of social status and capital. See Colleen Fong and Judy Yung, "In Search of the Right Spouse: Interracial Marriage among Chinese and Japanese Americans," *Amerasia Journal* 21, no. 3 (1995/1996): 77–98.
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28. Jimmy, interviewed by author, July 10, 2011.
29. A Korean pop-star, Rain, was included in a 2006 *Time* magazine article as being one of the hundred most influential persons of the year. He was also voted as one of *People* magazine’s hundred most beautiful persons in the world in 2007.
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32. John, interviewed by author, July 18, 2011.
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CHAPTER 4

Sports and Korean American Men

Abstract As limitations persist for Korean American men on their public performances of manhood, they search for agency and power in other avenues and ways. Sports becomes an alternative site to practice and perform heteronormative and hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, as witnessed in other Asian American communities, sport becomes a site of resistance to the discrimination Korean American men experience in society. In Southern California, the sponsoring and organizing of sports tournaments by Korean American churches presents a possible space to display one's manhood and agency among their peers and fans. Utilizing various theories of sport with participant observation, Hearn critically analyzes what occurs at these tournaments, from sheer enjoyment, to public constructions of hegemonic masculinity.

Keywords Sports • Hegemonic masculinity • Sports tournaments • Korean American Church • Heteronormativity • Church sports tournaments • Hypermasculinity

Introduction

Imagine a county park with a row of tall trees lining the outer edge of a large opening. In the opening is a grassy field. It is a sunny Saturday in southern California, which, as one might expect, means there are several

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different athletic events occurring. Soccer, softball, more soccer, and football are taking place this day. Adult male Hispanics play their weekly soccer league match; white friends of mixed gender gather to play recreational softball; kids of diverse races run around in a mob to chase a ball in what appears to be a youth league game of soccer. One may be surprised, however, when they turn their attention to the footballers. Here, on the grassy field in the large opening are over two-hundred men, mostly Korean American and second-generation, who have gathered to play in a semi-annual flag-football tournament. They represent sixteen different Korean American churches from the greater Los Angeles area and come with intricate formations, elaborate plays, uniforms, and unquestioned passion.[1]

I summarize my argument to this point: Korean American men are complex social beings whose gender constructions of masculinity are largely the result of social influences. I propose in the previous chapters that on account of social scripts and realities that disempower Korean American men, they look to other sites and facets of life to gain a measure of social power and status. When they do so, they are not only able to grasp a better sense of who they are, but perhaps more significantly, who they are as men, and men in society. I offer this chapter on men and sports as a specific example of the way Korean American men play out their masculinity—they are performing gender and often do so in hypermasculine ways. What makes this data all the more interesting is that these highly competitive and hypermasculine forms of gender performance occur not within a city league or an informal game of pick-up football but in highly organized church-sponsored tournaments.

Through sport and these church tournaments, Korean American men now have an alluring and alternative opportunity to socially construct and perform their masculinity. I also point out that this masculinity is based upon a hegemonic ideal that valorizes posturing and destructive competitiveness. For some, it does not matter that these tournaments are sponsored by Korean American churches; they are public opportunities to showcase one's manhood. For others, they believe their spirituality should account for something when people step onto the field, therefore, their attempt to reshape these hegemonic standards.

Korean American Church Sports Tournaments

Turkeybowl and the Fruit of the Spirit Bowl (FOTS)—two football tournaments—symbolize the energy and significance of church sports events for Korean Americans in southern California.[2] These two tournaments are

held in the Fall and late Winter respectively and attract not only numerous participants, but equally passionate fans who eagerly root for their church. A secured spot in one of the sixteen team slots are often a premium. It is not uncommon to see a waiting list of churches that were unable to give a participation commitment by the tournament director's deadline. Preference is given to churches who participated the previous year thus making it difficult for a new church to participate; they have to wait for a church to pull out.[3] Once, instead of waiting to hear word about their entrance into a tournament, one of the wait-listed churches began their own tournament that ran simultaneously in the same park, thus bringing the total number of churches to over twenty for that year. The vigor shown by the sheer numbers involved is enhanced when one considers that these are only two of many different sports tournaments organized throughout the year. While the number of tournaments hosted may be particular to the region, Korean American church sports tournaments is not a local phenomenon either as San Diego churches gather annually on Labor Day to play in a day-long grass volleyball tournament, and other indoor volleyball tournaments take place among Chicago and New Jersey area churches.

There are several ways to analyze and discuss these annual sporting events. On the one hand, to the casual observer, these events yield a simple, cursory reading; they are no more than a gathering of adults who compete in organized, competitive play and churches who gather to fellowship. In some sense, they are not much different in action than the personal and collective enjoyment shared at a local little league baseball game. On the other hand, a critical reading produces a much more complex and dynamic interpretation. These tournaments are not simply sites of physical activity and enjoyment, they are sites that produce, reproduce, and change gender, cultural, racial, and spiritual beliefs.

A Critical Reading of Sport

Critical feminists and cultural critics have exposed the multivalent and political nature of sport. Sport should not, nor cannot be taken at face value on account of the forces that contribute to the production of meaning within a cultural non-literary "text."[4] Sport, as a cultural product laden with social and political significance, now becomes a site to be read critically for the purposes of analyzing axes of social power in interlocking fashion.[5] Susan Birrell and Mary G. McDonald remind us that a critical reading of sport provides another look into gender, race,

class, and so forth, as "relations of power" and not as static categories.[6] Therefore, Korean American men at church sports tournaments cannot be read simply as a racial group of men playing organized sports competitively together. Rather, their histories and socially constructed realities in a context such as the USA, together with their own subjective experiences, make for a complex interpretation of what occurs on a Saturday twice a year.

Jay Coakley's five different social theories (functionalist, conflict, critical, critical feminist, and symbolic interactionist) provide rich and complex lenses to interpret the athletic experiences of these Korean American men.[7]

Functionalist Theory

Functionalist theory attempts to explain how society works to maintain stability through the sharing of values, beliefs, and organization. The more society can agree in unity and harmony, the better it functions as a well-oiled machine. It works, therefore, to maintain the status quo rather than disrupt it. In sport, functional theorists believe that sport can be, and is used, to produce values and characteristics that are important for the functioning of society as a whole and the progress of individuals within that society. For instance, the idea of teamwork and drive are two positive values that arise out of the organization of sport. Because individual members work toward a common cause, they are presented through sport with opportunities to work through differences and come to some resolution when these differences are in conflict. Sport is thus encouraged because it produces many individual and societal benefits. Several of the men who had played in at least one church football tournament noted in the interviews two primary goals of these tournaments; fellowship and evangelism. Abe sums up best this idea of fellowship and male bonding:

> I think that sports [are] one way God has given us an avenue between brothers. It's amazing how it can break through boundaries….I'm a big advocate [of sports] because it connects brothers like no other thing can, really fast.[8]

A major caveat, however, of functionalist theory in relation to sport, is that it assumes that all people arrive at the same meaning for sport and sports participation. That is, it does not consider well the complexities of meaning that are attached to one's investment in sport. The chief executive officer of a television network may have a completely different stake

in sport as does the single parent of a child on a local youth soccer team. Though they both have an investment in sport, the reasons behind these cause conflict as to whether to maintain the current reality of sport or to question it.

When I asked the men what they thought of Turkeybowl and FOTS and how they reconcile what they see (i.e., hyper-competitiveness and extreme aggression) with the fact that the tournaments are church-sponsored, most of them answered with the qualifier, "I know that it's supposed to be for fellowship or outreach but…." The men followed this by giving a complexity of answers including winning, looking good in front of their teammates, spectators, girlfriends and other women, and becoming *the man*.

Conflict Theory

Generally, conflict theory runs counter to functional theory. While these two theories agree that society exists as a system of integrated beliefs, values, and organization, they differ in that conflict theory views the economy, and not "general system needs," as the driving force behind equilibrium.[9] Rooted in Karl Marx's critiques of industrial and capitalist societies, the theory questions the imbalance of the control of production. Therefore, as the theory relates to sports in society, it questions the disproportion of control between the owners of competitive sport, the athletes (those who produce sport) and the average fan (the consumer of sport). The theory argues that the production of sport would look much different if it were more in the hands of the athletes than the upper-echelon owners. However, since contemporary sport is controlled largely by the owners, there is a push by those who control power, to maintain what currently exists in sports since it reinforces the economic benefits of the elite often at the expense of the lower classes. The National Football League and the NFL Players' Union resolved a heated labor dispute after the owners administered a lockout of players, thus setting off a maelstrom of lawsuits and bargaining maneuvers.[10]

There are several limitations, however, to conflict theory. First, it lacks consideration of the complexity of reasons that sustain the institution of sport. Though sport in contemporary society does carry strong underpinnings related to its commodification by media and the market and those of the economically elite, it would be remiss to believe that these are the only considerable factors that sustain sport. People participate in, and consume sports, for behavioral, cognitive, and affective reasons, not simply as pas-

sive bystanders of a larger system.[11] There is some measure of individual agency; it is not simply a social, economic machine. Second, sport is maintained not merely by those in control of the means of production, but by persons of all classes. Though the television executive might emphasize the financial side in contrast to the single parent who may stress the social interaction afforded her or his child, they both have an investment in perpetuating sport. Finally, closely related to the first two limitations, conflict theory does not consider well other factors such as race, gender, and spirituality that contribute to the social construction of sport and its significance in society and individual's lives.

Critical Theory

Critical theory questions the organization of society particularly examining existing power relations among persons and groups of people.[12] It pries into the way organizations are structured and seeks to delve below the surface to uncover complex realities. Critical theorists are not content to maintain the status quo. For by doing so, people contribute to oppressive realities that keep persons from understanding the intricacies that generate injustice.

In sport, therefore, critical theory often asks questions that address the behind-the-scene issues displayed in sport, the "back regions" as some scholars have quipped.[13] While a functionalist may view sport as a site that strengthens the moral character of teammates and even of society (e.g., how sport brings persons of all classes together), the critical theorist might question the frequent and unnecessary (for the athlete and viewer) television time-out breaks during the course of a basketball game. It is not uncommon to see a television time-out in professional or college basketball within seconds after a coach's time-out simply because it is under a certain time interval, regardless of when a previous one was taken. This type of questioning would lead to a discussion of the contractual obligations the governing body of the sport and the teams involved have with the sponsoring television network, which may lead to a whole host of other inquiries. This, then, is a goal of critical theory and its byproduct, critical thinking: to make complex that which appears simple in order to address injustices produced by a social institution such as sport.

On account of its stance toward advocacy, a shortcoming of critical theory in relation to sport may, as seen in the previous theories, be its lack

of consideration to the wide range of social meaning and significance people bring to sports. For instance, though critical theory works to reverse patterns and ideologies that keep marginal persons from freely or equally participating in sports, advocates fighting the corporate commodification of sport, particularly among urban African American youth, may have difficulty balancing advocacy with the reality that these youth now have equipment with which to play.[14] The work of critical theorists at levels of systemic change might alter the ability of an individual to participate in and enjoy a sport.

Critical Feminist Theory

Critical feminist theory builds upon critical theory as it introduces gender as a vital issue to the discourse of social stratification. Early feminist thought sought to make gender the critical piece of social analysis. However, later feminist thought would advance the earlier version by advocating for a fuller and interdependent look of gender and other axes that contribute to social power. One axis (e.g., gender) is not sufficient or accurate enough to critique cultural reproduction and social organization but must be done through a "prism of difference"[15] or a "matrix of domination."[16] One experiences life differently on account of their social location. That is, one's social location is affected by one's combination of race, gender, class, ethnicity, etc., and while one axis of power can be highlighted in discourse, it must always be done in relation to the others, as a different combination of axes will shift social status and meaning from context to context.[17]

In light of sport, feminist theory first looked to critique the differences of sports participation at all levels through the lens of gender. Critiques concerning the unequal participation of women in sports, for instance, took center stage.[18] However, as feminist theories developed, sport was now analyzed through several different lenses.[19] An integrated look into the world of sports became the main focus of feminist theorists and as a result, questions posed in earlier feminist thought now reflected a difference in depth and breadth.[20]

Interactionism

Interactionist theory maintains that as persons interact with one another, they create a system of shared symbols which in turn, give meaning to

current and future exchanges.[21] Interactionist theory emphasizes the place of entry into a critical discourse of sport.[22] Whereas the previous theories analyze the surrounding structures (e.g., economy, patriarchy) to provide assistance in reading sport, interactionist theory focuses upon behavior at the interpersonal level.[23] Therefore, analyses of a participant's identity, reasons for participation, and personal reflections upon her or his involvement, become the main focus of this approach. The primary intent is to "understand social worlds from the inside—through the perspectives of the people who create, maintain, and change them….[It is] to view culture and society from the bottom up rather than the top down."[24]

Two interrelated weaknesses emerge with this theory. First, caution is given toward the tendency to overlook structural and systemic dynamics when attempting to understand interpersonal subjectivity and meaning. Bryan Turner's reflections of the body in society and Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony highlight this concern.[25] Turner argues that, while one may choose to represent oneself uniquely, this representation is the result of structural influences that consciously or subconsciously inform a desirable imagination of the self.[26] One might choose to act in self-definition, but on account of powerful, structural forces such as the media, one's concept of self is highly influenced by these.

Gramsci's theory is similar in thought. He offers a compromise between structuralist notions that view systemic apparatuses as greatly impacting the self and culturalist approaches that view the human as prevailing agent in its ability to resist these apparatuses. For Gramsci, influence is had not through domination and force but through a struggle of ideological influence.[27] People from below accept ideologies from above as normative, even those that may contribute to their oppression. In doing so, persons are unknowingly complicit in their own oppression.

The emphasis placed upon the subjectivity of the participant(s) involved in sports contributes to a second weakness. It is difficult sometimes to suggest visionary changes in organization and structure towards fairness and equality when focus is placed primarily upon the participant's meaning-making.

An Integrated Approach

To interpret Korean American men playing sport, I emphasize the last two theories (critical feminist and interactionist) for the following reasons. Critical feminist theory offers that the construction of gender is a complex

process of power rather than a pure theory concerned only with gendered experiences. While one can observe how men use Turkeybowl and FOTS to construct social significance and personal empowerment, critical feminist theory continues to remind us of the violent and oppressive dynamics that exist in contemporary sport and how these dynamics are often the result of reinforced social meaning.[28] Critical feminist theory also argues that while men are empowered in sport, sport simultaneously reinforces the unequal relations (most notably gender and age) often experienced in Korean American communities and families because of the gender and hiearchical ideology (i.e., older patriarchal male) it portrays. But to read Korean American sports participation more accurately, critical feminist theory is balanced with interactionist theory to explore the way Korean American men make meaning through the ritual of competitive sport.

Playing by the Rules of Hegemonic Masculinity: Korean American Men Play Sports

In any good competitive sport, there are certain rules and guidelines by which to abide. Without them, disorganization and chaotic play reign; with them, however, come the possibility of boundary-shaping, social cohesion, and enjoyment. Rules are boundaries that inform players what is acceptable or unacceptable action. When explicit rules are broken, a player gets thrown in the penalty box, receives a foul, or marked with some other form of violation or infraction. When it comes to implicit rules of the game—baseball has many of these (e.g., do not step on the pitching mound during a switch between innings unless you are the pitcher)—break these and opposing teams find ways outside the jurisdiction of the referee to enforce a message that this type of conduct is unacceptable (e.g., throwing at the violating player when he next comes up to bat). Contemporary sports produces certain "rules" or normative discourses of hegemonic masculinity. By sports, I mean not only an actual competition, but the undercurrents that go into constructing what sport is today. These undercurrents include play and athleticism, but also include the economic market and social power. In my research of Korean American football tournaments, I noticed a continuum of the ways players conduct themselves on the field. On the one hand, there are those players that seem to play in a way that appears no different than the media-driven images of contemporary sports and hegemonic masculinity: the tough,

rugged, I-don't-cry image of the conquering sports athlete. Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), and professional sports in the United States such as the National Football League (NFL), overwhelmingly glorify and build their business markets and ideological image around the notion of redemptive violence and the victorious hero.[29] The "pain principle" informs men that playing through pain is courageous and when you don't, you become sissified.[30] "Conquer or you will be conquered" is the unofficial motto of this type of masculinity. It is often displayed in phrases such as "going to battle," "pulling up your jockstrap," and "be a man," while also demonstrated in trying to "one up" your opponent by "showing him up" or "juking him out of his jock." In the midst of a highly-charged game I observed, an ultra-competitive player went up to another player after his team scored a touchdown, got in his face, pointed at the player and said, "How do you like that number five?!"[31] Later, this same player after another successful play went up to a different player of the opposing team and yelled, "How do you like that number thirty-three?" At the end of one of the practices I attended prior to the tournament, a team captain informed the newer players to keep their "head on a swivel" throughout the tournament because there are many players that are willing to administer a cheap shot during a play.[32] One man described the play at FOTS this way: "A lot of guys just want to win. If they can break your leg and they can win by breaking your leg, they're going to break your leg, and that's unfortunate."[33] One year, according to the tournament director, a player had become so incensed with the actions of his counterpart that after the game, he went to his car and retrieved a bat from his trunk with the intent to come back and beat the other player up.[34]

The hyper-competitiveness and hypermasculinity exhibited at these tournaments can be explained, in part, through a mixture of the theories previously mentioned. Michael A. Messner has written extensively on the influence contemporary sport, through media and the economic market, has upon society. Building upon Sut Jhally's term, *sports-media complex* (i.e., media's influential and integrated nature with contemporary sport), Messner adds commercialization to the term (*sports-media-commercial complex*) to demonstrate how contemporary sport is an institution replete with global and economic influences that vie for society's and the consumer's attention. Sport is not simply an autonomous institution of exercise and competition but a convoluted location of competing forces. The sports-media-commercial complex shapes the way society understands

success and significance and provides images of what should be important.[35] Reports on Super Bowl XLV illustrate the massive and integrated institution sports and the market have become. The game between the Green Bay Packers and the Pittsburg Steelers for instance, was at the time, the most watched event and the most expensive program in television history having cost each thirty-second commercial slot three million dollars.[36] In the United States, eight of the top ten television broadcasts in 2010 were sporting events while the top soccer clubs globally are multimillion dollar companies that help create a multibillion dollar industry.[37] Nike, Adidas, Reebok, Fila, Puma and other shoe and clothing companies market their star athletes as persons to imitate from head to toe. Images of Michael Jordan playing through a virus that caused him to throw up multiple times in a game during the 1997 NBA finals, Brett Favre competing as the "iron man" with multiple injuries through the last few years of his career, and Tiger Woods having come out of a self-imposed hiatus from golf during the months following his marital scandal to play at the 2010 Masters tournament also contribute to the notion of the courageous athlete who competes at all costs. While marketers present an image of heroism, conflict and critical feminist theories ask at what cost and for whose benefit?

As these theories look to the macro concerns, interactionist theory considers these structural causes with the intent of understanding interpersonal explanations of Korean American men's behaviors in sports. Why do Korean American men play sports and participate in these pervasively violent tournaments? Richard Major argues that sports is a site where black men resist structural racism and institutional barriers.[38] Because Blacks do not have the same structural opportunities as that of mostly Whites, "black males' appropriation of sport as an arena of self-expression is an example of human agency operating within structural constraints."[39] Sports become a site of cultural resistance and creativity.

Historically, sports have served Asian Americans similarly in their resistance to racism and have provided a form of "cultural citizenship," the idea that Asian Americans belong as citizens even with mixed cultures and heritages.[40] For instance, Nisei Japanese Americans created sports leagues as a way to counter the social ostracism and institutional racism they experienced in the first half of the 1900s and particularly during World War II internment.[41] Chinese Americans did the same with basketball not only exhibiting their self-agency, but their ability to counter dominant stereotypes of Asian Americans, those of the unathletic and uncoordinated

Asian.[42] South Asian American men use pick-up basketball to resist cultural stereotypes that reinforce the geeky, nerdy, computer caricature they often face.[43]

There is something appealing to this idea of resistance and cultural citizenship—the space and cultural events that provide opportunity to prove that one belongs. The difference, however, between the Chinese and Japanese before them, and now their contemporary South Asian men, is that for these Korean Americans, proving oneself is largely in relation to *other* Korean Americans. The validation of one's skill and ability comes from the hands of fellow Korean Americans, not other racial groups. Other races seem to be viewed as a threat to one's ability to succeed and when this threat is taken out of the equation as in an ethnic-specific tournament, showcasing one's manhood and skill level often comes at the expense of another Korean American. They compete *against* Korean Americans rather than *with* Korean Americans, akin to competing gangs of the same ethnicity.

The responses of the men I interviewed who played in the football tournaments begin to reveal the complexity around which they play and construct their masculinity. For instance, Rodney offers that while playing in Turkeybowl or FOTS provides a physical outlet as an alternative to the college intramural games they no longer engage in, he also points to the possibility that playing in the tournaments is a way to compete and "show their stuff" specifically because they are not playing against "these big white guys" but on a more level playing field consisting primarily of Korean and Asian men.[44] Charles adds that the football tournaments are ways Korean American men can prove and differentiate themselves from other Korean American men: "It's a great way to showcase your masculinity [and to show] how strong you are." He would add that if a "Mexican" or a "white guy" played, there would be speculation that this person is a ringer and assumedly better than all of the Korean American men.[45] He would later offer that playing in Turkeybowl or FOTS makes him "feel so masculine" and then reflect, "If I played in a white FOTS, it would be different. I'd be more…intimidated. But I actually feel more empowered when I play in a Korean FOTS." Abe believes that for the participating men, FOTS offers them a legitimate opportunity to succeed. Here he impersonates them: "We can win! We can win! This is one place I can win!"[46]

Although, as I have pointed out, the use of sports as social resistance by the Chinese and Japanese differs slightly from the Korean Americans

who use it as personal proving ground, Korean Americans resist (at least personally) evolving notions of "orientalism"—images placed upon Asian Americans by Westerners and their discourses.[47] One could argue that playing football regularly is Korean American men's own version of the "cool pose" black male athletes exhibit for the purposes of gaining social status and power.[48] In a society that is increasingly inundated with sport and places great value on athletic performance as a construction of heteronormative masculinity, sport is a site where men can realize that they too belong and prove their manhood, even if it is against other Korean American men.[49]

Interestingly though, these tournaments that are sponsored for Korean American churches and are played mostly by Korean Americans, are not exclusive of other racial participants. Many players bring friends of other races to participate and are largely recruited for the purposes of fielding the most competitive team. One year a predominantly white church participated in a tournament.[50] While one might assume that having on average, taller and larger players than the other teams would grossly advantage the white church team, they placed third in their pool (of four) and did not win the tournament, having tied for third overall after playoffs. There were no official complaints by the Korean churches about their participation but had they won, their allowance might have caused an issue. Further, in juxtaposing the literature of black men and sports with Korean American men, by beating this team, it might have confirmed for the Korean American men, that at some level, they belonged with Whites. And for the white church and their fans, them not having won the tournament may have begun to disrupt any of the stereotypes they might have held of Asian and Korean American men. Jachinson Chan offers that in the face of stereotypes that contribute to racial hierarchy, "the burden of proving one's worth as a [Chinese American] man is bound by the additional burden of disarticulating the stereotypes."[51] If so, the Korean American men seemed to have held their own.

Bonding and fellowship is another reason why Korean American men continue to participate in these tournaments despite their violent nature.[52] Numerous hours in practice are spent preparing for a tournament. The idea of "going to battle" with other men and achieving a common goal is another lure. As sport serves as organized opportunity for connection, one scholar argues that boys and men do this fearfully for they are apprehensive of the potential loss of status in their interaction with other boys and men through the constant negotiation of identity positioned against

another male.[53] A man's identity is formed primarily in separation from, and in position to, others. Therefore, competition and proving oneself greater than another provides a man self-worth in this exercise of positionality. Because the need for connection is vital for men, sport becomes the safe ground where men are able to feel connected in an arena that legitimizes positioning, posturing, and competitiveness.[54]

Participation in this form of masculinity (i.e., hegemonic masculinity), however, can have its detrimental consequences for Korean American men as it does for other men of color.[55] As Korean American men participate non-reflexively in events such as Turkeybowl and Fruit of the Spirit Bowl, they become subject to both the constructive and destructive forces of sport including the perpetuation of violence and patriarchy.[56] Michael Kaufman reminds us that violence is most appropriately seen threefold: violence towards women, towards other men, and towards oneself.[57] As Korean American men find space for self-assertion and prove their manhood through church sports tournaments, they simultaneously reproduce the very dynamics and tools that oppress themselves and others. Self-assertion for many young men often manifests through the guise of "omnipotence through violence."[58] As In Ju Cho has noted, this violence often occurs within Korean American households in the form of men's abuse of their spouses.[59] She found in her study that in all categories of violence, 79% of the Korean American men had committed some form of spousal abuse from 2006 to 2007. Furthermore, 13% had slammed their wives against the wall and approximately 3% had "hit, held down, or used a weapon to make their wives have oral or anal sex."[60]

Reshaping the Rules

As I have argued to this point, church sports tournaments have produced destructive dynamics that shape, in part, who Korean American men become. This may appear ironic and puzzling considering that these are tournaments organized on behalf of, and played by, Christian churches. In some sense, the play these churches demonstrate is nothing different than what some expect in a non-religiously organized tournament. One of the respondents went as far as to say that he felt Korean American men's demonstrations of hypermasculinity were drawn out even more than city leagues because it was a *Christian* tournament. He reasoned that showing aggression was a way to step out of the stereotype of soft and passive Christianity.

Some may counter this critique that several churches use the tournaments as evangelistic tools to reach out to non-Christians and therefore, have a number of players who may not understand a Christian ethos of respect, humility, and care. Though having a number of non-Christian players present at any one tournament is undoubtedly true, there are two concerns with this reasoning. First, while there are non-Christians who exhibit the violence and the sexism that runs contrary to the ethic of social care expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, there are many *Christian* players who do likewise. Sometimes in competitive sport it is Christians who demonstrate character unbecoming of a Christian. The president of a Christian university, for instance, had the failing grade of a men's basketball team player removed so that the team could improve its chances of winning a national championship.[61] The irony of this episode was that "the president was an ordained minister for whose name the school's graduate divinity school was named, the tournament the team won was the National Christian College Athletic Association, and the failing grade in question had been earned in a religion course."[62]

During the football tournament, I observed one of the players chide a fellow teammate when his girlfriend arrived with team supplies of food and drink. Seeing the many boxes of supplies, player A asked player B if his girlfriend had brought *his* "tampons" as a way to jokingly belittle player B. I raise this example to demonstrate two aspects of sport and Christianity. First, the culture of sport carries with it a sexist and homophobic discourse that helps to differentiate the "real" men (i.e., hegemonic masculinity) from the sissy, girly ones. Second, this type of discourse and ideology appears among Christian men as readily as it does among non-Christian men and is indicative of the influences contemporary sport has among the formation of men in modern society.[63] The culture of sport is effectively invasive no matter one's religious identity if one is unconscious to the structural and spiritual influences at work. Furthermore, while it would appear next to impossible to differentiate by observation between those who are, and are not, Christian at these tournaments, it does not deter from the reality that the tournaments are organized by, and on behalf of, Christian churches. They continue to carry the name "Christian" and have the backing and sometimes leadership of pastors and other spiritual church leaders.

This leads to a second concern of using the tournaments as evangelistic tools. What are non-Christians being evangelized into as they participate in these tournaments? As Shirl Hoffman notes, perhaps Christians, and

particularly evangelical Christians, have bought into the larger culture of contemporary sport creating what Frank Deford terms “Sportianity.”[64] Here there are no differences between Christian and secular play, for competitive sport regardless the setting, *is* competitive with winners and losers. One may even contend that on account of the *Christus Victor* or the battles fought (and sometimes won) in the both the Christian and Hebrew scriptures, high competitiveness and aggressive play help to pave the way for a theological imagination that welcomes this behavior. As one of the men reflected, “Sometimes it’s hard on the football field to see who God is because some guy is in your face going boom, boom (making physical hitting motions) and then he throws you on the ground and just walks over you.”[65]

Several aspects, however, reveal that this type of conduct is contrary to participants’ and spectators’ understandings of Christianity. First, the gathering of all the teams prior to the beginning of play is telling. Like tournaments before, there was a time for all the participants to come together in worship. The director gathered all of the teams and had the players integrate and “stand next to somebody not from your church” because “we are all one in Christ.”[66] After quick introductions, the director continued by exhorting players that we “don’t play for riches here” but store up “treasures in heaven” as a way to encourage the men to “remember who we play for, for God and Christ.” He would continue to add that this type of play is to not “lay out guys.” This message is similar to the other tournaments in which I have participated, as pastors in charge of the message often remind players that they play “for Christ” and “in the spirit of Christ.” Following the message by the director, a couple of young men led the participants in singing two contemporary praise songs. I noticed that while a number of men did not know the words to “Give Us Clean Hands” and “How Great Is Our God,” several men closed their eyes, raised their hands and sang enthusiastically, much like they do in second-generation Korean American worship services[67] and is common among Evangelical worship.[68] At the end of the singing, the director then led us in a time of prayer before play commenced.

A second reason why I believe overt displays of aggression and physical play are contrary to participants’ and organizers’ views of Christianity is that prayer was a key element throughout the day. Teams were encouraged to pray together at the middle of the field before and after every game. While the prayers before the game mostly occurred, those after the games waned as the day went on, the competitiveness increased, the stakes drew

higher, and the frustration heightened when a team lost. Moreover, the substance of the prayers players offered is also telling of what their expectations are and what actually occurs at these tournaments. The prayers offered by team captains and pastors prior to the game mirrored those of the tournament directors as they offered petitions to God to help players "play in the spirit of Christ" and "for Christ" in addition to prayers for "protection from injury." Prayers following games included thanksgiving for "no major injuries," forgiveness for the attitudes and actions players may have exhibited during the game, and the reminder that we are "all brothers in Christ at the end of the day."

The incongruity of these football tournaments with Christianity is also the perspective of non-participants. While most fans cheered their teams on respectfully, there have been a couple of instances where I witnessed a fan challenging a player to a fight after the game because they were so incensed with the player's actions. Though this is an anomaly of the actions of most fans, there is something to be said about the views of those who do not regularly attend these tournaments yet know what takes place at them. I had a conversation with a person whose comments sum up well the sentiments others have shared concerning the tournaments. He said there needs to be something done for the tournaments to reflect more a "Christian spirit."[69] When I pressed him a little about what he thought this spirit would look like, he answered that it wouldn't lead to such "aggressiveness and trying to demolish each other," that players' "attitudes would be better," and there would be less "hyper-aggression."

These points concerning the compatibility of church football tournaments and Korean American Christianity seem to reveal an implicit assumption shared by most, if not all, who have experienced these tournaments. Participants—whether players, coaches, directors, pastors, or fans—appear to understand that these football tournaments elicit something contrary to their understanding of Christianity. Therefore, in addition to the way Christianity is explicitly used to frame the tournament, there are the constant exhortations to play "in the spirit of Christ," "for Christ," and the reminders that we are all "one in Christ."[70]

Though this depiction of what occurs gives an accurate description, it does not tell the whole story. There are those who try to play in a qualitatively different way on account of their commitments to Christian spirituality. Some realize that a contact sport such as football frustrates their ability to live according to their understanding of scripture and Jesus' ethics of love and respect. As a result, some withhold from playing because

they know the violent and aggressive nature that arises within them when they participate. There are those, however, who knowing the aggression they will confront, continue to play because they want to participate in a more cordial and "Christ-like" way. To hold oneself in this manner includes playing fair (i.e., no cheap shots), helping opponents up when the play is over, giving compliments, interacting with the referees with respect, exemplifying hard play, and viewing their opponent as persons rather than opponents to overcome. One hears this paralleled in Abe's voice:

> For me, I don't really care about winning that much. As long as I know I had a good game….I think [playing in a different spirit] is something that we should try to do especially when we have an opportunity with non-Christians [who play] sports with us. We could reach out to them and let them see a glimpse of God.[71]

Conclusion

I present the world of church football tournaments as an example of how Korean American men perform gender.[72] When Korean American men find relatively few avenues to exert their sense of self in ways that society deems valid and acceptable, they find other avenues and sites to do so. TurkeyBowl and Fruit of the Spirit Bowl are two of these possibilities. Through sport, Korean American men have the opportunity to perform masculinity, often to the detriment of other Korean American men and their own selves. However, it is also a way to gain agency and practice their spirituality. As I turn to the following chapter, I maintain that Korean American Christian spirituality has served as an organizing structure that provides stability for these men while it simultaneously constructs gender ideologies that largely prevent men from establishing mutual relations with others.

Notes

1. "Korean American" here refers to the *second-generation* Korean American churches. These churches are either completely independent second-generation Korean American English-speaking ministries (i.e., having no financial or spatial ties to a mother church) or the English-speaking ministries of a first-generation Korean American church (i.e., have both independent and dependent responsibilities toward a first-generation church). The tournaments of which I speak are for second-generation Korean Americans. There are separate tournaments for the first generation.

2. For all sports, there are numerous tournaments per year that are organized for Korean American churches for both men and women. This does not include the tournaments for Korean American women or the tournaments for the first generation.
3. I have had first-hand experience with much of what I describe including the numerous communications from the tournament directors to the captains of the participating churches.
4. Susan Birrell and Mary G. McDonald, eds., *Reading Sport: Critical Essays on Power and Representation* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000), 3.
5. Mary G. McDonald and Susan Birrell, "Reading Sport Critically: A Methodology for Interrogating Power," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 16 (1999): 283–300.
6. Birrell and McDonald, *Reading Sport*, 5.
7. Jay J Coakley, *Sports in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 9th ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2007), 32–52.
8. Abe, interview with author, July 24, 2011.
9. Coakley, *Sports in Society*, 39.
10. "Judge Says N.F.L. Lockout Ruling to Take 'Couple of Weeks'," *New York Times*, April 6, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/07/sports/football/07nfl.html?ref=football (accessed April 7, 2011).
11. Barry D. McPherson, James E. Curtis, and John W. Loy, *The Social Significance of Sport: An Introduction to the Sociology of Sport* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Books, 1989), 11–14.
12. Stephen D. Brookfield, *The Power of Critical Theory: Liberating Adult Learning and Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).
13. McPherson, Curtis, and Loy, *Social Significance of Sport.*
14. Judith Waldrop, "Shades of Black," *American Demographics* September 1, 1990, 34; E. Bun Lee and Louis A. Browne, "Effects of Television Advertising On African American Teenagers," *Journal of Black Studies* 25, no. 5 (1995): 523–36.
15. Maxine Baca Zinn, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, and Michael A. Messner, eds., *Gender through the Prism of Difference*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), 6.
16. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 222.
17. Ibid.
18. Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo, eds., introduction to *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Books, 1990), 2.
19. Susan Birrell and Cheryl L. Cole, eds., *Women, Sport, and Culture* (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1994); Messner and Sabo, *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order.*

20. Critical feminist theory appears to depict best this development among feminist theories as it incorporates many of the previously mentioned theories into an integrated methodology for critical analysis particularly as it relates to issues of power.
21. Coakley, *Sports in Society*, 47.
22. While each of these theories consider elements of the other and are not "pure" in this sense, for theoretical purposes, I will consider them distinct from one another understanding the risk of sounding reductionist.
23. Messner and Sabo, *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order*, 27.
24. Coakley, *Sports in Society*, 48.
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49. Ross Runfola argues that the workings of white society have contributed to the super-machismo attitude of black men through two ways. First, they have cut off black men from other arenas of social life (intellectual, political, and economic) and two, having provided sports as an "opiate for the black masses" as a way to keep them socially contained. Thus black men who are limited in the ways they can feel socially empowered, are "encouraged…to prove their worth by 'making it' with their body." See Ross Runfola, "The Black Athlete as Super-Machismo Symbol," in *Jock: Sports and Male Identity*, by Donald F. Sabo and Ross Runfola (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 82.
50. This was due to the opening up of slots when the initial playing date was postponed on account of rain and the originally committed Korean American churches were unavailable to participate on the new date. Furthermore, the postponed date was too close to Easter that many Korean American churches could not participate due to their church responsibilities.
51. Jachinson Chan, *Chinese American Masculinities*, 8.
52. Messner, *Power at Play*, 32.
53. Messner, *Power at Play*, 32–33.
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57. Kaufman, "Construction of Masculinity."
58. Hatty, *Masculinities*, 6.

59. While Cho does not distinguish between first- and second-generation Korean American men, the delimitations of her sampling does include men who identify as "Korean or Korean American" and is within the ages of 20 and 64. Furthermore, the questionnaires of the study are conducted in both English and Korean which also leads one to believe there were second-generation Korean American men as part of the constituency. See In Ju Cho, "The Effects of Individual, Family, Social, and Cultural Factors on Spousal Abuse in Korean American Male Adults" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2007), (accessed through ProQuest Dissertations, April 12, 2011).
60. Ibid., 162–63.
61. Shirl James Hoffman, "Whatever Happened to Play?: How Christians Have Succumbed to the Sports Culture and What Might Be Done about It," *Christianity Today*, February 1, 2010, 24.
62. Hoffman, "Whatever Happened to Play?"
63. Both of these men are active members in ministry at the church I observed.
64. Hoffman, "Whatever Happened to Play?" 23.
65. Abe, interview by author, July 24, 2011.
66. Field notes, March 19, 2011.
67. Sharon Kim, *Faith of Our Own*, 86–89; Rebecca Kim, *God's New Whiz Kids?*, 45–46.
68. Hart, *Old-Time Religion*, 172–200.
69. Field notes, March 20, 2011.
70. As a comparison, I highlight a softball tournament organized by first-generation Korean Americans in which I participated. The liturgy of worship on the program they handed out at the beginning included the playing of the tournament as *part* of the worship for the day. Contrarily, the second generation appears to have parceled out worship from play, assigning worship *before* play.
71. Abe, interview by author, July 24, 2011.
72. Another fascinating venue to study is the night club scene, particularly in Koreatown.

CHAPTER 5

Korean American Spirituality and Gender

Abstract This chapter first examines Korean American spirituality in light of American evangelicalism and Korean shamanism. Second, it looks at how its ties to traditional evangelicalism reinforce conservative notions of gender. While scholars contend that second-generation Korean American Christianity is not monolithic and varies from first-generation Korean American Christianity, Hearn offers that an analysis of gender in Korean American spirituality contests this view. Though individuals who hold to more progressive understandings of gender roles exist, there remains, on the whole, a conservatism within second-generation Korean American spirituality around issues of spiritual headship and gender. Hearn combines data from the interviews of second-generation Korean American men with ethnography at Christ Church to make his case.

Keywords Korean American spirituality • Evangelicalism • Gender roles • Church leadership • Shamanism

Introduction

As I have argued to this point, Korean American men are complex beings when viewed through a feminist web of analysis. A single axis as an analytical tool does not suffice to interpret Korean American men and their

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quest for significance and meaning. Furthermore, for Korean American *Christian* men, the search for empowerment and significance often occurs through the additional lens of spirituality.[1] One might argue that Korean American spirituality presents men simultaneously with both traditional ideologies and practices of masculinity (i.e., hegemonic masculinity) and alternative views of masculinity. American evangelicalism and its ability to curb issues of gender equality through choosing selective passages and validating these through a biblical inerrancy frame, has influenced Korean American Christianity and its beliefs and practices. Unsurprisingly perhaps, the roles of theological and pastoral leader (i.e., preacher and worship leader) in Korean American churches then are predominantly filled by men. So as Korean American men feel largely disempowered throughout society, they simultaneously find pockets of empowerment through family, social relationships, and spirituality. Yet on account of their spirituality, there are those who alter their ideology and performance of masculinity, affecting in part, their social relations.

I divide the chapter into two major sections. The first section probes a historical and sociological exploration of the Korean American church in order to uncover its significance for Koreans in America. The latter section focuses upon the influences of Korean American spirituality, notably American evangelicalism and Korean shamanism, to understand the foundational and practical pieces of Korean American spirituality. Laying this out provides a context to see gender and spirituality at work in interlocking fashion among Korean American Christian men and Korean American churches.

The Significance of the Korean American Church

Early Korean Churches in America

Beginning with the first settlers to Hawaii and later to the west coast, the Protestant church has historically served different functions for Korean immigrants and their American-born children. Early settlers, with the help of plantation owners, set up the first Korean American church in 1903 soon after their arrival in the islands.[2] The following year, a church in San Francisco was established and then again, a year later in Los Angeles.

Korean churches in the Americas were set up swiftly for several reasons. First, as many settlers were Christian—one study reports that up to 40% of the initial immigrants came from the same Incheon church[3]—many of them looked for places to worship liberally. Although Christianity was

a burgeoning religion in Korea, it was still a minority one with a different social system that competed with indigenous social and religious philosophies. Many, therefore, ventured across the Pacific with the belief, implanted by recruiters, that Hawaii was "heaven" and a place to practice, unhindered, this new-found faith.

Second, it behooved not only immigrants, but Christian recruiters and plantation owners to build these institutions. The recruitment to the islands and sustaining of Korean laborers on the plantations was facilitated by Christian ministers closely tied to American plantation businessmen. As part of the recruitment efforts of Americans, ministers lured persons they previously converted to Christianity for labor, which as David K. Yoo argues, demonstrates the inseparability of religion from geopolitical and economic interests underpinning the USA and its relations with Korea.[4] The recruitment of Koreans was a convoluted endeavor. Once on the island, owners built worship spaces to maintain plantation economy as they strategized that erecting worship spaces would discourage Korean laborers and their families from moving off the plantations for the cities or other higher paying plantations. Owners believed happier, more settled Korean Christians were better workers and not as likely to leave.[5]

Fellowship, networking, and cultural reproduction contribute a third explanation as to why early Korean immigrants quickly established churches. After six days of tireless labor, Koreans gathered on Sunday to share life together. In addition to worship, they ate together, took part in English and Korean language classes, and participated in political planning for Korea's independence from Japan. As a result of these practices, cultural reproduction was available for both the immigrant and emerging second generations. Furthermore, it provided the first generation the skills and networking that helped to ameliorate their transition to America as Japan's annexation of Korea left immigrants as exiles in liminal space.[6] The difficulty of their transition abroad was complicated by their inability to return home. Thus the church became a site of solidarity and strength for Koreans in America.

A fourth reason Korean churches arose is because of the role religion and politics played. As American businessmen and ministers combined religion with politics, Koreans comparatively did the same, using churches as sites to become politically involved in Korea's liberation from Japan. Several church leaders held dual leadership roles within church and politics and took advantage of the institution of the church to raise funds to send to Korea and to train political leaders for the independence movement.[7]

Post-1965 Korean American Churches

As the discussion moves away from the early Korean American church to a post-1965 period, it is important to understand the roles the church has played according to the historical and social milieu in which it has existed. One might say that, while the Korean American church still plays a political role, it addresses matters contextually. For instance, as early immigrants viewed the church as an independence-gaining institution, there are those who view reunification between North and South Koreas as a focus need of the contemporary church.[8] On the contrary, there are those of the second generation who, following the lead of white evangelicalism, believe the church should exist apolitically.[9] To interpret the roles of the Korean American church contextually then is to note that the perceived needs of the Korean American community are partially informed by the different generations. The internal diversity of Korean Americans prohibits us therefore, from making definitive claims about the Korean American church.

Keeping in mind the caveat to over generalize, contemporary works on Korean American Christianity however, provide a few possibilities for identifying preliminary themes and patterns. The issues of race, ethnicity, and discrimination and the negotiation of these by Korean Americans in their religious, civic, and social lives is one possible theme.[10] Antony Alumkal argues that a study of religion through the lens of race yields two responses on account of differing denominational and theological affiliation in Asian American churches.[11] On the one hand, Asian American churches influenced by American evangelicalism often frame the discussion of race in terms of unity and oneness in Christ. The "homogeneous unit" becomes the overriding principle through which to view differences such as race and consequently cover over these differences in the name of unity.[12] On the other hand, mainline Asian American churches are more apt to view race and ethnicity as essential to one's religious identity; each is equally vital to the construction of one's identity and must be seen as aspects to be embraced.[13]

A second theme that appears to emerge consists of the notion surrounding ideas of agency, hybridity, and creativity.[14] The jazz term "improvisation" captures this idea best as it demonstrates Korean Americans' ability to maneuver and create using the parts they have despite the changing contexts in which they often exist.[15] Korean Americans continue to create and act as agents despite family, financial, and bicultural difficulties that cause unstable realities. Sharon Kim's longitudinal study of twenty-two second-

generation Korean American churches offers support for this hypothesis. Kim argues that second-generation Korean American churches in the Los Angeles area are creating "hybrid third spaces" as ways to hold their ethnic and cultural heritages while not being limited by them.[16] In this hybrid third space, Korean Americans negotiate multicultural and multiracial differences on account of Christianity and resist either assimilationist or pluralist theories that suggest they need to be one (Korean *or* American) or both (Korean *and* American), but not some emerging formation between the two (Korean American).

Though this concept of hybridity seems to suggest that Korean American churches—particularly those of the second generation—are dissimilar from their earlier counterparts, one can dispute this claim pointing to the similarities that exist within contemporary Korean American churches as it did in early ones. Pyong Gap Min for instance, notes four different functions the church holds for the post-1965 immigrant generation. These are: (1) a provision of social interaction, (2) a maintenance of cultural and ethnic traditions, (3) an offering of social services such as health care and citizenship needs, and (4) a provision of social status and position.[17] Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim add that religious participation in Protestant churches becomes a way of life and a means to emotional well-being, personal comfort, and social belonging.[18]

Although these two studies give emphasis to the first generation and appear irrelevant to Sharon Kim's second generation churches, several studies allow one to conclude that perhaps first and second generation Korean American churches are more similar than dissimilar, and not too different from the early Korean American church, particularly in light of its provision of ethnic fellowship, shaping of one's ethnic identity, and safety from racial discrimination.[19] Rebecca Kim's sociological theories of why Korean Americans practice Christianity together in campus ministries, appears to confirm this belief.[20] When compared with the functional theories of both early Korean American churches and post-1965 immigrant churches, the comparisons seem rather analogous.

Moreover, one might argue that an analysis of gender and gender roles make first and second generation churches appear even more similar to one another. While this argument appears contentious given the egalitarian ideologies some second generation Korean Americans and their churches adopt, the following studies point to the inconsistency between held beliefs and practices. On the one hand, both second-generation women and men attempt to differentiate from their parents' Confucian beliefs

and practices regarding gender. They do this as they strive for an increase of women's voice and presence in church leadership. For instance, members at a second-generation Korean American church in Elaine Ecklund's study desire to break down gender hierarchies by giving women more opportunities to lead.[21] Second-generation Korean American evangelicals in Rebecca Kim's study also hold egalitarian gender roles that contrast the first generation. This results in women serving more freely in the ministry and pursuing occupational careers with less prohibition.[22] The gender roles of the second generation thus appear different from the first generation.

On the other hand, an analysis of the various axes of power, points to the reality that both generations largely leave women out of influential leadership and adult teaching roles while relegating them to administrative roles, behind-the-scenes work, or teaching children in Sunday School.[23] Women do not serve in traditional and authoritatively religious roles such as pastor, worship leader, and theological educator whose leadership is often public and in the pulpit. Rather women's leadership often manifests in ministry through administrative organizing and planning, or in teaching children, who are often looked down upon within a Confucian social hierarchy.[24] A second-generation Korean American woman sums up this sentiment poignantly remarking that in Korean American churches, "Women are definitely second-class citizens. There are many who don't think women should be in positions of authority.... Even in the second generation, there's segregation between men and women."[25] One of the men pointed out this same observation when he responded to my query if there was anything unique to male spirituality as opposed to female spirituality:

> I mean in essence it's the same. But I think that when it comes down to the man, it's like, I don't know, the men are the ones that are always preaching the Bible and giving the lessons and the stories. You know, they are the ones that are supposed to be setting the example to be godly.[26]

Second-Generation Korean American Spirituality

A Definition of Spirituality

Scholars have struggled to come to some consensus of what spirituality means. This may or may not come as a surprise considering that spirituality is so prolific in today's public discourse. In this study of second-

generation Korean American men and their spirituality, I find Sandra Schneider's approach helpful and the one I adopt. She views spirituality as a person's lived experience that consciously seeks life integration through self-transcendence toward one's perception of ultimate value.[27]

What then is the ultimate value that second-generation Korean American Christians confess? Similarly, though not the same, what do their actions say about what they hold most dearly? I look to evangelical spirituality first and then make a turn to particular spiritual expressions among Korean Americans to answer these questions.

Evangelical Spirituality

Evangelical spirituality, in spite of regional and historical nuances, contains common elements that reflect a theological system. It was born out of the English religious movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries both as a reaction to the rationalism of the Enlightenment era and as a call for a religious response to the growing social decay brought on by the industrial revolution.[28] Several religious movements influenced evangelical spirituality across both centuries. The seeds of seventeen-century Puritanism in England and later in America, emphasized through a Calvinist doctrine for instance, spiritual vitality of depraved humans, an emphasis of being "born again," and an inner assurance of salvation.[29] Puritanism also introduced several practices common to evangelical spirituality including "quiet time" morning devotions, prayers before meals, and journaling as a means of confession.[30] Pietism's offering of heartfelt religious experience countered Enlightenment intellectualism.[31] Moreover, the Moravians—Count Zinzendorf and the Herrnhut community—introduced both an ecumenical ethos and moral renewal that emphasized the inner work of the Holy Spirit, gathering "Lutherans, Moravian Hussites, Calvinists, Catholics, and sectarian Protestants" for confession and prayer.[32] Moravian spirituality in turn, played a great part in the Wesley brothers' own spirituality. The impression of the Moravian's faith and resilience during a turbulent seafaring trip to Georgia paved a way for John Wesley's own religious reflections and eventually his renowned Aldersgate experience. The Moravian's practice of the love feast and use of hymnody also made its mark upon the brothers with Charles alone having composed over 9000 original poems and hymns.[33] Additionally, the Wesleys' emphasis upon the movement in one's spiritual life toward

Christian maturity and perfection as witnessed in personal piety and social compassion exhibited Puritan and Pietistic influences.

Undoubtedly these movements in England affected the Evangelical Awakening across the Atlantic in North America. Jonathan Edwards and George Whitfield, two iconic figures of the eighteenth-century Revival, contributed uniquely to evangelical spirituality. Edwards, seasoned and settled as a pastor, stressed the importance of an authenticating work of God within the life of the believer.[34] A conservative Calvinist, Edward's spirituality "centered in the glory of God" and "tolerated nothing which diminished that glory or subtracted from the absolute sovereignty of the divine will."[35] Whitfield by contrast, preached passionately and vociferously to captive audiences and made itinerancy, in the vein of the Wesleys, a common practice. While his sermons may have lacked the intellectual rigor of Edwards' addresses, Whitfield made up for it in high emotion, perhaps too much, as he was often accused of "wild enthusiasm."[36] Whitfield viewed the Bible as a means of grace that could only be interpreted through the help of the Holy Spirit.

An original American religion, the Shakers drew much of their influence from the Quakers whose theology and practice ran similar to the Puritans with one notable exception: Quakers had a much higher view of humanity than did the Calvinists.[37] The Quaker's favorable anthropology resulted in both an inner spirituality aimed at personal holiness but also one that flowed outward, manifested through acts of peace and social justice. The Shakers in America came out of the Quaker tradition and placed an emphasis upon worship that included "ecstatic dancing" and "mystical union in Christ."[38] This religious tradition had a part in shaping evangelical spirituality, particularly the Pentecostal movement of the early 1900s and then later charismatic movements of the latter half of the twentieth century. The Azusa Street Revival underscored the baptism of the Holy Spirit who showered followers with gifts of speaking in tongues, of prophecy, of interpretation, and of healing.[39] Though Pentecostalism can be thought of as a denomination (Assemblies of God in particular), the charismatic movements that emerged out of the 1960s made their mark more as movements and less a denomination, having influence in a range of religious traditions. The two are similar, however, in that they give prominence to outward manifestations of the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, corporate worship is the primary setting for such expressions.[40]

Given the diversity of religious influences in evangelicalism, it appears difficult to capture the essence of its spirituality. Acknowledging this com-

plexity, enough commonalities exist, however, to depict an evangelical spirituality. David W. Bebbington argues for four characteristics that are the crux of evangelicalism: (1) *conversionism*, (2) *activism*, (3) *biblicism*, and (4) *crucicentrism*.[41] Conversionism is the simple belief that lives need changing. This change is the result of knowing both one's inability to change under one's own power coupled with Christ's ability and willingness to do so for incapable individuals. Conversionism furthermore, is not mere intellectual ascent or confessional practice, but a move toward integration of faith into a person's whole being.[42] Activism broadly speaking is best understood as dynamism, the ability to move and create than lay dormant. Specifically, activism holds the idea that if one's life is converted as a result of one's justification in the work of Christ, then that person's life should convert others toward a similar life change. Biblicism views the Bible as the main source of truth and inspiration. It views God's self-revelation and God's dealings with humanity as expressed in Holy Scripture. On account of this conviction, evangelicalism commits to Bible-centered theology and spirituality. Crucicentrism holds the atoning work of God in the crucified Christ as a final core tenet of evangelical faith. The cross not only bespeaks of humanity's frailty, but also to the rich generosity and willing submission of God on behalf of creation.

From these foci, an evangelical spirituality begins to emerge. Ian Randall's suggestion to include worship as an addendum to Bebbington's typology helps here.[43] Randall argues that worship, both individual and corporate but more so the latter, places Bebbington's four tenets in appropriate context. It is in light of the worship of God that the four find ultimate purpose. One might argue that this stress upon worship is a spiritual reason a rapid explosion of the contemporary praise and worship movement occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century. Darryl Hart identifies how various Christian music companies have played a significant role in shaping evangelical spirituality, worship, and theology with an emphasis upon personal and intimate language and a music genre akin to Western rock.[44] There are those, however, that caution against the shallow exterior and overt emotionalism this movement presents.[45] Moreover, one might say that a mature relationship with God, regardless of the emotion, *is* the ultimate form of worship.

If worship in the broad sense (i.e., mature relationship) is the chief end of humanity, it takes several forms in evangelical spirituality. First, hymnody, as brought to the Wesleys by the Moravians and then later developed by the two brothers, is one such form.[46] Individual and corporate

singing reminds singers and hearers of the works of God while also opening themselves to the fresh work of the Holy Spirit. Second, if evangelicalism is to be Bible-centered, active, and focused on life change, then daily devotional reading and prayer are of prime importance for they are disciplines that provide opportunities for inspiration.[47] Alister McGrath cautions, however, that keeping the disciplines should be not confused with a maturing relationship with God.[48] A reversal of these two often leads to rote action and eventual spiritual death. Lastly, from the Evangelical Revivals, the preaching and the hearing of the word of God as it is steeped in the cross, is a twofold practice. First, the preaching of the Good News is a challenge commonly taken up as a response to the Romans 10:14 passage that asks how people will believe if they have not heard and how will they have heard if there is no one to preach? Therefore, preaching becomes a form of spiritual discipline as it bears the word of God to those that desperately need to hear it. Second, the practice of listening is one that is marked by making oneself available to God through devotional reading, prayers, and hearing the word through preaching.

One might offer then that an evangelical spirituality is concerned ultimately with a maturing relationship with God as revealed in Jesus Christ and experienced through the Holy Spirit's renewing work in the individual and community of believers. Evangelical spirituality strives for a transformation of inner character resulting in a difference of outward action, from personal piety and devotion to God, to social compassion and grace.

Korean American Spirituality

Asian American scholars have identified the effects American evangelicalism has had on second-generation Korean American spirituality.[49] One area where this has significance is with identity formation. Identity in evangelical spirituality is more theological in nature than ethnic or racial, and strives more for a "unity in Christ" than a highlighting of difference. Thus it seems that Korean American evangelicals are drawn to construct their identity in apparently mutually exclusive ways.[50] Identity construction takes on an "I am a Christian first…Korean American second" form but not necessarily both simultaneously.[51] This falls in line with American evangelicalism's stress on a transformation of inner character resulting in an identity founded in Christ.

Korean American churches in Sharon Kim's and Victoria Hyonchu Kwon's respective studies, however, contest the notion that for Korean

American Christians, identity is exclusive of ethnicity or race.[52] Both similarly argue that because assimilation is not a straight-line endeavor for Asian immigrants as it was for Whites, ethnic churches offer spaces that resist racial scripting and marginalization. However for Kim, the ethnicity that is engendered does not reflect a pure pluralist model either. Many second-generation Korean American churches combine some of the cultural and ethnic practices of their parents' generation with aspects of Western American culture in their identity formation. Yet to label the second generation as bi-cultural is not sufficient according to Kim, for in having the ability to maneuver in two cultures, they create hybrid third identities that are not fully one and/or the other, but a mixture of the two. On account of their practices of meeting together as a second-generation Korean American church, Kim contends that their Christian identity is not mutually exclusive of their ethnicity.

My observations at Christ Church seem to confirm Kim's hypothesis of hybridity. Though the overwhelming majority of attendees and each staff member are either second- or one point five-generation Korean American, there were many aspects of church life that pointed to an emerging reality from among the Korean philosophies, values, and practices of the first generation and the Western, North American ones from the surrounding culture in which these Korean Americans have largely grown. For instance, I noticed that, while they held—similar to the first generation—full fellowship meals following the services, the food choices were not limited to Korean items. The food items were rarely Korean and when they were, they were catered from Korean stores. Furthermore, many members of Christ Church would venture over to the first-generation side regularly and take Korean food from their fellowship gathering while the first-generation members' children would frequently come to Christ Church's fellowship to eat pizza, Mediterranean food, hot dogs, and other non-Korean foods. Conversation and preaching language was mostly English, though one could hear Korean spoken between members on occasion. If the pastor used a Korean term or some cultural understanding, he would be quick to explain in English what that meant for the non-Korean-speaking attendees. The children's ministry in regards to language was a little different on account of the children coming from both dominant Korean-speaking and English-speaking families. The bilingual pastors and teachers spoke to the children in both languages, mainly using English to teach that day's content and Korean to teach behavior (e.g., "put your hands together for prayer").

In my interviews, I found that while many of the men dealt with identity issues, they did not explicitly communicate that their search for identity is largely predicated upon race or ethnicity. Several pointed out that coming to a *Korean American* church was due to feeling more comfortable, having friends that were Korean who also attended the church, or referred to the uncomplicated reality of having others understand one's culture and not needing to explain it. Brian was an exception. He did offer that although he really enjoyed and admired the ministries of a "multiracial" church close to his work—"I felt like they did so much of a better job than most Korean churches"—he shared that it would be a difficult transition to attend that church because he didn't want to be a "token Asian" and seen as "Panda Express."[53] For Brian, race serves as a point of reflection in his spirituality and identity formation and a significant reason why he continues to attend a Korean American church. On the other end of the spectrum, Eric came to Christ Church because he felt called to it. Having previously come from a multiracial church, race was a non-issue for him and perhaps an early detriment. He admits, however, that race is slowly becoming a factor as he moves along in his identity formation:

> Certainly the Korean American nature of this church is something that I think about and wrestle with here and there. I think in a way it's restorative because as much as my father had racism against other races, probably the most poignant racially-based sentiment that I noticed in him was self-loathing of his Korean identity.[54]

Though the majority of the rest of the men did not explicitly raise the significance of race at Christ Church, several men shared that in their late high school and college years, they began to befriend other Korean Americans, which led them to a larger network of Korean friendships and eventual attendance in Korean American churches. Since a number of men moved from Koreatown to predominantly white suburbs, their friendships were largely non-Korean until their later years in high school or when they went off to college. What I find interesting is that for the men in their twenties who did not see race as a considerable limiting social factor, as many evidenced by pointing out their multiracial circle of childhood friends, they too attended Korean American churches such as Christ Church, long after their high school years. Therefore, regardless of their explicit reasoning of race and identity, it is a noteworthy part of these men's lives.

A second way Korean American spirituality reflects American evangelical spirituality is through corporate worship. Entering into second-generation Korean American churches, one quickly notices the use of contemporary praise songs, overhead projectors, full bands, and other technological equipment. This was no different at Christ Church as I observed a full band most every week with up to four guitarists on occasional weeks. The atmosphere contains a range of styles from a rock concert to earlier forms of praise and worship such as Maranatha, Vineyard, and Hosanna Integrity (1980s and 1990s) to more current movements such as Hillsong, Worship Together, and Bethel music.[55] The majority of the songs I noted Christ Church singing came from these major worship publishers; hymns were played sporadically.

Remove the aspect of race from these churches and it becomes nearly impossible to distinguish between Korean American contemporary praise and worship and the Western worship industry from which they mimic their music. One might say that the only aspect that *is* Korean American in Korean American worship is the performance of such music *by* Korean Americans. A second-generation Korean American woman who attended the Urbana 2003 conference shared with me an incident that occurred in worship. Aiming to exhibit the cultural diversity represented at Urbana, the worship band with a Black American leader played songs one night with an urban groove to represent African American worship. The next night a person of Hispanic descent led songs played with a Latin beat while singing in Spanish to represent Hispanic worship. When the night came to present Asian American worship, an Asian (Chinese) American man led worship on his guitar with the band singing contemporary praise songs in a rock-grunge rhythmic beat reminiscent of current Hillsong, Worship Together, and Bethel melodies.[56] Apparently, what made the worship Asian American was that it was led by an Asian American.[57]

A third characteristic of the current evangelical praise and worship culture noticeable in Korean American spirituality is an emphasis upon bodily expression. This includes the raising of hands, closing of eyes, clapping, shouting, dancing, and kneeling. This can be traced in North America to the rise of Pentecostalism and the charismatic "Latter Reign" and third wave movements of the first and last halves of the twentieth century respectively.[58] As mentioned above, it also find its roots in the English Revivals that turned toward a more heartfelt and emotional expression of religion.

As I attended various worship services (i.e., Sunday morning worship, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week early morning worship, joint Easter morn-

ing worship with other Korean American churches) at Christ Church, I observed many of these existing forms. The worship leader would often encourage people to raise their hands or focus upon being in the "presence of God alone." The congregation clapped loudly and in unison to most of the upbeat songs, singing vociferously and energetically. At the end of some songs, I could even hear whistling like one might hear after a spectacular play at a sporting event. Times of spontaneous and corporate prayer were also a part of the free-flowing and organic dynamic the worship leaders seemed to want. When I attended the early morning prayer meetings during Holy Week, one aspect that appears to have carried over from the first generation is the out-loud, unison prayer for which Koreans are well-known. Brian points out, however, that he wishes the second generation would be as fervent in their prayers as the first generation. "One thing I respect about my parents' generation is the morning prayer and how they just pray fervently for the church.... I feel like it's been forgotten."[59]

Several of the men shared that they had experienced charismatic spirituality in worship services and particularly at church retreats when they were younger. Most of these men looked favorably on these experiences though there were a few that qualified them with a bit of skepticism. Chris' hard and drug-filled lifestyle in high school changed on account of a charismatic retreat his parents required him to attend. He recounted how the speaker, who "was amazing" eventually had a time of prayer for people where "people were falling backward." Chris shares that when the pastor prayed for him, he blacked out and fell backwards. People told him later that he was screaming though he doesn't remember any of it.[60] While Chris is grateful for how this experience changed his life, he is also a bit cautious when churches get too charismatic in worship, particularly with the public display of speaking in tongues. He reasons that if the Holy Spirit gives the gift of tongues (he believes in all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit) for the edification of the whole body and for the glory of God, then an interpreter needs to be present in public worship to make the prayers known. Chris is quick to add that he doesn't "see that happening at church" as most simply pray without interpretation. There is further reason for Chris' skepticism and that is on account of the spiritually, charismatic, youth pastor he had in high school. The pastor was leaving his position on staff at the church to go to another church but before he left, he told a group of core student leaders to go with him invoking the name of God in the process ("God told me that we would do ministry together") to persuade many to

join. Chris and his best friend would be turned off by the ensuing division in this church and eventually left the Church altogether for a few years; his friend never recovered and rarely steps into a church.[61]

Ken offers that he grew up also with very charismatic experiences having witnessed several exorcisms. He shares that he desires the gift of tongues and even has had many pastors who have said to him, "Hey, I have a 100% batting average [of people receiving the gift of tongues when they pray for them]. Let me pray for you," only to be discouraged when nothing happened.[62] He feels pressure to receive tongues reasoning that because it is a gift and everyone else is receiving it, why is he not also partaking of it? He confides that it is difficult sometimes not to hold a *quid-pro-quo* theology as he believes that his lack of speaking in tongues is some kind of divine punishment for his struggle with pornography.

It would be a stretch, however, to characterize Christ Church's collective spirituality solely through a charismatic lens. It does not practice the speaking in tongues or other charismatic gifts collectively, although there are individuals who I heard uttering prayers throughout the worship services. One could perhaps say that the denominational affiliation of the church and the theological background of the senior pastor tend to aim for a balanced approach for Christ Church's spiritual expressions.

A fourth parallel to American evangelicalism is an emphasis upon right doctrine that arises largely out of Bible centeredness. For many second-generation Korean American Christians, being "biblical"—a phrase I often heard in my ethnographic observations and several of the interviews—includes a form of biblical literalism that results in right action (e.g., the "What Would Jesus Do?" phenomenon).[63] One might say that a desire to better understand the Bible leads one to commit to practices of corporate Bible study and personal devotion including the reading of scripture and prayer. Peter shared that a spiritually mature person is somebody "who is in the Word and you know when they speak, it's backed up with the Word."[64] Furthermore, practicing personal devotion, Bible reading, and prayer on a regular basis should lead to improved moral action. Jimmy explains that "self morals" is how he defines spirituality as he learns to discern what is right from wrong.[65] Korean American spirituality also includes the act of preaching and listening. The congregation's ability to know the Bible and God's intentions for them lies both in the pastor's responsibility to teach and preach biblically and the hearer's response to listen and obey that message. John sums up well the sentiment of others,

offering that the word "obedience" comes to mind when he thinks of Christian spirituality.[66]

A fifth feature is the need to be 'born again' and to accept Christ as personal savior.[67] Evangelicalism's stress of the cross and the atoning work of Christ is the impetus of this characteristic. For some evangelicals, being born again is confession and acceptance of God's atoning work (justification). A couple of men in their interviews for instance, identified a concern about their fathers' salvation noting that they were unsure where their fathers stood in terms of faith matters. For others, being born again is an issue of inner personal transformation and the work that happens after confession and justification (sanctification). Being born again for many Korean Americans, is the process that occurs in one's pursuit of personal holiness (piety) and religious authenticity of one's personal relationship with God.[68] When I asked the men to share how they view spirituality, most pointed to personal and character transformation toward Christ-likeness. Spirituality has to do with integrating one's inner life with their outward actions, bringing consistency to the two in all aspects of their lives. Jesus for many was the prime exemplar of this.

Finally a sixth quality of Korean American spirituality that reflects evangelical spirituality is its activism or outreach, traditionally known as evangelism. As a religion committed to the transforming work of God, it also believes that it should share this news through proselytization and other practices such as acts of compassion, social justice, and prayer for those that have not accepted Christ as savior. At Christ Church, one of the months was dedicated solely to the local and global outreach ministries. In each of the worship services, time was given to pray corporately for a specific "unreached" people group. Overhead slides were made from week to week that gave demographic data concerning each group. Two leaders came up to present the material and then led the congregation in prayer for each group, particularly focusing upon their salvation. One of the men I interviewed started a Bible group at his work though he admitted that there were explicit guidelines against creating such a group and that he and his boss (who supported him) could suffer backlash from other employees.

Several of the men spoke about spirituality, however, not in terms of evangelism, but outreach and community. For them, living out one's Christian faith was a matter of living it with others in community with the ultimate goal of being outward oriented instead of self-oriented. That is, Christian spirituality is a matter of living in service to others and

not only for the development of one's personal relationship with God. Interestingly, with the exception of a few years following the Los Angeles city upheaval in 1992 when churches were some of the most heavily involved institutions in community relations, second-generation Korean American churches generally have not extended this activist and outward-reaching spirit into the political and civic arenas as one might expect given the surge of involvement of evangelicals in US politics during the late twentieth century.[69]

Shamanistic Influences

Although it appears that aspects of Korean American spirituality find their beginnings in American evangelicalism, it would be remiss to think that it does not have roots in Korean spirituality. For instance, corporate prayer in loud unison (*tongsung kido*) may find its lineage in the English Revivals, Pentecostalism, and the charismatic movements,[70] but some contend that these expressions of Christian worship are more readily accepted by Koreans because of the influence that Korean folk religions (particularly shamanism) have on their worldviews and practices.[71]

Shamanism stresses harmony in interpersonal relations and a kinship with one's ancestors. Evil is introduced by those who act out of selfish ambition at the expense of the group; thus shamanism instills an ethos of conformity.[72] An individual isolated from others, therefore, is considered a pitiful person thus making ostracism an effective punishment. A show of unselfish emotion is also welcomed as it signifies a "strong humanity" and helps to control society on account of the potential negative emotion directed toward the one who causes pain for others.[73] Emotion is a governor that deters selfish displays of emotion, as the one who exhibits self-interested emotion is now subject to the negative emotional response of others which augments isolation. Shamanism also adheres to the belief that an authoritative and charismatic figure, who keeps the collective in mind, stabilizes chaos.[74] Those who then visit shamans go expecting charismatic demonstrations of emotion through vivid song, dance, and loud shouts.[75]

Parallels with shamanism expedited Protestant Christianity's acceptance and influence in Korea. There are several reasons why this expediency occurred.[76] First, Protestant missionaries used daily vernacular to relate their message, unlike the Catholics who used Latin and the Confucians who used classical Chinese. Second, the worship of Protestants was highly

participatory as attendees sung hymns mightily in corporate worship. Whereas visitations to shamans ended in performance viewing, Protestant worship services actively involved people. Third, the familial language (e.g., “child of God” “Father”) ensconced in Protestant Christianity rang of collectivism and concerns for the family. Fourth, the worship of revivals organized by the Protestants simulated best the emotional fervor of shamanistic rituals. Finally, Koreans ironically received a gospel message aimed at dealing with *individual* sin because it philosophically addressed the problem of human failing in a way that had not been made to that point. Protestants did not leave Koreans to ponder their shortcomings as in a shamanistic worldview. Rather, Protestants presented a doctrine of sin with a message of atonement and culminated this conversion with exuberant worship and passages of scripture that assured them of the change that could be had within new believers.[77]

Unsurprisingly, Korean Christians are influenced by three aspects: (1) a shamanistic worldview, (2) high emotionalism, and (3) the firmness of biblical orthodoxy, continue to be readily drawn to the ecstatic and biblically based forms of evangelical spirituality. Given the chaotic reality of many Korean Americans due to immigration stress on the family, racial and ethnic discrimination, and other anxieties, a system such as evangelicalism with its concrete spirituality is attractive. This parallels Pentecostalism’s nascence among the racially poor and its continued pull among oppressed people groups particularly from the global south. While the charismatic movements of the 1960s and 1970s appealed to racial and class constituents different from early Pentecostalism, these movements appealed in part, to those who came out of hippie and drug cultures looking for stability.[78]

Korean American and Evangelical Spirituality: How Alike Are They?

Sharon Kim’s recent study contests the idea that Korean American spirituality, particularly its forms of corporate worship, is monolithic.[79] Not all churches desire polished bands or strive for high emotionalism in worship. Moreover, one might contend that while Korean American spirituality is largely the byproduct of American evangelicalism, they are dissimilar in several ways due to the influences of Korean culture. Soong-Chan Rah challenges the Western evangelical church (particularly the white church) to look to non-Western churches, such as the Korean American congre-

gation, to free itself from the individualistic, materialistic, and racist ideologies and practices it engenders.[80] Collectivity and hospitality are two significant elements that differentiate Korean American spirituality from its evangelical counterpart. A collective mindset brings people to consider others in decision-making processes and encourages persons to keep harmony in interpersonal relations. It moves persons away from a self-centered approach to religion and faith toward a consideration of others. Therefore, Rah criticizes contemporary praise and worship that contains an abundance of "I" language and an emphasis upon *personal* salvation to the detriment of the collective. Collectivity calls for attentiveness to systems and structures in addition to the awareness of others. Furthermore, hospitality and generosity run counter to the materialism and self-satiation apparent in American evangelicalism as they build many of their churches based upon business principles and capitalist ideals.

While I see the value of Rah's challenge of Western evangelicalism to look to the modeling of Korean American spirituality and practice, I argue that second-generation Korean American spirituality has mimicked so much of American evangelicalism—particularly in worship—that Rah's summons to change is as appropriate for second-generation Korean American evangelicals as it is for (white) Western evangelicals. If worship songs are shaping of one's theology and spiritual habits, the songs chosen by Korean American worship leaders and pastors are no different than the ones that help to shape the churches Rah critiques. Korean American theological and doctrinal foci and worship practices compare similarly with American evangelicalism.

Gender in American Evangelicalism

It appears that with issues of gender, Korean American theology and spirituality are similar to American evangelicalism, conservative Protestantism, and in some instances, to fundamentalism. John Bartkowski historically traces and organizes American evangelicalism's stance on gender into four distinct periods: pre-American Revolution, from Revolution to the late 1800s, from 1875 to 1930, and from 1930 to the present.[81] On account of the New England Baptists' influence upon the development of American evangelicalism, the strains of egalitarianism could be found among Evangelicals of that period. The Baptists' stress upon individual religion and the roles women played in sustaining the revivals were two factors that produced this inclination. An emphasis upon individual and

heartfelt religion provided women the opportunity to become involved in preaching and organizational governance at revivals and church meetings. This weakened any centralized Puritan and Anglican authority that underscored the sovereignty of God over/against self-will. Furthermore, the role of women during this period began to overturn Puritan views based upon distinct sex roles.

During the American Revolution, however, the Baptists altered their views of the sexes on account of having to rethink their outward-facing approach to non-believers amidst a growing religious market. Whereas the previous approach was to focus upon "winning individual souls," the Baptists now began to make the family, to the detriment of women, the center of church leadership.[82] This ideological shift is best summed up as the phenomenon of "familism"—the idea that the man is to lead the family.[83] Furthermore, evangelical ideals that began to converge with Victorian principles specifically about the headship of the father in the family home further weakened egalitarianism.

However, the development of corporate industrialism from the late 1800s to the early 1900s began to pull men—and their influence upon the family—away from the home and into the public sphere. This shift came in conjunction with the first wave of feminism and a move of women to be less dependent upon men. The growth of fundamentalism was, therefore, the conservative evangelical response to the decline of the Victorian father and a reinforcement of gender roles based upon a combination of biological sex and biblical inerrancy. The idea that the Bible contains universal, self-evident truths regardless of the particular context and irrespective of hermeneutical complexities, allowed fundamentalists to take passages (e.g., a wife's submission to her husband, the disallowance of women to teach a man) to reinforce men's and women's roles. A first-wave fundamentalist captures well the critique of women who began to take up larger social roles:

> In man, the Scriptures emphasize the active virtues…. In women, they emphasize the passive virtues…. When this difference is lost and man becomes womanish, or woman becomes mannish, then the proper balance is lost, and harmony gives way to discord.[84]

Mark Muesse's essay on religious machismo correspondingly argues that on account of three factors (the first wave of the women's movement, the unyielding ethos of fundamentalism, and an understanding of masculinity defined by the secular) fundamentalists espoused a hypermasculine

theology in order to disprove any masculine deficiencies, which they either feared within themselves or anticipated would be cast on them by secular society.[85] The result ironically was to present a theological construct that rivaled secular visions of masculinity—a theology based upon reason, little or no emotion, highly controlled, and unquestionably ordered.

Following World War II and particularly after the progressive movements of the 1960s and 1970s, conservative Protestants, including many Evangelicals, continued the discourse on gender differentiation. A shift, however, occurred with this latest movement for as earlier fundamentalists relied on selected Biblical passages to defend a wife's submission and inherent womanly traits, later conservatives and fundamentalists drew from an argument based largely upon chronology.[86] Since Adam was created before Eve and since Eve drew Adam to sin, a woman's role is to be second to that of the man. Later conservatives, however, would make the distinction that this does not suggest any inequality, but rather a demarcation of the spheres of domain. Furthermore, the logic was buttressed by a view of essentialism—that males and females hold specific characteristics due to their biological sex.

Though research has shown this characterization of gender by Evangelicals as generally accurate, there are those who argue that there has existed and continues to exist alternative evangelical voices who contest these views.[87] While this is a minority view within Evangelicalism, it would be remiss to typify the discourse on gender and Evangelicals in the manner depicted above without noting a few of the nuances.

First, many contemporary conservative Protestants (including Evangelicals) are more apt to spend time with their families and be invested in their children than are their mainline Protestant counterparts. This is due to the upsurge of literature and rhetoric that has come from elite conservative Protestants (e.g., James Dobson, Tim and Beverly LaHaye) who push for a new kind of male leadership—that of servant leadership.[88] Here, the father/male is challenged to take up his God-ordained position to lead, but to do so in a servant-style approach as Jesus did. As a result, more conservative Protestant fathers invest in the family on account of their answering the call to lead. At the same time that an increase of the father's involvement in their children is noteworthy, Wilcox also comments that there is much less involvement in the division of household labor for evangelical men than in their mainline Protestant counterparts, giving credence to the thought that evangelical theology drives the roles and practices of men and women.

A second nuance on gender discourse among Evangelicals is that there are some who are less inclined to adhere to a *radical essentialism* concerning men's and women's sex and gender differences. While radical essentialists hold to immutable sex differences, *moderate essentialists* contend that men and women, although having certain innate attributes, can incorporate characteristics of the other sex.[89] It takes hard work and much patience, but a man, for instance, can learn to be sensitive.

Finally, there are those who do not take a gender difference approach, but rather view gender equally in the sense that both men and women have the capacity to take on a spectrum of characteristics, including strength, passivity, sensitivity, aggression, leadership, and followership. Scripture is to be read holistically and thematically and not selectively. The main "goal" of being is not gendered in a traditional sense, but the result of taking on the fruit of the Spirit as found in the letter to the Galatians.

Gender in Korean American Spirituality

Gender as it is experienced in Korean American churches and their spirituality is a subject that has been taken up by only a few (read: Asian American women).[90] Moreover, while there have been a handful of works on gender by Korean American women, there remains a noticeable lacuna of the subject by Korean and Asian American men and Korean American Evangelicals. The rare exceptions are Antony Alumkal's study on gender in a Korean American church, Andrew Sung Park's reflections on the *han* women bear because of sexism, Young Lee Hertig and Chloe Sun's edited volume of Asian American evangelical women's reframing of various Biblical characters, and Soyoung Park's study of identity formation among Korean American evangelical women.[91]

When gender is addressed in Korean American religious works, particularly in the field of sociology, it offers a glimpse into the gender ideologies of Korean Americans. These views are usually based upon two notable factors: traditional gender views within the conservative wing of American Christianity (i.e., American evangelicalism, conservative Protestantism, and fundamentalism) and Korean Confucianism. Confucianism emphasizes the hierarchical ordering of five relationships including father-son, husband-wife, elder brother-younger brother, old-young, and ruler-ruled.[92]

As people and society configure their interpersonal relations in hierarchical ordering, harmony ensues and society functions more fittingly.

Although second-generation Korean Americans appear to be assimilated and acculturated to Western values including egalitarianism, on account of evangelical theology, second-generation Korean Americans continue to hold to traditional gender roles reasoning that keeping strict gender roles is biblical.[93] In her study of Korean Christian fellowships on college campuses in the northeastern USA, Park finds that although Korean American women enjoy a measure of equality in organizational leadership (Park reasons it's because the ministries are student-run), it is not a full equality as the preachers, guest speakers, and worship leaders during her research were all males, even while there was a female staff worker present at one of the campus ministries.[94] In an informal conversation with two males, as Park adjusted the males' use of the term "King" to "Queen" as a descriptor for the gender of God, the men retorted, "Don't even go there" as a way to squelch any heretical viewpoints.[95] These practices were also found in Rebecca Kim's study of various campus ministries at a large West Coast university. Although there were female speakers in each of the other campus ministry groups, only in the Korean American campus ministries were female speakers absent.[96] Kim speculates that this phenomenon might be due to the fact that the Korean American campus ministries are student run and have no paid staff (who are women) to give the messages. Additionally, as they turn to local church pastors to come in and give the message, there are relatively few evangelically trained women pastors who could give the message. While this might be true, the allegedly smaller numbers of evangelically trained women might be due to the theological interpretations that prevent them from entering theological education in the first place.

While I did not ask questions specifically in the interviews about evangelical identity formation, it became clear that the Bible was a central force in shaping who these men are becoming, particularly in their understanding of masculinity and manhood. When I asked the men how they thought their roles play out in their (potential) families and marriages, several of the men pointed to the belief that the man should be the head of the household. As I pressed further how this looks like as it manifests in the home, the most common answer was spiritual headship, which has to do with making sure that the family is on a good and healthy spiritual

path. The exchange between Isaiah and me illustrates this as we turned to marriage in our conversation:

Mark What would you want [your marriage] to look like in terms of how you and your spouse interact, function, and [carry out] your roles?

Isaiah I'm actually more worried about the spiritual roles of the household [than the other roles] because I know from the Bible that I should be the spiritual head of the household, the immediate household right?…I'm more worried about being a spiritual leader in my household.

Mark What does spiritual leadership look like to you?

Isaiah For me it's more setting an example in terms of just like, not just attending church but even through prayer and even through seeking….

Mark And that responsibility for spiritual leadership in your marriage is largely upon you [and] not necessarily your wife or both?

Isaiah No I think it's a shared responsibility. You know in the Bible when it says that the man is supposed to be the spiritual head of the household, I don't think of it as a ninety-ten split or a hundred-zero split. When I think of it, I think of it as a sixty-forty split. You know, like maybe you have the edge because you're given that crux of that responsibility. So you're given a little bit more because ultimately that's what God wanted your role to be for your household.[97]

What I find interesting in Isaiah's response is that while he believes men and women should partner in their spiritual responsibilities within the family, there is still a God-ordained position of higher responsibility. This is a common theme for those who believe in male headship. After sharing this idea a few times in the first half of his interview, I asked Abe to say more about it.

Mark Can you say more about what it looks like for you in terms of a man being the head of the household?

Abe You're the head of the household but you kind of…you're the head because your wife kind of lets you be the head as well as you allowing her to be part of the head. You know because she helps run the family. She may be in rank, where everyone is looking at you, she's right below you. You know but you guys are co-…. You guys are partners really. So you're the head but you're kind of like a figurehead almost in certain ways because you have to work as a team with your wife and stuff like that…. But the head of the household I still think should lead the house at home too.[98]

John explained his thoughts on this type of leadership in terms of servanthood:

> It's a leading where the wife is willing to follow because she sees the heart of the husband. So there's no coercion or no sense of domination but there is like a true personhood acceptance for both people. The man and the wife become more fully who they should be because of that. So my theory is that in any household the woman has the option of being completely dominant in the household. And if the wife isn't happy, she can ruin it for everybody. But then it's like her role to submit and it's the guy's role to take that leadership so that they can become more fully who God has them to be.[99]

This thinking in the men is reminiscent of leading evangelicals who hold to a *complementarian* view of household relationships. While men and women are equal in value, they are given different biblically mandated roles, the most notable one stating that the man should lead. It is important to point out that it is not only the men who espouse this belief, but women who also advocate this ideology. Brian, responding to my question of what a man leading in marriage looks like, raised an indelible memory:

> One thing that also sticks out with me is that the head Hillsong pastor and his wife, who also has a female conference, she had said something that still sticks out with me. She pretty much called out all of the men saying…that if you want your wife to support you and be by your side, then stand up as leaders so that they can support you and if you're not going to be a leader, then it causes so many problems.[100]

Interestingly, the men who hold to this view are single and never married, though not all single men who have never married hold this view. There were a few that held to an *egalitarian* view of marriage where household roles are negotiated in mutual ways between husband and wife. Furthermore, I found that the basis for their gender role ideology comes largely from spiritual and biblical understandings and not simply from cultural tradition as several men alluded to the latter reasoning and observation in many first-generation marriages. I noticed that Christian spirituality based largely upon one's interpretation of the Bible is a major force in determining the men's understanding of male spirituality.

It would be remiss, however, to overstate that spirituality only influenced men toward complementarian gender ideology. Spirituality (in addition to simply being married) was one of the reasons why two of the

married men changed their stance on women in leadership and ordination. On account of their theological training and having been exposed to women and their call to ministry, these two men changed their views in favor of a woman's spiritual authority and leadership. Ryan, for instance, changed when he felt that seminary women could articulate their call to ordination and ministry better than he or other men he knew could:

> I was like, how can I tell this [woman] that you cannot be a pastor and [that] the journey that you went through and your calling is invalid? Who's to say that my own journey and calling is valid because I'm a man? So from that point on I started to question a lot of things that I was taught and also the traditional definitions of what roles men and women play.[101]

Another man reasoned that he and his wife slowly evolved to a more egalitarian household on account of their spiritual growth.

Christ Church's position on women in leadership appears different from the more conservative stances of other Korean American churches and Christians. Several conversations I had with Korean American women at Christ Church revealed how some outside of Christ Church viewed it as liberal and "unbiblical." Susan for instance, shared that when friends of hers (a heterosexual couple) had visited the church and saw a woman leading worship on the guitar, they shared with Susan afterwards in a sincere way their concern that she was attending a church that was "unbiblical."[102] According to Susan, it was the female friend who was the more vociferous of the two. As Susan told me this story, she asked me if I had any plans to interview or observe other churches for she believed that Christ Church was on the extremely progressive end of Korean American churches in terms of gender ideology and women in spiritual leadership. An early worship gathering of second-generation Korean American churches for Easter sunrise service seems to validate the idea that Korean American churches are generally conservative concerning gender and spiritual leadership. As I attended this service, I noticed that among all of the public leaders, there was only one female present. She served as the back-up vocalist to the male worship leader on the praise team. The pastors involved in the worship were all males. Women were most visible during the hour following the service, having cooked and served the fellowship meal to those who came.[103]

In some ways, Christ Church is noticeably different than this portrait of Korean American churches. There is one part-time female pastor on

staff who is not a children or youth pastor but a pastor to the adult community.[104] When serving publically in worship, she led the call to worship, gave announcements, and helped to administer communion with other pastoral staff. She has preached on occasion to the adult congregation, taking turns approximately once a quarter with the other associate male pastors. There has been one female worship leader at the church who has since left. Women helped to serve as ushers and in other areas of church leadership. The food preparation was not relegated to women exclusively. Men and women as singles, couples, and family groups shared in the preparation of food for the whole fellowship. Moreover, the leader of the food ministry is a male.

Though staffing and public roles appear to be more egalitarian at Christ Church than at other Korean American churches, the language used for God in worship reflects more masculine images. The first sermon I heard was on the topic of the Lord's Prayer highlighting that while many equate the "Our Father" in similar fashion to our earthly fathers, it is erroneous thinking for the imperfect actions of earthly fathers do not reflect the actions and concern of the heavenly "Father."[105] Though the pastor never made an explicit correlation of God as male, and the sermon point was to refrain from equating the perfect qualities of the heavenly Father with our limited earthly fathers (and not a commentary on the sex of God) curiosity remains with regards to the constant use of masculine pronouns to speak of God.[106] The worship leaders continually referred to God in their communication as "Father" "Abba" "Our heavenly Father," used the gender exclusive pronoun "he" or "him," sang songs with titles or phrases such as "Father of Lights" "Humble King" "Let Us Adore Him," and often encouraged the congregation to imagine themselves with "you and him alone right now" as a way to encourage intimacy between God and oneself. This exclusive vernacular reinforces the current sociocultural structure in which Korean American men live and the patriarchal privilege that is consistently engendered to the detriment of women, girls, men, and boys. One could argue that the highly patriarchal images and ideology found in our churches and spirituality contribute in part to any misogyny and degrading of women among Korean American men in society.

While this gender-exclusive language was common during my time at Christ Church, I bring to light two instances that suggest the potentiality and growth of Christ Church with this issue. During one worship service, the pastor performed a double baptism first with a mother and then her child.[107] Prior to the sprinkling of the water upon the mother's head, the

pastor read as part of the liturgy a passage that imaged the water as the "womb of new birth."[108] This was the first time I had heard any feminine imagery used in worship at Christ Church, particularly as it referred to the work of God. A second instance occurred when the pastor preached on women and men in ministry and the call for the priesthood of *all* believers. Following the service, there was a question and answer period where two seminary-trained women who are each on respective ordination tracks, fielded questions and shared their personal struggles and experiences concerning Asian American women in ministry in Asian American churches.[109] This was the first time I had experienced any Asian American pastor addressing the issue of women spiritual leadership through the pulpit during worship. Interestingly, one of the questions fielded by the two women was given by another woman asking how they see themselves in their families in relation to the "Biblical" mandate for men to be the heads of the household. According to a later conversation I had with one of the panelists, the woman who asked the question was operating out of the assumption that all families understand or should understand the "head of the household" passage in a complementarian manner where the man is the spiritual leader.

Conclusion

Though Sharon Kim is correct to point out that hybridity accurately demarcates second-generation Korean American spirituality from either American evangelicalism or first-generation Korean American spirituality alone, I offer a further point for reflection: Through the lens of gender, one can argue that second-generation Korean American Christians have more in common with these two constituencies who perpetuate gender bias and hierarchy through near exclusion in spiritually authoritative positions of high visibility,[110] language in worship, and spheres outside of the Church, such as the home. I argue this by illustrating the heavy influence American evangelicalism and Korean spirituality have had upon Korean American spirituality. While I agree with Kim that Korean American spirituality is diverse, emergent, and therefore something slightly different, its foundational building blocks are noticeable and must be considered. Gender ideologies—based largely upon American evangelicalism and fundamentalism—maintain traditional beliefs regarding men and women and their gender roles which meld rather conveniently with the tenets of Confucianism, one of the major social philosophies of life that influences Korean Americans. Gender cannot go unanalyzed when the foundational

cores of both American evangelicalism and Confucianism contribute heavily to Korean American spirituality in both practice and in ideology.

While this proliferation of traditional gender ideology appears to be the case in my informal observations of Korean American churches elsewhere and among several of the men I interviewed, there exists at Christ Church, a church and group of second-generation Korean American men that are refashioning this mold. Several of them are committed to more egalitarian values in their (potential) marriages on account of their spirituality.

Notes

1. I understand spirituality as distinct from, and yet, including religion (the institutional and systematic organization of one's beliefs and actions about the ultimate) and theology (reflections and discourse of God) in that spirituality is one's integration of lived experiences toward her or his understanding of the ultimate. I will, however, use the term 'spirituality' as encompassing of all three since the spirituality I observe among these men includes religion and theology.
2. Yoo, *Contentious Spirits*, 35–46; Kwang Chung Kim, R. Stephen Warner, and Ho-Youn Kwon, "Korean American Religion in International Perspective," in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 9; Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Makers*, 9.
3. Su Yon Pak, et al., *Singing the Lord's Song in a New Land: Korean American Practices of Faith* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 5.
4. Yoo, *Contentious Spirits*, 7–12.
5. Patterson, *Ilse*, 56–57.
6. Yoo, *Contentious Spirits*, 7–9.
7. Patterson, *Ilse*, 49.
8. Pak, et al., *Singing*, 38.
9. Elaine Howard Ecklund, *Korean American Evangelicals: New Models for Civic Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
10. David K. Yoo and Ruth H. Chung, eds., introduction to *Religion and Spirituality in Korean America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 5–7; Ecklund, *Korean American Evangelicals.*
11. Antony W. Alumkal, "Analyzing Race in Asian American Congregations," *Sociology of Religion* 69, no. 2 (2008): 151–67.
12. Mark Hearn, "Color-Blind Racism, Color-Blind Theology, and Church Practices," *Religious Education* 104, no. 3 (2009): 272–88; Alumkal, "Analyzing Race in Asian American Congregations," 159.

13. Russell Jeung, *Faithful Generations: Race and New Asian American Churches* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).
14. Sharon Kim, *Faith of Our Own*, 12–15.
15. Yoo and Chung, *Religion and Spirituality*, 10–11.
16. Sharon Kim, *Faith of Our Own*, 13–14.
17. Pyong Gap Min, “The Structure and Social Functions of Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States,” *International Migration Review* 26, no. 4 (1992): 1371–72.
18. Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, “Religious Participation of Korean Immigrants in the United States,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 29, no. 1 (1990): 22–23.
19. Peter T. Cha, “Ethnic Identity Formation and Participation in Immigrant Churches: Second-Generation Korean American Experiences,” in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 144–52; Antony W. Alumkal, “Being Korean, Being Christian: Particularism and Universalism in a Second-Generation Congregation,” in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 184–86; Ecklund, *Korean American Evangelicals*, 44–46.
20. These theories are: (1) the need to belong and find meaning, (2) familiarity and attraction to the same, (3) the possibility to congregate due to a larger homogeneous mass, and (4) the capacity to attain power and status. See Rebecca Y Kim, *God’s New Whiz Kids?: Korean American Evangelicals on Campus* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 144–45.
21. Ecklund, *Korean American Evangelicals*, 106–07.
22. Rebecca Kim, *God’s New Whiz Kids?*, 44–45.
23. Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Makers*; Chong, “What It Means To Be Christian”; Soyoung Park, “The Intersection of Religion, Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in the Identity Formation of Korean American Evangelical Women,” in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001); Alumkal, “Preserving Patriarchy.”
24. Ecklund, *Korean American Evangelicals*, 107; Soyoung Park, “Intersection of Religion,” 203–04.
25. Chong, “What It Means to Be Christian,” 281.
26. Tony, interview by author, July 17, 2011.
27. Schneiders, “Religion vs. Spirituality” and “Study of Christian Spirituality.”

28. Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 160. There is some discussion as to the beginning of evangelicalism. While those such as John Stott argue for an evangelical spirituality that was present in apostolic Christianity, others argue that, as a cultural movement, evangelical spirituality's formative roots began in the 1700s. See James M. Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality: From the Wesleys to John Stott* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge Publishing, 1991), 7–8.
29. Richard F. Lovelace, "Evangelical Spirituality: A Church Historian's Perspective," in *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader*, ed. Kenneth J. Collins (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 218–19.
30. Ibid., 219–20.
31. Sheldrake, *Brief History*, 144.
32. Lovelace, "Evangelical Spirituality," 221.
33. Teresa Berger, *Theology in Hymns?: A Study of the Relationship of Doxology and Theology According to a Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists (1780)*, trans. Timothy E. Kimbrough (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1995), 66.
34. Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality*, 42.
35. Gordon, *Evangelical Spirituality*,52.
36. Ibid., 53.
37. Sheldrake, *Brief History*, 121.
38. Ibid., 150–51.
39. Edith Blumhofer, "Azusa Street Revival," *Christian Century*, March 7, 2006, 20–22.
40. Oliver McMahan, "A Living Stream: Spiritual Direction within the Pentecostal/Charismatic Tradition," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 30, no. 4 (2002): 336–45.
41. David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Winchester, MA: Allen and Unwin, 1989), 2–17.
42. Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 124–25.
43. Ian M. Randall, "Recovering Evangelical Spirituality," *European Journal of Theology* 19, no. 1 (2010): 40–41.
44. Darryl G. Hart, *That Old-Time Religion in Modern America: Evangelical Protestantism in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), 172–200.
45. There is concern that while the new contemporary praise songs are strong in intimate language and what the worshiper does *for* God (e.g., "I love you," "I'll serve you"), they lack substantive theology and proclamations of the works *of* God. See Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for the Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995).

46. By ‘hymnody’ I am not suggesting the singing of *hymns* but rather singing of songs in worship. Contemporary praise songs are hymnody in this broad sense.
47. Ian M. Randall, “Evangelical Spirituality,” in *New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 289–91.
48. McGrath, *Evangelicalism*, 129.
49. Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches*; Rebecca Kim, *God’s New Whiz Kids?*; *Sharon* Kim, *Faith of Our Own*; Karen J. Chai, “Beyond “Strictness” to Distinctiveness: Generational Transition in Korean Protestant Churches,” in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 157–79.
50. Rudy V. Busto, “The Gospel According to the Model Minority?: Hazarding an Interpretation of Asian American Evangelical College Students,” *Amerasia Journal* 22, no. 1 (1996): 138; Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches*, 71–96.
51. Soyoung Park, “Intersection of Religion,” 196.
52. Sharon Kim, “*Faith of Our Own*,” 4–15; Victoria Hyonchu Kwon, “Houston Korean Ethnic Church: An Ethnic Enclave,” in *Religion and the New Immigrants: Continuities and Adaptations in Immigrant Congregations*, ed. Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Saltzman Chafetz (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2000): 109–23.
53. Brian, interview by author, July 2, 2011.
54. Eric, interview by author, March 12, 2011.
55. Rebecca Kim, *God’s New Whiz Kids?*, 50; Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches*, 49–50; Karen J. Chai, “Competing for the Second Generation: English-Language Ministry at a Korean Protestant Church,” in *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*, ed. R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 306; Sharon Kim, *Faith of Our Own*, 86–87.
56. Perhaps Mia Tuan’s phrase “honorary white” is an appropriate designation here. See Tuan, *Forever Foreigners.*
57. This example raises in part, the dilemma of racial construction, essentialism, and agency. That is, since the term, ‘Asian American’ is a social construct with political ramifications (Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 1994) is it even possible to discern what Asian American worship would look like given the vast experiences and realities of Asians in America? Furthermore, does having a Black African, Hispanic, and Asian American worship border on essentialism? Finally, this example raises the issue of agency, asking who determines the make-up of Asian American worship. Does it suffice to say

that Asian American worship is worship done by Asian Americans regardless of the form and content? A similar debate among current Asian American religious scholars asks whether or not an Asian American Christianity can be spoken of? Is there Asian American theology, biblical hermeneutics, or ethics and if so, what is it? See Tat-Siong Benny Liew, *What is Asian American Biblical Hermeneutics?: Reading the New Testament* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press; Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 2008); Jeffrey K. Jue, "Asian American Theology: A Modern and Postmodern Dilemma," in *Conversations: Asian American Evangelical Theologies in Formation*, ed. D.J. Chuang and Timothy Tseng (Washington D.C.: L^2 Foundation, 2006), 99–119; Mary F. Foskett and Jeffrey Kah-Jin Kuan, eds., *Ways of Being, Ways of Reading: Asian American Biblical Interpretation* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2006); Grace Y. Kao and Ilsup Ahn (eds.), *Asian American Christian Ethics: Voices, Methods, Issues* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015).

58. Robb Redman, *The Great Worship Awakening: Singing a New Song in the Postmodern Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002).
59. Brian, interview by author, July 2, 2011.
60. Chris, interview by author, July 10, 2011.
61. Ibid.
62. Ken, interview by author, July 1, 2011.
63. Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches*, 54–57.
64. Peter, interview by author, July 9, 2011.
65. Jimmy, interview by author, July 10, 2011.
66. John, interview by author, March 18, 2011.
67. Chai, "Competing," 309; Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches*, 57–59.
68. Rebecca Kim, *God's New Whiz Kids?*, 46–48.
69. Ecklund, *Korean American Evangelicals.*
70. Myung Soo Park, "David Yonggi Cho and International Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 12, no. 1 (2003): 107–28.
71. Don Baker, *Korean Spirituality* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008); Chu-Kun Chang, "An Introduction to Korean Shamanism," in *Shamanism: The Spirit World of Korea*, ed. Richard W. L. Guisso and Chai-Shin Yu (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1988), 30–51; Pyong-Choon Hahm, "Shamanism and the Korean World-View, Family Life-Cycle, Society and Social Life," in *Shamanism: The Spirit World of Korea*, ed. Richard W.I. Guisso and Chai-Shin Yu (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1998): 60–97.
72. Baker, *Korean Spirituality*, 8–9.
73. Hahm, "Shamanism," 65–69.
74. Hahm, "Shamanism," 87.

75. Baker, *Korean Spirituality*, 22.
76. Ibid., 72–74.
77. Baker, *Korean Spirituality*, 73–74.
78. Redman, *Great Worship*; Hart, *Old-Time Religion*.
79. Sharon Kim, *Faith of Our* Own, 86–89.
80. Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Books, 2009).
81. John P. Bartkowski, *Remaking the Godly Marriage: Gender Negotiation in Evangelical Families* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 17–34.
82. Bartkowski, *Remaking*, 20.
83. William Bradford Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 8–9.
84. Bartkowski, *Remaking*, 28.
85. Mark W. Muesse, “Religious Machismo: Masculinity and Fundamentalism,” in *Redeeming Men: Religion and Masculinities*, ed. Stephen B. Boyd, W. Merle Longwood, and Mark W. Muesse (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 89–102.
86. Bartkowski, *Remaking*, 32.
87. Elaine Storkey, “Evangelical Theology and Gender,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, ed. Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs*; Bartkowski, *Remaking*.
88. Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs*.
89. Bartkowski, *Remaking*, 46–48.
90. While most works on Korean American religion and spirituality have studied a number of issues, I have found gender to be a corollary subject matter with the exception of a few works. See Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Makers*; Rita Nakashima Brock, et al., eds., *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women’s Religion and Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007); Grace Ji-Sun Kim, *The Grace of Sophia: A Korean North American Women’s Christology* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2002); Soyoung Park, “Intersection of Religion”; Christine J. Hong, *Identity, Youth, and Gender in the Korean American Church* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).
91. Alumkal, “Preserving Patriarchy,”; Park, *Wounded Heart*; Young Lee Hertig and Chloe Sun, eds., *Mirrored Reflections: Reframing Biblical Characters* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010); Soyoung Park, “Intersection of Religion.”
92. Jung Young Lee, *Korean Preaching: An Interpretation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 35–37.

93. Alumkal, "Preserving Patriarchy."
94. Soyoung Park, "Intersection of Religion," 202–05.
95. Ibid., 205.
96. Rebecca Kim, *God's New Whiz Kids?*, 63–64.
97. Isaiah, interview by author, July 2, 2011.
98. Abe, interview by author, July 24, 2011.
99. John, interview by author, March 18, 2011.
100. Brian, interview by author, July 2, 2011.
101. Ryan, interview by author, March 18, 2011.
102. Field notes, March 27, 2011.
103. Field notes, April 24, 2011.
104. At the time of this study, the senior pastor was the only full-time pastor.
105. Field notes, January 30, 2011.
106. Ruth C. Duck, *Gender and the Name of God: The Trinitarian Baptismal Formula* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1991), 69–72.
107. Christ Church's theological stance on baptism is such that the act of baptism is an acknowledgement of God's work upon the person which is later confirmed at a later time (confirmation). Therefore infant baptism is encouraged and welcomed.
108. Field notes, February 27, 2011.
109. July 31, 2011.
110. Min, "Structure and Social Functions," 1389–90.

CHAPTER 6

Forming Korean American Men: What Can We Do?

Abstract This concluding chapter suggests key components to consider for persons who work with second-generation Korean American men. Issues of empowerment and self-agency affect men internally and socially, particularly in relation to their fathers. Hearn suggests that if Korean American men are to heal and contribute in positive ways to their communities, those who work with them need to consider curricular issues, validation of a man's personhood, initiation into community and interrelatedness, and the need for multiple interpretive lenses. Hearn proposes that transformative formation is not transmissive teaching alone but one that engages men where they are.

Keywords Korean American men • Religious education • Spiritual formation • Practical theology

Introduction

I argue to this point that Korean American men are more accurately interpreted as sociohistorical constructs whose use of spirituality (i.e., their held beliefs and practices of what they deem of ultimate value) helps to reinforce and reinterpret their lived experiences and

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held ideologies. I do not, however, advocate for a *strict* sociohistorical reading of Korean American men either; our bodies and physical lives do matter as do the bodies and physical lives of those around us.

On account of the conviction that bodies do matter, coupled with my own commitment to liberative praxis, this final chapter offers an initial conversation into the religious education and spiritual formation of Korean American men. My purpose in sharing this is to raise a few pertinent issues and to spur on pastoral imagination among those who work with Korean American men and women.

Philosophical Underpinnings of Working with Men

A few years ago, I began reading Stephen Boyd's *The Men We Long to Be: Beyond Lonely Warriors and Desperate Lovers* searching for resources in Men's Studies and Christian spirituality. I was struck by the project Boyd set out to accomplish: help men heal from inner and outer destruction in order to live more holistically. He establishes his work with men upon seven premises which I find translates well in my own work with Korean American men:

1. men are not inherently violent,
2. one can view hegemonic masculinity through a theological frame of sin and a move away from what men are created to be,
3. men participate in an oppressive system that keeps them bound yet calls them to address,
4. communities with new visions of manhood are needed to tend to this transformation,
5. men are interdependent and their well-being is linked to others,
6. certain aspects of the Christian tradition (theology and practice) have negatively influenced men and society, and
7. the "pursuit of bliss is [men's] duty"—*bliss* understood as true happiness, the result of "wholeness and participation in God's realm of justice and love."[1]

With these premises in mind, I raise three common issues that reoccur at different points throughout the interviews and in my own work with Korean American men. These are: (1) empowerment, (2) sense of self, and (3) sense of others.

Empowerment, Self, and Others (Especially Fathers)

Stephen Boyd's premises, particularly his third point of living within an oppressive system, is brought to further light when we juxtapose Michael Kaufman's important theoretical underpinning regarding patriarchy. Kaufman contends that while patriarchy extends a gross advantage to men to the disadvantage of women, *untended* patriarchy as a matter of social and positional power, also leads to violence toward women, other men, and a man's own self.[2]

Kaufman asserts that the rape of a woman, for instance, is more about issues of power and less about the playing out of sexual fantasy or physical sex. Having analyzed various testimonies of rapists, Kaufman notes that many of these men who felt socially powerless are drawn to physical violence as a way to demonstrate their power and attain some measure of control and authority. "Violence against women can become a means of trying to affirm [a man's] personal power"[3] in an ideological structure (i.e., patriarchy) that differentiates masculine from feminine qualities and castigates those men who do not exhibit these to the extent that is socially acceptable. If a man cannot demonstrate to others his 'manliness' through socially expected norms (e.g., sexual virility, athleticism, professional status), there remains the resort to violence. As one scholar notes, a "man may still retrieve the ultimate tool of manly self-assertiveness: omnipotence through violence."[4] This sense of feeling powerful is increased when achieved through group approval as observed in the subculture of college fraternities and their views toward women and their bodies.[5]

A friend once tuned me into an overwhelmingly popular internet video series entitled, "Ktown Cowboys." In the vein of pop-culture reality shows, the overall plot of the videos has to do with a group of second-generation Korean American men that introduces Los Angeles Koreatown to a recent East Coast transplant. What becomes quickly apparent in the various episodes is the performance of masculinity and male bonding at the degradation of women. Women are often seen as sex objects and used for masculine rites of passage.[6]

In their pursuit for empowerment, men not only commit violence toward women, they commit it toward other men. If social power for men is positional—that is, my identity as a man is defined in relation to other persons, particularly other men—then the potential for competition and posturing increases. If a man can prove himself 'masculine' (i.e., hege-

monic masculinity) then other men become potential contributors to this project whether by group approval or by defeat. I become a man either through your approval or by overcoming you or both (learner overcoming the master). To overcome another man is to prove one's potency. This is witnessed everyday at the local gym when strangers and friends who get together to play a game of pick-up basketball 'one-up' each other and try to make the other look bad in front of onlookers. We heard this posturing in the observations and interviews of men with regards to Turkeybowl and Fruit of the Spirit Bowl. One supposes that online social media is another way that posturing and empowerment occurs as the number of "likes" "friends" and "retweets" is a way to feel some measure of agency in relation to others.

Empowerment that comes through approval is not necessarily violent or destructive (e.g., help groups). However, when the approval comes as a result of harm done to others such as fraternal endorsement of a brother who "hooks up," "gets some," or "hits that"[7] with an unknown person at a party, it reinforces a patriarchal system that engenders various forms of violence.

By committing these various forms of violence toward women and other men, men ironically, commit acts of self-violence. This third form of violence is the result of living in a patriarchal society that privileges males (especially hegemonic men) and sets up a destructive sex-gender system that leaves men feeling inadequate and isolated when they do not meet this script.

For Korean and Asian American men, these common issues for men in society become even more complex on account of race. As society has historically scripted racial and gender stereotypes for Asian American men, these scripts potentially disempower men by setting up a construct that further marginalizes them from a normative account of the masculine. Asian American men have often been emasculated and feminized, thus taking a considerable part of the normative script (i.e., sexual virility and personal agency) away from them. Furthermore, for some, cultural scripting of filial piety and self-abnegation contributes to additional feelings of disempowerment.[8] And if one feels powerless in an ideological structure (patriarchy) that supposes one's ascent to privilege and power, the one who falls short of that normative script will look for it through other avenues. For Korean American men this occurs primarily in the private sphere but also in select public, cultural, and social spheres where a Confucian belief system based upon the privileging of male over female

and older over younger provides an alternative option to the scripts they are often funneled into "playing" in their workplaces and society as we have heard in the interviews. Consequently, when there is a lack of control and agency, the bodies of women[9] and men (as seen in the sports tournaments) become sites of control.

The idea of control and agency was a recurrent theme in the interviews, particularly as it had to do with the relationship between the men and their fathers. According to the men, most fathers exhibited some form of control over their lives through physical punishment, emotional trauma, or fear. Eric recalls a tumultuous upbringing aimed primarily at helping him succeed in the "public sphere [that] held very high stakes."[10] According to Eric for instance, learning to play an instrument was not an endeavor to appreciate music or to learn a musical skill. Rather it was to "succeed in a violent competition" that would one day see him attain a "life unthreatened by poverty," especially poignant for immigrant parents who were "very anxious about surviving in America." His parents believed that beating others in competition and being the best among his peers would help him in life. Later in the interview, Eric shared how his father's own internal racism and self-loathing caused him to disallow Eric from speaking Korean at home or improper grammatical English in his presence:

> He would feign misunderstanding. He would just say, "I can't understand what you're telling me," you know with me being nine or ten years old at the time. "I can't understand what you're saying because you used a dependent clause improperly in that sentence." I'd have to repeat everything I said.[11]

Paul shares a similar story of childhood struggle as his father, who thought Paul was too soft in character, used sports as a ploy to toughen him up:

> Weekends I would have to wake up at five o'clock and play tennis with him for a few hours before coming home for the rest of my day…and it was grueling. It wasn't even like a match. We might play a match but then after a certain point, if I wasn't playing well or I screwed up in something, he'd get pissed. And then I would have to do constant drills with him until I got it right. And it…wasn't encouraging. It was yelling at me and calling me things like, "You're an idiot" or whatever, just a lot of those kinds of insults.…I know that he didn't really think of me as an idiot but I know

> what he was trying to do. He was trying to piss me off to the point where I developed that aggression and do what he wanted me to do.[12]

I asked Paul why he thought it was so important to his father to toughen him up and make him aggressive. He shared that having this aggression was the way his father survived his own parentless childhood and achieved some measure of life success.

Still others shared how their father's harsh physical punishment and exhibits of great emotional anger would instill fear in them. Their fathers' great displays of anger occurred more frequently than the rare expressions of positive emotion. Several witnessed a polarity between extreme anger and a reservation of words. Laura Uba, writing about Asian American family dynamics, comments that self-control of emotions, harmony, and reservation of words are values for which traditional Asian American families often strive.[13] While the men's families of origin appear to have taught these values indirectly, these values were also broken by their fathers' displays of negative emotion and overbearing control.

Sadly, the men with these family upbringings have not gone unscathed as witnessed in Eric's life journey of self-agency and actualization. He confesses that even in his mid-thirties, "I still haven't figured myself out."[14] He realized beginning in his mid-twenties that:

> I needed the freedom in life to continue to change; to make decisions and realize they were wrong; to have the convictions and have the freedom to change them because I recognize [that they] didn't hold true for me anymore; to take a stance against, for instance, my parents or against institutions that I had grown up within and be able to change that stance.[15]

Speaking about the eroding relationship between him and his father, Eric would later declare with a small group of persons that "our roads had to diverge because he could not accept the person I was becoming."[16] He would go on to share that he told his father in somewhat of an act of self-definition that "you take the worst in me and bring it out and you take the best in me and stomp it out."[17]

One might characterize Charles' life also as a journey toward self-definition, control, and agency. His teenage years were plagued by a search for acceptance and identity. This search eventually turned to the use of hard drugs and promiscuity, where he admitted to "messing up a lot of lives."[18] While in his mid-twenties he attended a conference that

helped him explore and heal many issues related to his family of origin; he still deals with the tenuous relationship between his parents and him. As Charles exercises one aspect of filial piety, giving his parents money on a regular basis, it has become an area of tension for him. "I hate giving you money" Charles would share to a group of men about what he told his parents. He would later add, "I don't know what living in a way where we love each other in a healthy way [looks like]."[19]

Michael had several run-ins with the law during his early twenties. He "got into drugs and alcohol and being promiscuous. You know just to the point where that's the only thing that kind of made me happy and so I did it even more."[20] He dabbled in a gang and was eventually incarcerated for driving under the influence (DUI) of alcohol. After he seemed to have put his life back together some, he was arrested for a second DUI and because he had a job, was put on house arrest, needing to wear an ankle bracelet in order for law enforcement to monitor his whereabouts.

Abe, now in his late thirties, seems to have come to a place of self-definition and control. This has not always been the case as he wished there was more trust shown by his parents during his child and teenage years. He alludes to how he was never allowed to play certain sports as an illustration of his parents' fear for his safety which he believes prevented him from learning how to deal with his mistakes:

> As a child, I feel like you don't understand things and then you kind of grow up into an adult and you're like, uh, you know you're insecure about certain things. I feel like I forced myself to overcome these fears because my parents instilled these fears in me. "Oh you get hurt in sports," and so I only played sports where we didn't have a bat.... So my parents were really, really overly cautious.... I feel like my parents should have let me fall on my face a few times and I think if I had learned that early it would have been easier for me to have accepted failure when I was growing up.[21]

He would go on to share that while he was a good student, he had no idea how to handle the failure he faced when he got kicked out of school.

Self-control and self-actualization are key concepts for Tony's view of masculinity and manhood. In his words, having "your shit together" and knowing that you can take care of important responsibilities such as a family, defines a man.[22] It was when he was in the military that he felt he had his act together the most and began to come into his own sense of manhood. It was the first time he was living away from home on his own.

It was the first time he had to think about racism. Sixteen-year-olds in the rural areas of the South made an impression upon him as they took care of their younger siblings, ran farms, and cared for the family when their fathers got sick. Moreover, he was empowered by the awards he received for his high performance and felt great responsibility being entrusted with powerful weaponry:

> You're like *that* young and are given so much power…. You know, they're giving you live weapons and they're like making you, putting you in charge of people's lives. It's a big deal. And it gives you that responsibility whether you [take advantage of it] or [not]. For me, I [took advantage of] it.[23]

Brian's story is a little different in that he wishes his father would have brought a different quality of leadership and presence with the family. His disappointment in his father is clearly evident when he speaks about his father's lack of modeling maturity to his sons as he "cusses in Korean," fights with his wife frequently, and is not "responsible with his work."[24] Communication and language issues are also a source of distance between Brian and his father. Growing up, he was embarrassed of his father, in part, because of his father's broken English. Furthermore, the lack of healthy conversation and relational modeling between his parents seems to have weighed on him. When I asked Brian what he wanted to have heard or seen from his father, if language was not a barrier, he replied:

> I would have liked to have seen…my parents really enjoying each other's company. That's what I really wanted to see. That they were, even though we go through different struggles, they would [say], "Hey, I do care for you." More than my mom or dad saying that they love [me], I'd rather see them saying that they love each other. I think that'd be more important to me.[25]

Learned aggression and a lack of fatherly presence cannot be overlooked in trying to understand why the men's fathers behaved with apparent iron fists. When I asked the men why they thought their fathers acted the way they did or held stubbornly to certain (racial) beliefs, the majority of answers had to do with the way their fathers lacked any guidance themselves when they were younger. Moreover, Japanese oppression, the Korean War, or their father's own military service (or any combination of the three) traumatically affected many of their fathers. Peter reasoned that

his father was so narrow-minded and carried deep-seated resentment on account of Japanese oppression:

> I think my dad is just a traditionalist and he's just very closed…. He comes from the wartime where Japan took over Korea and stripped him of his culture and his language. So I think there's a lot of bitterness and anger that carried through. And you know something about first-generation Korean dads having some kind of vendetta or something…some anger or the Korean card to pull out and say, "You know these people have wronged me so I deserve retribution or I can afford to make fun of people and mock them."[26]

Ryan also uses the Korean War to frame his father's harsh treatment of him during his childhood years:

> During the Korean War, my grandfather disappeared and a lot of the men disappeared. And so you [can] imagine during that time period, there [was] a…flux of men missing in this…generation's life of fathers. So we have fathers who didn't have their fathers around because of the Korean War. So my father grew up without a father; he was four or five years old when his father disappeared. He basically had to live on his own, survive on his own, and try to figure out what it is to be a man on his own [with] no one to teach him.[27]

Although these stories of tumult and upheaval are common among most of these men, a few told alternative stories indicating the relatively healthy relationships they have with their parents. Jimmy and John both convey that they have good relationships particularly with their fathers. In John's case, this was not always so as his father was gone a lot from the home during his childhood years. John felt that his father was disconnected from his wife and the rest of the family. However, as his father became "more committed to the faith," John reflects that his father began to change becoming more present and helpful around the house.[28] John's father for instance, continues to make large lunches for John even though he is a grown adult. Paul, whose father used sports to toughen him up, comments how his father has changed over the years:

> For the last year, my dad has done a lot of apologizing of the way he raised me because he didn't know what he was doing…. He was not good showing his affection towards his kids because he didn't have it growing up. No one showed him how to do it.[29]

Paul would recount a fairly recent episode he had with his father to illustrate his father's new efforts. As Paul was watching football on television one Sunday afternoon, his father came over and joined him:

Dad Hey, who do you like?

Paul I like the Bears.

Dad Oh yeah, why?

Paul Because I've always liked them.

Dad Oh yeah? Me too.[30]

Paul shared with great emotion how this exchange moved him since he knew that his father's favorite team was not the Chicago Bears, but the Dallas Cowboys. "It was his way of connecting with me."[31]

The change, however, was not always with the men's fathers. Abe would share that it was a realization about his father that brought Abe to a healthier place with his father:

> I just realized maybe five years ago…how my dad loved me. My dad can't talk about [the love he has for me]. But he'll do anything you want. You wake up in the morning every day and he'll make you the same meal. It's the only meal that he knows how to make, but he'll make it every day. And [I'm] like, "What the heck dad? I don't even want it, but I'll eat it because you made it." And you know? He'll break his back for [me].[32]

What Are We To Do?

For some, these stories of the men might seem all too familiar and may bring up some painful memories of one's own. We may be left asking the question, how then can we work with Korean American men? I have asked this question repeatedly as I have worked with Korean American men and boys over the years in various church contexts. While there is no one correct method or model that is a sure-fire way of working with men, I propose that we rethink curricular issues, consider several implications for those working with Korean American men, and refine our purposes in working with men.

The majority of the men I interviewed and have worked with have grown up in Korean American churches where the spirituality, theology,

and formation are generally consistent from church to church. Men's groups and other formation groups have structured their time together with the purposes of faith formation centered around a transmission of doctrine, tradition, and scripture. That is, if the group is taught the Bible and understands orthodox doctrine first, the assumption is that the persons in the group will be led to live a more faithful and Godly life; it is a linear and unidirectional way of formation, from theory to practice. While Korean American Christian formation and education is largely patterned after an evangelical model based upon bible-centeredness and the passing down of religious tradition through transmissive pedagogy, I contend that we need to try something different.[33] The ahistorical and acontextual approaches[34] to Christian formation and education many of the men have experienced has resulted in lifeless Christianity, knowing much *about* God and the Christian tradition but little *of* God and the power behind the tradition.

Paulo Freire's education for critical consciousness and transformation is important here. Freire applies the term "banking method" to demonstrate how educators versed in a transmissive style of teaching deposit information into their learners (he calls these learners "receptacles") only to pull out this information later, when needed.[35] One problem that this style of education poses is the learner's difficulty of internalizing the content. It results in producing learners who know content matter but have yet to grasp the significance behind it in such a way that allows the learner to use it in a multitude of contexts and situations. Freire argues that when this failure occurs, true and full liberation of the learner has not occurred. The learner continues to be a prisoner to his or her own learning.

We often hear from preachers and pastors that our faith is not meant to be a Sunday-only-faith. Rather, we are to incorporate it into our lives in such a way that this integration is manifest throughout the week. Yet, from a formational lens, I contend that it is difficult for men to make meaning of their faith when the pedagogy implicitly communicates that their lives are secondary to the learning of the tenets of faith through scripture.[36] The men I have worked with need to ask and discuss life questions that deal with concrete issues in their lives.

Freire's response to the banking method of education then is summed up in the word *conscientization*—a coming into critical consciousness. The term carries the idea of an awakening to the realities of the self in relation to the world around it.[37] Working with Brazilian peasants concerning their welfare and health conditions, Freire showed them a series of pictures of

daily activities and asked them to explain what was occurring in each situation. He proceeded to facilitate a discussion among the people about the structural intricacies and difficulties they faced in order to draw out reflections on life as a first step toward constructive action.

Curricular Issues

In order for conscientization to occur, those working with Korean American men must consider the curricular starting points in order to help men make (faith) meaning of their (faith) lives. Consider starting with a practice that these men keep regularly in their lives. In one of the men's groups I facilitated, I began the very first session playing basketball together. After playing a few games, we made our way to the lounge area and ate dinner. Our conversation, which began during the meal, centered around the idea of basketball playing, our bodies, and what it means to be a man in the United States today. Race, power, and physical health was introduced into the conversation at various points in our discussion and reflection. The purposes of this and ensuing conversations were twofold. First, I aimed to integrate a common practice of these men's lives (i.e., sports) with their faith. Many of them commented throughout the weeks that this was a different kind of men's group than what they had been a part of in the past. Instead of viewing sports as separated from spiritual formation, these practices were assumed a part of it. Second, by introducing common practices into the pedagogy, now, as Freire advocates, we can critically reflect upon the concrete pieces of our individual and collective lives so as to pave the way for a discussion of structural and systemic issues. Spiritual formation involves discerning the sacred amidst the secular and is regularly the result of mindfulness, critical awareness, and reflection. When we introduce practices with critical reflection (*praxis*), we now have the opportunity to delve deeper into our held meanings of those very practices. To discuss why a man feels the need to "one up" another man on the basketball court begins to peel back the socially constructed layers of power, agency, and masculinity. By naming the structures of one's context, one gains a bit of agency and control over these.[38] And in bringing awareness to common practices, we offer the opportunity to change the very way we live our lives and hold our faith.

Consider then the starting points. Movies, physical exercises, eating food together, reading an excerpt from a book, watching a video clip, are a few curricular starting points one might mull over in addition to a bible study or a sermon. Allow for critical reflection and discussion following

these starting points. Furthermore, if one is working individually, and not in a group, with a Korean American man, one can still alter the starting point. Whether in a small group or in a one-to-one relationship, a key consideration is to begin with where the man is in his own life.[39]

Similarly, work to develop one's listening skills as it helps to bring a healthy presence to the relationship.[40] Past men's groups in which I have participated have made it a point to create an atmosphere of listening, probing, and vulnerable sharing. There is explicit communication from the beginning that the men are not trying to "fix" one another but are trying to grow together through listening postures.[41] Maria Harris and Gabriel Moran offer that listening grounded in deep silence enables persons to tend creatively to the world's cries. This listening is not limited only to Holy Scripture but includes the voices of those as close to us as our family and friends.[42] When men begin to listen deeply to one another, they plant seeds for an intimate connectedness that engages their spirituality.[43] Dan McAdams writes that intimacy is "the desire to share that which is innermost with another person."[44] For some men, building intimacy is not solely about communicating one's innermost thoughts. Some need to work not on verbal communication and sharing, but on reflective listening that does not fix or judge the other.[45] We learn intimacy as acceptance and response, not as the process of fixing problems. This type of listening "avoids interpreting or judging one another. Rather, it lets one another be."[46]

The relational dynamic one hopes to establish among the men is another aspect to contemplate. I have found that Korean American men thrive when they are in a non-judmental environment of trust and vulnerability. Again, for many, they have come from cultural and spiritual environments where it is commonplace for a parent, pastor, or spiritual leader to tell them the right way of living without providing them much space to be heard or deeply seen. This approach parallels Freire's banking method where the learner has had minimal opportunity to reflect upon and integrate the content with their own lives. While the wisdom and advice may very well be valuable, the processes of formation are questionable such that the man is not inclined to accept the wisdom. He rejects not *what* is being offered, but *how* or by *whom* it is offered since there is little effort to engage who he truly is.

As one nurtures an environment of intimacy and engaged listening, men now have the space to narrate their stories. In the African American religious tradition, Anne Streaty Wimberly offers that a crucial step to faith formation is to tell one's life story for it begins to unlock and link the various pieces of a person's life with the holy.[47] I find that providing space

to recreate and offer one's life in their own voice has led to powerful and intimate moments with men. Open-ended questions or phrases such as, "When did you most feel like a man?" or "Name a time when you were most frustrated with either yourself or someone close to you," begin to reveal these men's lives.

Implications for Spiritual Formation

The spiritual formation of Korean American men is complex in that it incorporates various curricular and pedagogical concerns with critical and systemic issues surrounding the social construction of Korean American men. Given the lack of agency I have witnessed among second-generation Korean American men, I first find initiation an important concept and implication for those who work with Korean American men. By initiation, I do not suggest a move back to the vision quests of the *mytho-poetic* movements of the 1970s and 1980s or the more recent Promise Keepers movement of the 1990s. This is not an advocacy for men needing to discover their "inner" man or step into their "rightful" place as the head of the family. I am rather proposing that men need to be initiated in *themselves* and into *community*.

By being initiated in themselves, I mean that we build cultures of validation and actualization. This may take actual rites of passage where men are validated in their personhood and being rather than in their masculinity, which in North America is a hegemonic masculinity. Korean American men need to be validated first in who they are and not only in who they should be. This may be realized in validating who they are at work, who they are as parents, or even, who they are at play. I understand that this commitment to initiation and validation comes with criticism, particularly a gendered one where many women and children have suffered the consequences of unaddressed patriarchy. I have two responses to this. First, I emphasize the validation of the *person*, not the support of irresponsible action though admittedly, this is oftentimes hard to distinguish. Second, I do not advocate for a reinforcement of patriarchy but rather a new social project that begins to bring men to a healthier and more self-giving place. In order for this healthier change to occur, Korean American men need to know that they are seen and accepted both in their striving to do better and in their blemishes. I have facilitated an exercise where I ask men, when ready, to stand up behind their chairs one-by-one and introduce them-

selves from the point of view of the person from whom they need the most validation.[48] The majority of the men introduce themselves from their father's or spouse's point of view and do so with much trouble because of the pain they feel from these relationships. It is important to note, however, that this validation is not a license to live irresponsibly or recklessly with no others in mind. It is rather a call to live responsibly in relation to others and to pursue their discernment of God's vocation upon their lives. Many of the men do not carry a healthy measure of self-worth; rather, it is self-criticism.[49] Initiation begins to address the self-criticism and fractured self by helping men to view themselves in a different capacity, one that is affirmed by others who assist the initiation and in doing so, affirm the *person* of the man, not necessarily the man of the person.

Furthermore, an initiation into community is an invitation into interrelatedness. It is a call for men to realize that they are not isolated from others and that their actions, beliefs, and values have an effect on not only themselves, but also those around them. Invitation into community is a challenge to let a man's guard down (to stop the posturing) and to realize that he matters to them and they to him. It requires that men care for their self in order that they might care for others.

A second implication concerns Korean American churches and leaders. If we are to adequately form second-generation Korean American men, then we need a training that provides us with multiple interpretive lenses. As I have proposed throughout, there are many complexities to second-generation Korean Americans regarding their lived experiences in the United States today. In order to analyze and comprehend the intricacy of Korean Americans, it is vital that we look to other disciplines in addition to traditional theological sources for guidance. The ministry of the church and the Korean American community as a whole would benefit from the melding of traditional theological curriculum with other disciplines. Training in racial and gender construction and the learning of Asian American immigrant history, for instance, would give religious leaders more resources to understand the people whom they serve. As life experiences become ever so complex, our churches need leaders who are able to discern the underlying structures of people's lives. I have witnessed in Korean American churches an increased emphasis upon intrapersonal awareness and psychological concepts (e.g., family of origin) and yet, still lag behind in their abilities to discuss macro, systemic issues that concern Korean Americans in society. Though many Asian Americans are carrying out this work in fields and disciplines unrelated to theology, it seems that

our ecclesial leaders on the whole, have either turned to these resources minimally or not at all. It is vital for our church leaders to take cross-disciplinary courses in their theological training and when they are not offered, to have the vision and boldness to request taking these courses elsewhere.

A final implication for leaders and churches is the need to set up ministries where men have the opportunity to live life together in healthy ways. By this, I am not advocating for a men's night out of sitting together to play poker or to have a night out without the spouse and children where one can "just be a man" in the sense of Robert Connell's hegemonic masculinity. Rather, I am advocating for ministries to be set up where men can share intentional spiritual life together in service, reflection, and fellowship. Serving together on projects (e.g., food pantry feedings, Habitat for Humanity experiences) is a good way to help men bond constructively. If a church is limited with their resources, partner with other organizations who are already doing these various service ministries. Establish small groups where men are given topics to reflect upon in order to raise self-awareness and create intimacy among one another. Train facilitators to acquire good listening skills and the ability to deeply explore an issue. In turn, these ministries are calling men to live life differently as a result of understanding their interrelatedness with one another.

Ask Why I Work with Korean American Men

As I conclude this book, I ask that we (re)consider why we work with Korean American men. One's answer gets to the heart of why one begins the journey and stays committed to the work. If your answer is only to make conversions to the faith, you might find yourself frustrated working with Korean American men. They need more than a simple conversion to the faith if your understanding of conversion is to pray the sinner's prayer, to accept Jesus into your heart, and so on. If your ultimate goal of working with Korean American men is to unconsciously have them understand theological propositions and doctrines, then again, you might find yourself unsatisfied in the long run.

If by conversion, however, you have in mind a transformation of one's life such that it affects their whole existence, then I find that many Korean American men want to be a part of this. And if by theological reflection and spiritual formation you take seriously the process of helping men to critically reflect upon the concrete realities of their lives in conjunction

with their religious tradition, again, I find that many Korean American men will be engaged in this endeavor.

My short answer to why I work with Korean American men is this: Korean American men and Korean American society need healing. As a church leader and practical theologian, I am committed to realizing the abundant life God desires for all (John 10:10) and in order to come to this realization, there are aspects we need to broach and address as I have laid out in this book. Whether it is Irenaeus or someone else who uttered the words, I hope to see Korean American men come fully alive so that our Korean American communities can be more peaceful places. I encourage you then, whether on your own or with others, to consider the overarching purpose of your work with Korean American men.

Notes

1. Stephen B. Boyd, *The Men We Long to Be: Beyond Lonely Warriors and Desperate Lovers*, (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1997), 3–4.
2. Michael Kaufman, “The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men’s Violence,” in *Men’s Lives*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 4–17.
3. Ibid.
4. Suzanne E. Hatty, *Masculinities, Violence and Culture* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000), 6.
5. A. Ayres Boswell and Joan Z. Spade, “Fraternities and Collegiate Rape Culture: Why are Some Fraternities More Dangerous Places for Women?” in *Men’s Lives*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner, 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998).
6. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-TLWOwbW24.
7. These terms are colloquialisms for sexual intercourse.
8. William M. Liu, “Exploring the Lives of Asian American Men: Racial Identity, Male Role Norms, Gender Role Conflict, and Prejudicial Attitudes,” in *College Men and Masculinities: Theory, Research, and Implications for Practice*, ed. Shaun R. Harper and Frank Harris III (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 415–33.
9. Hee-Kyu Park, “The Silver Dagger in Evangelical Korean American Women’s Lives: Exploring the Cultural, Religious and Psychological Hybridity of Korean American Woman’s Premarital Sexuality,” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion Western Region, Whittier, CA, March 27, 2011).
10. Eric, interview by author, March 12, 2011.
11. Ibid.

12. Paul, interview by author, July 2, 2011.
13. Laura Uba, *Asian Americans: Personality Patterns, Identity, and Mental Health* (New York: Guilford Press, 1994), 34–38.
14. Eric, interview by author, March 12, 2011.
15. Ibid.
16. Field notes, May 1, 2011.
17. Field notes, May 1, 2011.
18. Charles, interview by author, July 24, 2011.
19. Field notes, May 1, 2011.
20. Michael, interview by author, July 8, 2011.
21. Abe, interview by author, July 24, 2011.
22. Tony, interview by author, July 17, 2011.
23. Ibid.
24. Brian, interview by author, July 2, 2011.
25. Ibid.
26. Peter, interview by author, July 9, 2011.
27. Ryan, interview by author, March 18, 2011.
28. John, interview by author, March 18, 2011.
29. Field notes, May 1, 2011.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Abe, interview by author, July 24, 2011.
33. Harold W. Burgess, *Models of Religious Education: Theory and Practice in Historical and Contemporary Perspective* (Nappanee, IN: Evangel Publishing House, 2001).
34. Though the doctrines and scriptural interpretations themselves are situated in context and history, the teaching of them have not necessarily been situated in the men's own personal histories and contexts.
35. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, 30th Anniversary ed. (NewYork: Continuum, 2003), 71–86.
36. This is not to suggest that scripture or doctrine are not important in spiritual formation and education. Rather, that the place at which they are introduced into the formation can be wisely discerned.
37. Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 41–58.
38. Elaine L. Graham, *Transforming Practice: Pastoral Theology in an Age of Uncertainty* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 104–05.
39. Beginning with the lived experience is at the heart of various Practical Theology methods. See Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 2008) as one example.
40. Robert Bolton, *People Skills: How to Assert Yourself, Listen to Others, and Resolve Conflicts* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1979).

41. While growth certainly includes wisdom giving, especially in a wisdom-giving culture (i.e., Korean American), the quality of the relationship, the way in which one offers the wisdom, and the timing of the wisdom giving are crucial pieces to consider. The men I have worked with are more open to wisdom if they trust who it is that offers the wisdom. Much of the trust is built upon their confidence that you will hear them and that you are for them.
42. Maria Harris and Gabriel Moran, "Educating Persons," in *Mapping Christian Education: Approaches to Congregational Learning*, ed. Jack L. Seymour (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997).
43. James B. Nelson, *The Intimate Connection: Male Sexuality, Masculine Spirituality* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988).
44. Dan McAdams, *Intimacy: The Need to be Close* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 2.
45. Lynn C. Miller and John H. Berg, "Selectivity and Urgency in Interpersonal Exchange," in *Communication, Intimacy, and Close Relationships*, ed. Valerie J. Derlega (Orlando: Academic Press, 1984), 161–66.
46. Kathleen M. Galvin, Carma L. Bylund, and Bernard J. Brommel, *Family Communication: Cohesion and Change*, 6th ed. (Boston: Pearson A and B, 2004), 144.
47. Anne Streaty Wimberly, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 69–91.
48. I thank Jon Ido Warden, an Asian American counselor, who shared this technique with a congregation my wife and I had served.
49. Some men cover this self-criticism up by looking like they have it all together or by acting hard, the "cool pose."

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