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# Development of a Divorce Recovery Program for Korean American Women

Jua Grace Kim

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LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY  
School of Behavioral Health  
in conjunction with the  
Department of Counseling and Family Sciences

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Development of a Divorce Recovery Program for Korean American Women

by

Jua Kim, M.S.

---

Project submitted in partial satisfaction of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Marital and Family Therapy

---

June 2014

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Each person whose signature appears below certifies that this doctoral project in his/her opinion is adequate, in scope and quality, as a doctoral project for the degree Doctor of Marital and Family Therapy.

---

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very thankful to the many people who provided me support and guidance throughout the completion of my doctoral program. I would like to give my full gratitude to them. First, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Douglas Huenergardt. Words cannot describe how valuable his knowledge, expertise in research, guidance, and mentoring has been for me. I would not have been able to complete this work without the countless hours of consultation and support he gave to me. He has been such an amazing mentor and I will always be thankful for his time throughout this process.

I would also like to genuinely thank the other members of my committee. I thank Dr. Barbara Hernandez for her care, guidance, and expertise in qualitative research. Her endless mentorship and guidance as I went through the doctoral program also cannot be expressed adequately with words. I am also grateful to Dr. Colwick Wilson for his prayers, leadership, and his expertise in research. He always shared with me the value of humility.

I wish also to thank Dr. Carla Gober for her expertise in spirituality, prayer, and research, and Dr. Brian Distelberg for his support in research and IRB. I am grateful to Dr. Winnetta Baker, Dr. Ian Chand and Dr. Curtis Fox for sharing their expertise and wisdom in clinical supervision and teaching. My thanks also to Dr. Timothy Lee for his humility, spirituality, and mentorship, Dr. Michele Martin, Cynthia Curbow, and Michelle Donaldson for their guidance, mentorship and countless supervision. I am grateful to Dr. Harvey Elder for his humility, kindness, and teaching in spirituality and integration of medicine. Words cannot account for the love and humility that he has shared with me. I wish also to thank my friends, Dr. Jeni Shull, Dr. David Puder and

Lindsay Puder for their endless prayer, support, and wisdom. Words cannot express my gratitude to my friends, Dr. Lisa Esmiol, Dr. Cindy Loh, Lauralen Pahl Perham, Aspen Diercks, and Dr. Michelle Karume. Thanks also to Dr. Lindsey Lawson, and Dr. Aimee Galick for their friendship and wisdom. I am grateful for my research colleagues and friends, Tom Luttrell, Wendella Wray, and Amber Hearn. I thank my prayer partner and a friend, Dr. Kattya Ramirez. I also thank my friends from New Song church, Jolex and Blue Del Phila, James Lee, Nick Garcia, Jayne Hong, Andrew and Amy Phong, Tim Moore, Dr. Victor Chu, Paul Nitake, Arjuan Christiansen, Henry Ng and Sandra Lee, Shelley and Ben Stenphill, Tams and Frances Lai. Thanks also to my friends from Grace Church, Hyun Choe, Dr. Daniel Kang, and Cindy Lee. Thanks to my friend and mentor, Dr. Ben Zinke, whose mentorship and friendship throughout the program is a blessing to me. I also thank my friend, Cherry Zhuang, for her amazing friendship, and Dr. Kirstee Williams for her friendship and mentorship.

Special thanks to my friend, Dr. Werner Marroquin in Guatemala for his prayer, endless support, and trust in me. I could not finish this project without his support and prayer.

I wish to thank to all the first generation Korea-American women and the church leaders who help me to do this project. I am grateful to Dr. Knudson-Martin and SERT research team for endless support and their expertise in qualitative research. I am also thankful to my prayer supporter, Soon Jung. I must also take a moment to thank my friends. Dr. Abigail Ward, and Ketsia Lafontant, for their support and prayer. I also thank to my editors, Derek Yung, and Amy Wong for their endless support and dedication.

To my family, your love and support through this journey has been so valuable to

me. Mom and Dad, I am so blessed and lucky to have endlessly supportive and dedicated parents like you. Thank you so much for loving and guiding me in faith and in prayer. Thanks to my sister, Christine, my brothers, Anthony, Peter, and my niece, Monica, for prayer, endless support, and love.

And finally, I would like to thank God for supporting me and providing me with the means to complete this study.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- SC Social Constructionism
- MF Multicultural Feminism
- SSQ Social Support Questionnaire

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Development of a Divorce Recovery Program for Korean American Women**

**by**

**Jua Kim**

Doctor of Marital and Family Therapy, Graduate Program in Marital and Family Therapy  
Loma Linda University, June 2014  
Dr. Douglas Huenergardt, Chairperson

This study is a needs assessment of first generation immigrant, separated and divorced Christian Korean-American women for the purpose of developing a divorce recovery program. A large number of divorced Korean-American women currently do not receive adequate support from their communities, whether from the church or from their social networks (Kim, B., Titterinton, Kim, Y., & Wells, 2010; Lee & Scott, 2009; Son, 2011). This inadequate support may in part be due to the lack of a research community investigating the issues that Korean-American women face during divorce (Lee & Scott, 2009). The complexity of the divorce recovery process for Korean-American women remains unexamined (Park, 2008; Kim et.al. 2010). In addition, the divorce processes in these cases often takes longer than the divorce processes among Caucasian American women. Both Confucianism and gender oppression within Korean-American culture contribute to the longer process of divorce and increase depression and other negative impacts on these women. Understanding these processes provides differentiation and supports the creation of culturally nuanced programs based on key treatment principles developed from the study.

Using the experiences and stories of 20 divorced Korean-American women from a single women's ministry program in Southern California, this study provides data on a



range of contributing factors that influence the recovery process (e.g. duration of marriage, age during divorce, the acculturation process, awareness of feminism, and socioeconomic status). This study presents the experiences of these women using perspectives afforded by social constructionism (SC) and multicultural feminism (MF). As a research approach, Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) proved especially useful given the cultural impact of these factors on the recovery process. The findings from the needs assessment from IPA analysis provide important insight into the process of Korean-American women's divorce and recovery, and form the basis for creating a new therapy program called *New Life*.

The study analyzes the unique experiences that divorced Korean-American women encounter in their transition from married to unmarried status. The key findings may be summarized by five major themes:

- 1) The transition from a unilateral to a bilateral relationship with God
- 2) The development of a new identity that is based on self-worth regardless of marital status
- 3) A sense of self-progression in transitioning from separation, to divorce, and to post-divorce
- 4) The gradual change from seeking indirect forms of interactional support, to seeking more direct forms
- 5) The importance of a relational collectivist public in promoting healing.

This study therefore took into account the perspectives of both the divorced women themselves and the entire social community of which they are a part.

The emotional experiences of divorced Korean-American women included confusion, depression, anger, alienation, isolation, relief, and acceptance. The emotions also changed during the process of developing new self-identity and during their transitional stages. In general, divorced Korean-American women went through long periods of separation prior to making the decision to divorce. The study indicates that it usually took six to ten years of separation before the decision to divorce. During the separation period, these women faced depression, isolation, loneliness, and “hwa-byung,” a culture-bound syndrome that involves both anger and depressive symptoms. The program I designed seeks to support women who experience these emotional domains. The study also found that silent prayer and meditation on Bible verses are helpful spiritual supports for these women in their recovery process. Overall, the study emphasizes diverse spiritual, emotional, physical, and relational aspects of these women’s needs at the various phases of divorce. In sum, all of these findings provide new ways of thinking about how to address the specific phenomenon that Korean-American women face in their transitions out of their respective marriages.

*New Life* incorporates these major findings into its design. The program uses interactive reflecting teams in group settings, role-play, journal entries, and interactive dialogues with God (serenity prayers) to encourage growth in socio-spiritual as well as cultural-emotional-relational domains.

This study anticipates that the discovery of data will help marriage family therapists (MFT), program developers, and evaluators provide culturally nuanced support when counseling Korean-American women facing separation and divorce.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

#### **Introduction**

The ascendancy of multicultural feminism in Korea and in the United States over the last 20 years has transformed cultural paradigms for the contemporary Korean-American family. One particular concern resulting from new interest in multicultural feminism is the increased instance of divorce in Korean and Korean-American families. For the last two decades, incidences of divorce in Korea have increased from 23,000 in 1980 to 167,000 in 2003 (Shin, Choi, Kim, & Kim, 2011). Statistics indicate that nearly half of Korean couples married in 2007 will have divorced by 2011 (Korea National Statistical Office, 2008). Moreover, the divorce statistics of Korean-American communities show that nearly half of Korean-American couples are divorced or separated (Chang, 2003; 2006). Divorce, then, is an increasing phenomenon in both Korean and Korean-American communities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

For many of these women, however, divorce is a positive experience because it enables them to escape from physically and emotionally abusive marriages. Yet, there remains a lack of adequate societal support for divorced Korean and Korean-American women. Many divorced Korean and Korean-American women now find themselves alone in unfamiliar cultural and social terrains.

The capacity to address this growing need has been limited, in part, to the gaps in research on divorced Korean American women. Divorce research has typically focused on studying both the causes of divorce and the recovery process among parents and children (Krumrei, Coit, Martin, Fogo, & Mahoney, 2007; Chang, 2003; Shin et al.,

2011). Most of the divorce research, moreover, has focused on middle-class, Anglo-American families. There continues to be a considerable gap of research on families of color, especially Korean-Americans (Molina, 2004; Yárnoz, Plazaola, & Etxeberria, 2009; Son, 2011). Furthermore, the empirical data and research on Korean-Americans are out-of-date, often published more than a decade ago (Rhee, 1997; Kim, 1996; Kim, 1976).

Given the circumstances I have outlined, there is now a greater demand for further understanding the needs of divorced Korean-American women. The objective of the study is as follows:

To assess the needs of first generation immigrant Korean-American women as they transition from married to unmarried status so that a pilot program can be developed that addresses women's issues throughout the stages of divorce recovery.

Providing a needs assessment gives program developers the opportunity to understand women's needs within specific socio-cultural contexts. With an adequate needs assessment, program developers can design a recovery program that best fits the needs of divorced Korean-American women (Bamberger, Rugh, & Mabry, 2006). The study will provide detailed information on the post-divorce recovery process and treatment needs of Korean-American women. This will help marriage and family therapists understand post-divorce recovery within the appropriate cultural contexts. The findings of the study will also provide useful information for Korean-American women and their families, as well as evaluators and policy makers.

## **The Incidence and Prevalence of Divorce**

The causes of divorce among Korean-American couples have a direct impact on divorce recovery experiences of divorced Korean-American women. Research has shown that there are several major causes for the recent increase of divorces among first-generation Korean American women (Chang, 2003; 2008). The causes of divorce are interrelated, and stem from radical challenges to a Confucian societal structure, brought on by rapid economic development and global feminist movements.

Confucianism, an Eastern philosophy that originated from the Chinese scholar and philosopher Confucius (551-479 BC), has been the foundation of Korean philosophy and beliefs since the Choson Dynasty (approximately in 1392) (Berthong & Berthong, 2000, 169). Confucianism conceives a family within a patriarchal hierarchy. The logic of Confucian ideology, which is impressed on Korean society from generation to generation, dictates that women, (and also their sons), must be subordinate to the patriarch from birth to death (Haboush, 2003). More important, Confucianism also stipulates that the harmony of a household requires a woman to sacrifice herself to help her family (Yao, 2000). In other words, a family does not remunerate (whether by wages or decision-making power) a woman's labor and time spent on the family, but takes it as a given (Kim; 2005). The global feminist movement and economic development of the Korean state and society, however, have introduced new ideas that unsettle conventional Confucian ideology (Son, 2006; Park & Raymo, 2008; Kim, Edwards, Sweeney, & Wetchler, 2012).

One major cause of divorce is that Korean-American women's marital expectations have changed as a result of their increased access to economic resources in

Korea (Park & Raymo, 2008). This, when compounded with the rapid economic development of the Korean society and state, means that the distribution of resources, while not equalized between genders, has dramatically shifted. As a consequence, Korean-American women no longer consider men as the only “bread-winners” of the family.

The phenomenon of a dual-income household leads to gender role conflicts between the women and their spouses, which is another prevalent cause of divorce (Chun & Son, 2009). Though Korean-American women can now secure an income not only for their families, but for themselves as well, under Confucianism, they are still expected to care for the household and the family (Shim & Hwang, 2005). From the Korean-American woman’s perspective, the impossibility, or inequity, of these dual responsibilities demand that the husband must now share and take part in household and family responsibilities. Some husbands, who are committed to holding on to their traditional superior roles, try harder to cling to authoritarian roles and demand even more harshly that their wives submit to them. The inability of husbands to relax their expectations of gender roles often leads to marital conflict, and in many cases, violent, mental, and financial abuse (Son, 2006; Lee & Scott, 2009).

Another major factor among Korean-American immigrant marriages is the pace of acculturation to American culture (Kim et al., 2012). The impact of Western Anglo culture, which includes views on gender equality, language barriers, and drastic shifts in socioeconomic status (SES) can be considered as significant stressors on a Korean-American marriage (Son, 2006; Lee & Scott, 2009).

Another cause for the increase of divorces is the increase in marital infidelity (Allen & Atkins, 2005; Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2005). The increase of marital infidelity is a consequence of previous marital stressors now given salience by the recent changes in social, economic, and even techno-cultural developments. The increased opportunities for marital infidelity through social networking sites, compounded with changing morals surrounding marriage, have led to increased incidents of emotional and sexual betrayal in Korean-American marriages (Chun & Son, 2009).

Lastly, a significant cause of increased divorce is the growing social intolerance of marital abuse. Korean couples have traditionally maintained their marital relationships despite the reality of domestic violence. This is because Confucianism, religious beliefs, and social forces have historically legitimized domestic violence towards women (Son, 2006; Lee, 2005; Kim et al., 2010). Domestic violence is often a reality that many Korean-American women are expected to face and endure. In Los Angeles County, for example, Korean men commit the highest number of incidents of domestic violence (Kim et al., 2010). However, in contemporary Korean and Korean-American society, both gender's views towards domestic violence are changing. Korean-American women recognize that their husbands' abusive behaviors decrease their self-esteem and marital satisfaction, and also influence healthy parenting of their children (Chun & Son, 2009). Physical, emotional, and financial abuse towards spouses, although still a reality, is no longer socially acceptable, and women are more willing to divorce their spouses on the basis of domestic violence.

As the brief overview of the major causes for the increased incidents of Korean-American divorce indicates, much of the conflict stems from growing opposition to a

Confucian family paradigm, an opposition enabled by historical and contemporary economic and social developments. This opposition in turn has provided material and philosophical resources to empower women to leave destructive marital relationships. However, what these causes can belie is the sense of stigma and shame that Korean-American women face from their communities during and after divorce.

### **The Needs of a New Community**

For Korean women, divorce becomes a weapon and a shield against the gender oppression and discrimination of traditional Korean patriarchal culture and Eastern Confucianism. While the increased incidents of divorce in the Korean-American community indicate the growing empowerment of Korean-American women, this celebratory narrative often neglects to consider the stigma and shame that is attendant to divorce, especially within a Korean-American social context.

The feeling and social structure of shame for Korean-Americans are rooted in Confucian ideology (Son, 2006), and often inculcates in Korean-American women a sense of self-blame. In particular, for Korean-American victims of domestic violence, these women experience shame both from being beaten and from thinking that they caused their partners' violence. This shame and self-blame is further exacerbated when Korean-American women are stigmatized for initiating divorce (Son, 2006). The community, at least the one considered ideal by Confucian ideology, often blames the woman for disrupting the harmony of the household. In many instances, divorced Korean-American women are not only separated from their husbands, they are also separated from their children and their community (Kim, 2005; Son, 2006; Lee & Scott,



2009). As such, divorced Korean-American women are especially vulnerable to a type of social death.

The oppression of Korean women is deeply embedded in the Korean-American social context. Abused and divorced Korean-American women often do not seek out help or recovery services because program designers, counselors, and therapists are unaware of their specific social and cultural context (Lee & Scott, 2009). The current inability for the therapy field to address the needs of divorced Korean-American women can be attributed to how divorced Korean-American women's issues and experiences towards divorce and divorce recovery have been underrepresented in the literature.

In light of all this, conducting a needs assessment for divorced/separated Korean-American women is paramount for our society. This study conducts a needs assessment for separated and divorced first generation Korean American women as a first step towards developing a pilot recovery program.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT**

The goal of this study is to assess the needs of immigrant Korean-American women as they transition from married to unmarried status. This needs assessment is used to develop a pilot program that addresses women's issues throughout the various stages of divorce recovery. Of particular concern to this study is how divorced Korean-American women's recovery is influenced by factors such as the duration of divorce proceedings, age at the time of divorce, acculturation process, divorce initiation, feminist awareness, and socioeconomic status.

This study also examines the challenges, stigma, and emotional stressors that divorced Korean-American women face post-divorce. It is my hope that the findings in this study proves beneficial to the creation of guidelines for marriage and family therapists, and other related professionals who seek to develop more effective support programs and policies for divorced Korean-American women.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **Overview of the Korean-American Culture in Relation to Divorce**

The literature that currently exists on divorced Korean-American women has focused in particular on their vulnerability to post-divorce social alienation. Research suggests that a strong correlation exists between the post-divorce well-being of Korean-American women and their relationship to collective Korean culture (Son, 2011). This relationship is complicated by the fact that many divorced Korean-American women are either immigrants or first-generation Korean-Americans, which increases their vulnerability to social alienation. Divorced Korean-American women tend to struggle, because they perceive that they have lost not only their husbands, but also, their already tenuous connection to Korean culture: their social heritage and status, social networks, and their children (Lee & Scott, 2009).

Existing literature also demonstrates that a divorced Korean-American women's divorce recovery is complicated by her relationship to her children (Son, 2011), for instance, found that as Korean-American children integrate into U.S. institutions, they acculturate to American culture and often forget their mother culture. From the Korean-American mother's perspective, her children become increasingly different and indifferent in their language and behavior towards her. For the divorced Korean-American mother, her children are no longer the ones she raised back in Korea, and are no longer "100% Korean."

Research also documents how these losses serve to shatter and damage women's self-identity, creating several deleterious stressors such as anxiety, depression, and panic

attacks (Son, 2011). Transitioning from a wife, a mother, and a social entity to being a single woman is highly stressful and overwhelming (Son, 2011).

### *Formation of New Post-Divorce Identity*

People often experience divorce as a loss, a loss of social networks, and in some instances, a loss of a belief in God (Weiss, 1975; Herman, 1997; Wickrama et al., 2006; Everet et al., 2012). A common narrative in response to this experience of loss is that the outcomes of such a struggle can be productive and positive (Calhoun, Cann, & Tedeschi, 2004; 2006; 2010; Walsh, 2003).

Tedeschi & Calhoun (2004; 2006), for instance, propose that positive character development can occur because women are forced to adapt and thereby create a new identity (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004; 2006). Their former identity, culturally and historically conditioned to be subservient towards their husbands, is shattered and the women discover self-reliance and create an identity based on new-found strength if they are to survive (Calhoun, 2010). This process of self-fashioning, as Tedeschi & Calhoun assert leads the women to a new degree of independence. This study found that a woman's awareness of self-growth, when struggling with post-divorce adversity, can produce a higher self-esteem, stronger relationship bonds, and stronger spiritual beliefs (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2006).

The success with which individuals cope productively with these stressors, and in turn create positive outcomes, depends on the activation of protective factors and vulnerability factors (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2004; Calhoun et al. 2010). Protective factors (i.e., those that buffer the person or promote resilience in coping with the challenges of divorce) and vulnerability factors (i.e., those that increase the likelihood of adverse

consequences) include personal characteristics of the individual, family processes, relationships, and ecological systems external to the family, such as friends, extended family, school, the workplace, and the larger neighborhood (Calhoun et al. 2010).

Women do not approach divorce with a singular “emotional level,” but engage with the meaning of divorce through various stages (Fisher, 2006). Fisher (2006) has defined these stages of divorce similarly to the stages that one goes through when reconciling his or her inevitable death. These stages are aligned with specific emotional feelings of despair, disappointment, revenge, retaliation, hopelessness and helplessness (Fisher & Alberti, 2006). This study incorporates Fisher’s model of divorce to explore how divorced Korean-American women cope and navigate through the various stages of divorce and how they affect them.

### ***Cultural Competency and Korean-Americans***

Even though the divorce rate is high for Koreans, only limited research on divorce recovery for Korean-Americans is available in marriage family therapy fields (Son, 2011). Most of the research on divorced women is based on the middle class and white populations (Yarnoz, et al. 2008). If program designers apply this research wholesale to the phenomena of divorced Korean-American women, they run the risk of neglecting the unique experiences and perspectives that Korean-American women hold towards their collectivist cultural context.

This study contributes to these women’s issues and emphasizes the important key factors for divorced Korean-American women. Many Korean-American women view their identities as inherently tied to a collective culture. For instance, research has documented that many Korean-American women view marriage as a fundamental facet of their

identity (Son, 2006). Despite the awareness that values of interdependence, family harmony, and self-sacrifice are rooted in Confucian ideology and often reinforce patriarchy, many Korean-American women continue to define their identities by these values. As a result, while divorce may liberate Korean-American women from an abusive and unsatisfactory marriage, the price that they pay is their identities as mothers and as women (Chang, 2003; Lee & Scott, 2009). Moreover, this experience of divorce, an experience of identity loss and necessary transition, also intersects with the experience of being a first-generation immigrant (McGoldrick, 2006; Son, 2006; Lee & Scott, 2009). The below chart compares the causes of divorce, the consequences of divorce, and transitional cycles between first generation divorced Korean-American women and divorced Korean women.

Table 1  
*First Generation Divorced Korean-American Cases in relation to Divorced Korean (Causes of Divorce)*

Population	Causes of Divorce
Divorced Korean American	Financial difficulty Infidelity Abuse (Physical and Emotional Abuse) (Lee, & Scott, 2009) Addiction Immigration adjustment Acculturation process Role conflict (Son, 2006)
Divorced Korean	Incompatibility Abuse Infidelity Financial difficulty Role conflict (Park & Raymo, 2008; 2009; Chun & Son, 2011)

Table 2  
*First Generation Divorced Korean-American Cases in Relation to Negative Consequences of Post-Divorce Related Distress*

Identity	Health (Physical and mental illness)	Emotional Problems	Social Problems	Substance Abuse	Self
Negative in Consequence of post-divorce-related distress	-Psychosomatic symptoms: -*Hwa-Byung (HB) (Choi & Yeon, 2011)	-Guilt -Rejection -Shame (Son, 2006)	-Social isolation (Lee & Scott, 2009) -Change to lower socio-economic status (SES) (Y.Kim, 2005)	-Addiction (Alcohol, drug, gamble, work and shopping etc.)	-Decrease self-esteem -Lost identity (Y.Kim, 2005; McGoldrick, 2006)

\*A psychiatric term is listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 1994) as a culture-bound syndrome (Namkoong, & Lee, 1990). South Korean woman's depression-like anger symptoms (Lin, 1983; Choi & Yeom, 2011).

The charts compare and contrast the major causes of divorce between first generation divorced Korean-American women and divorced Korean women in Korea. The major causes of divorce for Korean-American women are similar to those for Korean

women: financial struggles, infidelity, abuse, addiction, and role conflicts (Chang, 2003; 2006; Lee & Scott, 2009; Son, 2006; Park & Raymo, 2008; 2009; Chun & Son, 2011).

This study first suggests using social constructionism (SC) and multicultural feminism (MF) as theoretical frameworks to explore how divorced Korean-American women fashion a new identity, a new relationship to the collective. It is within this new relational identity, embedded in socio-cultural discourse, that we can find a new perspective and meaning of divorce and its relation to the self.

## **Post-Divorce Recovery**

### ***Social Relationship and Divorce Recovery***

Divorce is a stressful and major event in a person's life and, can produce negative psychological, emotional, and relational influences (Wickrama et al. 2006; Schnell & Araditt, 2004, Baum, 2004; Hetherington, 2003; Preece & DeLongis, 2005). Divorce forces changes not only on individuals' self-identity and self-development, but on their social networks and family structures (Carter & McGoldrick, 2009; Krumrei et al. 2007).

Krumeri et al. (2007) established a correlation between an individual's social network and adjustment to a positive and productive divorce recovery. The availability and maintenance of social relationships (i.e. "specific relationships" and "network relationships") fostered a smoother post-divorce recovery by providing emotional support and promoting self-growth (Krumeri et al. 2007). "Network relationships", or "support groups", are particularly important in providing for an individual's emotional, psychological, and practical needs during and after divorce (Krumeri et al. 2007).



### *Age, Initiator, Infidelity and Post- Divorce Adjustment*

Divorce is concerned with the correlations between age, initiator, infidelity, and spiritual well-being. Divorce has correlations between depression, duration of divorce, and ambiguity in identity and divorce adjustment (Steiner, Suarez, Sells, & Wykes, 2011). While a recent study (i.e. Steiner et al. 2011), argues that age is not a significant factor in an individual's divorce recovery, or in determining who initiated divorce, the general consensus of decades of research asserts that middle-aged women who did not initiate divorce were more vulnerable to emotional distress (e.g. Bogolub, 1991; Kincaid & Caldwell, 1996; Peck & Manocherian, 1989).

Women, who discovered and experienced spousal infidelity and betrayal, experienced greater difficulty recovering from divorce (McArculty & Brnette, 2004). For divorced couples, 25-50% of men have had extra-marital affairs, whereas less than 25% of women reported spousal infidelity (McArculty & Brnette, 2004). Table 3 compares the systematic review of 1989's to 2005; 2009 to present's literature review on age, infidelity, initiator, spiritual well- being, depression, and ambiguity in identity.

Table 3

*Systematic Review of Divorce Adjustment Recovery Literature (1989's to 2005's and 2009's to present):*

*The systematic review is based on age, initiator, infidelity, spirituality, depression, and ambiguity in self-identity.*

Divorce Adjustment and Relationship Factors	Comparison Study of 1989's-2005's)	Research Study (2009's-present)
Initiator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiator's action is yield significant result (Kinciad &amp; Caldwell, 1996).</li> <li>• Non-initiator is more vulnerable (Peck &amp; Manocherian, 1989).</li> <li>• Non-initiator women are more difficult to adjust coping (Sakraida, 2005).</li> <li>• "Initiator is defined as one who actively participates in the decision" (Kinciad &amp; Caldwell, 1996).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiator should not be significant (Steiner et al. 2011).</li> <li>• Initiator is denoted who made a decision to divorce (Steiner et al., 2011).</li> </ul>
Age of Divorce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divorce in mid-life is more painful and have more difficult than younger age (Bogolub, 1991).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age of divorce was not significant (Steiner, et al., 2011).</li> </ul>
Infidelity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All affairs are not the same. The process of divorce varies depending on the type of affair (Pittman, 1989).</li> <li>• 25-50% of men had extra-marital affairs (Whisman et al. 1997).</li> <li>• One of the most damaging events in a marital relation-ship-infidelity (Whisman, Dixon, &amp; Johnson, 1997).</li> <li>• Women were considered less involved in extra-marital affairs (McAriclis &amp; Burnette, 2004).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "61.2% infidelity was a strong divorce contributor. Their ex-spouses stayed in the relationship with their affair partners after the divorce" (Steiner et al. 2011).</li> <li>• Developing Anger (Steiner et al.2011).</li> <li>• The strong contributor of divorce (Steiner et al., 2011).</li> </ul>
Spiritual well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A personal relationship with God (Bufford et al., 1991).</li> <li>• Strong self-concept (Bufford et al.1991).</li> <li>• It supports women to cope with divorce (Bohlmann, 2000).</li> <li>• A strengthen-ing of self for midlife non-initiating women of divorce (Sakraida, 2005).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spiritual well-being is related to existential well-being (Steiner et al., 2011).</li> <li>• The existential well-being is related to focus more on vision and purpose (Steiner et al.2011).</li> <li>• Increases self-worth (Steiner et al., 2011).</li> <li>• Find meaning and renewed vision (Steiner et al., 2011).</li> <li>• Christian's view on God and other religious view of God are different.</li> <li>• Christian's view on God is more intimate and closer than other religion (distant, demanding) (Steiner et al., 2011).</li> </ul>
Ambiguity of Self Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition from married to divorced is more difficult for women after divorce (Lund, 1990).</li> <li>• The role ambiguity with divorce to a change in identity (Rahav &amp; Baum, 2002).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To find their post- divorce identity (Gregson &amp; Ceynar, 2009).</li> </ul>

The above table contrasts and compares systematic review of several contributing factors of divorce and the recovery process (age, initiator, infidelity, ambiguity, duration of divorce effects, and ambiguity in identity) from 1989's to 2005; 2009 to present. Comparing the two time periods, the systematic review study (Kincaid & Caldwell, 1996; Peck & Manocherian, 1989) shows that non-initiators of divorce often have both a vulnerability and higher tendency to a difficult adjustment during divorce recovery (Sakraider, 2005) time period from 1989 to 2005. Steiner et al., (2011) argues that the age of women, and initiators (the one that makes a decision to divorce) are not significant in divorce recovery adjustment. A women's sense of self-identity is directly related to their spiritual well-being (Bufford et al., 1991; Steiner et al., 2011). Spiritual well-being is related to existential well-being to find their purpose of life after post divorce recovery (Steiner et al., 2011).

In addition, infidelity is a major cause of divorce and it increases the possibility of depression, humiliation and decreased self-worth (Steiner et al., 2011).

This chapter has provided a literature review of divorced Korean-American women and a meta-analysis of various factors involved in addressing their adjustments to divorce recovery adjustment. In particular, I have emphasized divorced Korean-American women's self-identity and their socio-cultural context as significant to their divorce recovery. Living in transnational culture (both Korean and American), divorced Korean-American women find themselves embedded in Confucian and Christian belief systems, as well as the Korean feminist movement. Moreover, their uses of social networks are crucial factors in gauging their divorce recovery.

The chapter also reviews the current meta-analysis of factors considered in divorce literature in two time periods, from 1989's to 2005's; 2009's to current. Like other western divorced American women, divorced Korean women's divorce recovery is also influenced by age, an initiator of making a decision, ambiguity of self-identity, infidelity, depression, and spirituality.

Women's interaction and their conversation with social circle also create new meaning and stories to divorced Korean-American women. Finding acceptance from oneself, others, or a higher being can serve to quicken the recovery process and give hope to divorced Korean-American women.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This study uses two major conceptual frameworks to examine Korean-American women's divorce recovery: social constructionism and multicultural feminism. These theoretical frameworks allow researchers to understand how women negotiate with divorce within a socio-cultural context such as family relationships and feminist discourses (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erikson, 1998; Schenella & Arditti, 2004).

#### **Social Constructionism**

As a theoretical framework, social constructionism holds that meaning is not found in some essential psychological characteristic, but constructed through language. Meaning and knowledge is produced and reproduced through verbal and nonverbal modes of communication. Moreover, the interpretation of meaning and knowledge is a dynamic process that connects an individual's experience to others within a collective socio-historical perspective. Analysis of this social exchange between the Korean-American woman and the researcher, or amongst divorced Korean-American women themselves, can reveal the collectively constructed meaning of divorce and its impact on a person's philosophy (Gergen, 1985, 2009).

Social constructionism creates a compelling articulation of "human nature"; it is not an essential or natural element that can be observed *a priori* in an individual. Rather human nature can only be observed and analyzed through concrete interactions among people who are embedded within their culture and history. The construction of human nature in this sense is dialogic. As people communicate through socio-cultural traditions

(i.e. certain forms of address and nonverbal cues) they are engaging with a process of self-narration and definition towards audience, of whom are socially constructed as well (Jeon, 2004). These interactions have a powerful, transformative character on both the speaker and the audience; they are sites of an activity, what Giambattista Vico termed as “providence.”

If meaning is socially constructed, this has certain implications in how researchers attend to different ways in which a divorced Korean-American woman communicates her experiences. Inconsistencies of details and omissions do not necessarily indicate embellishments and incoherency, but can convey speaker’s situational awareness of the audience and the time and place of telling. These variations can be important: people present what they want to show to others. The self in this sense is not an essential or singular entity, but is saturated with meaning.

### *The Saturated Self*

Social constructionism emphasizes that the concept and production of self occurs through language, which is itself embedded in a socio-historical context. Gergen (1991; 2009), for instance, holds that in using language to produce self, the self “acquiesces in social life” (Gergen, 1991; Gergen, 2009). Gubrium and Holsten (1999) describe this social life as spatial, as “geographies of self-making” (Gubrium & Holsten, 1999). In other words, an individual views his or her “self” from multiple socio-cultural perspectives, and the individual’s awareness of each perspective provides a particular contour of the self.

The individual shapes this contour through the act of self-narration (Misra & Prakash, 2012). Self-narration can be understood here both as rhetorical and as a function

of language. Individuals fashion an identity and the meaning of such an identity by consciously situating a story of self within shared and social geographies of meaning.

### ***Real Practice***

Social constructionist theories and paradigms offer real implications for the ways in which researchers and professionals engage in the practice of therapy and support. In particular, social constructionists understand that they are themselves embedded in their client's social reality, and their actions and demeanors will affect the client's perspective towards divorce and their particular usages of language. The challenge then is for the social constructionist to participate in this social reality, to use a shared language in order to provide a collective understanding of their client's reality.

## **Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

### ***Multicultural Feminism (MF)***

This study supplements its social constructionist framework with multicultural feminism (MF) to examine the ways in which multiple oppressions intersect and complicate the recovery of divorced Korean-American women. Multicultural feminist theories deconstruct traditional paradigms of ethnicity and gender by illustrating the intersecting hierarchies of dominant cultural discourses (De Reus, et al, 2005). This in turn allows researchers a way to understand the women's experiences within the context of power relations (Baber & Murray, 2001). Multicultural feminist theories, or third-wave feminism, emerged as epistemic challenges to the 1960's feminist movement. Its emphasis on intersectionality and the primacy of difference was a sharp contrast to the previous feminist paradigm, which took Caucasian, middle-class, and Western feminist

experiences as universal. In particular, multicultural feminism holds that individuals and social groups produce selves in order to navigate through multiple and often intersecting social and cultural oppressions. In this sense, a multicultural feminist theoretical framework allows researchers ways to examine how women, in particular, women of color, navigate and embrace the controversies of post-modern life (De Reus, et al, 2005). Standpoint theories discuss the relationship of social and epistemic location and their influences on how individual and social groups have processed meaning-making to identity in order to mediate and negotiate the political variance (De Reus, et al, 2005).

### ***Multicultural Feminism and Korean-American Women Feminism***

A multicultural feminist framework is especially useful given that although Asian Americans are an oppressed and marginalized social and cultural community, Asian American culture also participates in the oppression of women (McAdoo, et al, 2005). Generally speaking, Asian American families, and by extension Korean-American families are often patriarchal, stemming from the prevalent influence of Confucian ideology (Son, 2006). While Korean-American individuals and families often seek racial equality, they are often resistant to feminist movements and influences in both Korea and the United States.

Multicultural feminism therefore, situates Korean-American women's experiences and identities at the intersection of racial and gender oppression. It suggests that while Korean-American women may embrace acculturation into American society, they are hesitant to do so at the cost of their traditional values and practices. In other words, Korean-American women's perspectives on their gender identity are drastically



different from a second wave feminist paradigm, since they are both women and non-white.

As such, the coping strategies that Korean-American women utilize are different and must be contextualized in the intersection of race, class, and gender oppression. Second-wave feminist theory does not adequately address or represent the hidden social discourse of women of color and immigrant women's struggles. Multicultural feminism directs researchers and professional therapists to be aware of this intersectionality (Collins, 1998). This theoretical framework allows valuable insights into the various aspects of divorce for Korean-American women and can enable a professional therapist to better support the women's transition into singlehood.

### *Theorizing Identity*

Multicultural feminism highlights the invisible perspectives of Korean-American women by situating their experiences within collective power relations of class, gender, race, and sexuality. It provides a space for different meanings that women of color hold towards acculturation and feminism. As a post-structural practice, multicultural feminism augments social constructionist theory by deconstructing how conventional paradigms of race, gender, and class are themselves embedded within an oppressive and dominant social discourse (Blume & Blume, 2003). In this sense, language becomes a double-edged blade. While it enables the production of meaning and the fashioning of self, it is also the means by which oppression is reproduced and reinforced (Derida, 1995).

Women of color are oppressed by multiple intersecting social forces such as race, class, and gender (De Reus et al., 2005). Traditional theories do not adequately address this experience, and by extension, cannot address the needs of divorced women of color,

in particular for this study, Korean-American women. The goal of this study is to provide valuable qualitative research data, informed by social constructionism and multicultural feminism, to understand how divorced women of color, in particular Korean-American women, utilize their varied resources in post-divorce to navigate through the multiple and intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and class.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **Introduction to Qualitative Research**

This study took a qualitative approach to research in order to explore the needs of divorced Korean-American women at various stages of divorce. This study also incorporated an awareness of various contextual factors (i.e. age, time of divorce, initiator, abuse, acculturation process, etc.). My qualitative research allowed me to investigate how Korean-American cultural values influenced the needs of the divorced Korean-American women. This research was especially necessary given the recent call for conducting needs assessment on the topic (Lee & Scott, 2009). Qualitative research was an appropriate method and approach given the numerous factors that influence and accompany the experience of divorce. I discussed the complexity of some of these factors in the literature review in Chapter 4. Qualitative research conducted for this study, in particular interpretive phenomenology analysis (IPA), incorporated these various factors along with the participant's own interpretation of their experience.

#### **Research Questions**

With the hope of filling these gaps, the study was guided by the following primary research question:

What are the needs of immigrant Korean-American women as they transition from married to unmarried status?

In order to answer this question productively, the study utilized a phenomenological methodology. One of the aims of phenomenological inquiry is to explore and understand meaning through a human's subjective experience (Stambaug et al., 2011).

The foundation of this methodology can be found in the philosophical writings of Merleau-Ponty, which emphasize a subject's sensory perception and belief in his or her experiences in the production of meaning from life events such as divorce (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Thomas & Pollio, 2002). As such, a phenomenological method proves useful in illuminating how a participant's description of her experience reflects belief systems, and how these systems, in turn, shape meaning around needs and resources (Manen, 1990).

In practice, the phenomenological method requires the researcher to give maximum control to the interviewee in describing and conveying her knowledge, experience, and meaning with respect to particular phenomena. Researchers employing a phenomenological method often utilize open-ended questions (e.g., "Please tell me what it was like for you as you experienced separation and divorce," or "Can you describe how you coped during this difficult time?" or "Who provided help to you and what did they do or say?") in order to understand more fully the participant's lived experience (Piercy, 2005).

Using semi-structured interviews conducted in the Korean language, the study examined how divorced and separated Korean-American women navigated the transition from married to separated to divorced. It also considered how the participants' mode of self-narration through storytelling reflected an awareness of their experienced needs at various stages of divorce. Using a phenomenological framework, the task was to hear

directly from women about their experiences. For example, in what areas did they struggle? What was helpful? When did that help occur? How did they access (or fail to access) the help they needed? What do they think of the needs of other women going through divorce? How should their needs be met?

## **Participants**

### *Sampling and Description*

After receiving the IRB approval from Loma Linda University, 20 divorced Korean-American women and three single women's ministry leaders were recruited in Los Angeles and Orange County.

A total of 23 people participated in the data collection and interviews. Among the 20 interviewed women, two women were recently remarried. The ages of the participants for this research ranged from 34 to 65 years old. The average age was 50.21 years. Within the sample, 20 divorced Korean-American women had been divorced from a range of less than a year to 30 years. The average of divorce occurred 10.63 years ago. The average length of their marriage was 9.8 years, and the average length of separation was 4.9 years. The average age of these women when they came to the United States was 31.16 years old. 19 women had children. Five women initiated divorce. 10 women had at least college degrees and four women had beyond master's or doctoral degrees. See Appendix J for the demographic frequency of these participants. In order to maintain anonymity, each of the participants was assigned a pseudonym. For the snowball sampling, subsequent participants, acquaintances, were also recruited. The protocol for contacting and screening the participants of the snowball sampling remained consistent with participants recruited from the ministry. The following section discusses the

participant recruitment strategy.

### ***Recruitment Strategy***

I started the recruiting process by introducing myself at the single women's ministry's meetings in Los Angeles and Orange County. I was in consultation with the leader during this process. In that initial meeting, I briefly described the purpose of the needs assessment and asked any interested parties to talk to me after the meeting was over. I collected the potential participants' contact numbers and email addresses. I then contacted interested participants personally through phone calls and email to set up appointments, during which I offered further explanations about the needs assessment, described the risks and benefits in the consent form, and asked for their formal consent. I also had sign-up sheet available, which I collected at the next meeting. As stated above, after finalizing the initial pool of participants, I employed snowball sampling for subsequent participants. These subsequent participants for the snowball sampling were referred from the participants, church ministers, counselors, and community leaders.

### **Procedures**

#### ***Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria***

During the initial screening, I asked each participant if she was willing to discuss her own experience of divorce. If the participant consented, I informed her of the study's inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) the participant was divorced or was in the process of divorce, (2) the participant was an adult Korean-American woman, (3) the participant was first generation Korean-American woman (first generation denotes someone who was born in Korea and came to United States), (4) the

participant was separated or single, (5) participant understood and agreed to participate in the study after reading the informed consent, and (6) participant was within the age range of 30-66.

This study excluded remarried women because the purpose was to determine how women's self-identities were related to their divorce recovery process and their needs.

In addition to excluding those who did not meet the inclusion criteria, potential participants were screened for significant mental health issues to ensure that they would benefit from the study. It was expected that some participants would exhibit some mental health symptoms such as depression, anxiety, nervousness, sleeping disturbances, etc. As a trained and certified mental health provider, I am equipped to deal with such risks. As instructed, I also did not include individuals who were identified as having severe mental health-related limitations.

In order to provide a credible needs assessment for a community with varying experiences of divorce, I sought eligible participant based on factors such as age at the time of divorce, time frame of various stages of divorce (e.g. prior to divorce, during divorce proceedings, and the various stages of post-divorce recovery), and whether the participant or her spouse initiated divorce proceedings. The sample size, as mentioned above, included 20 participants and three leaders from the single women's ministry. The following section discusses how I addressed ethical concerns and the safety of the participants.

### **Participant Safety and Ethical Considerations**

While this needs assessment focused on each participant's experience of divorce, and on various factors such as self-identity, the stage of divorce, age of divorce, and who

initiated divorce, the study also carefully considered how the qualitative data would be ethically collected, recorded, stored, analyzed, and reported.

### ***Participant Screening and Consent***

I screened the participants in the initial conversation to see if they met the aforementioned inclusion criteria. Each participant was given an Informed Consent Agreement. The informed Consent Agreement discussed the benefits and risks of participation (see Appendix D). This agreement allowed participants to make an informed decision on whether to participate in the study or not. A study by Collogan, Tuma, Dolan-Sewell, Borja, and Fleischman (2004) reported that participants appreciate and are more open to participation if given informed consent agreements. Informed consent was extremely important to this study since trust can only be established if participants felt comfortable throughout all stages of the selection and interview process.

### ***Risks and Benefits***

The risk/benefit analysis of participation was informed by two basic principles which stipulated the obligations of researchers to their subjects: beneficence and non-maleficence. King and Churchill (2000) have defined “non-maleficence” as the duty to do no harm. Beneficence describes the active duty to seek an enduring good for the sake of others (King & Churchill, 2000). Through adhering to these two principles, this needs assessment aimed to decrease the stigma of participation, and to empower each participant to voice her unique perspective.

The study also informed the participant of the possible risks of participation in a qualitative needs assessment, such as the experience of vulnerability. For some



participants, divorce may have left deeply felt emotional scars. For some participants, divorce may have been a traumatic experience; participants may have to recount experiences of domestic, physical, and emotional abuse, or perhaps infidelity. Interviews that asked participants to recall met and unmet needs as they experienced divorce could potentially reactivate the participants' feelings of helplessness, despair, and depression. However, as Collogan, et al., (2004) observe, if the research procedures are planned, predictable, and controlled, participants may avoid the reactivation of a traumatic experience, even if they may have strong reactions to the questions (p.367).

As a mandated reporter, I also made known to participants my potential obligation to report suicidal intent, homicidal intent, child abuse, or elderly abuse.

I also let the participant know that the protection of their privacy was of the utmost importance. This study removed data any information pertaining to personal identification (Collogan et. al., 2004; Kavle, 1996; Goodwin & O'Connor, 2006). In order to protect the participants' privacy, I gave each participant a pseudonym.

## **Qualitative Interviews**

### ***Interview Procedures***

The interview was informal and semi-structured, meaning they were conducted in a face-to-face setting. Interviews also took place in quiet and safe settings. Each interview lasted approximately from thirty to ninety minutes, depending on the participants' responses. I requested that participants sign a consent form which gave me the permission to record them during the interview. The participants were also given an explanation of their rights to withdraw from the research at anytime. Interviews were conducted in Korean and were digitally recorded on a laptop using a digital voice

program. For security reasons, the computer was password encrypted and stored in a locked place. Each participant's personal identification information was removed, moreover, within one month of the interview's completion. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed in Korean and afterwards, translated into English for presentation in this study.

Prior to the interviews, I gathered the participants' socio-demographic information with the permission of the participants (see Appendix E), as well as any relevant data (e.g., education, occupation, number of years in the United States, number of children, duration of marriage, stage of divorce, age during divorce, the initiator of the divorce, social activities, and networks). The permission for this procedure was explained in the informed consent form (see Appendix D).

As I gathered socio-demographic information (see Appendix J for demographic details), I paid close attention to the participants' experiences at the various stages of the divorce: three and six months prior to their divorce, right after the divorce, three months, six months, one year, and two years after the divorce.

The interview guide (see Appendix G) contains the prompts I followed during the interview process. When appropriate, I asked follow-up questions.

During the interview, the participants' body language and other non-verbal cues, as well as their general reactions to the questions were observed and recorded. These observations were important because the participants did not always express everything verbally. Thus, by observing their body language and expressions, I was able to form a more complete understanding of their experiences.

I also requested, at the end of the interview, that participants refer any

acquaintances to the study. I asked options to disclose their name when they referred acquaintances or friends to the study. The participant's name was always kept confidential, but it was her option to disclose her name and participation when referring acquaintances or friends. I contacted participant's acquaintances or friends and followed the same procedures as outlined earlier. I did not disclose participant's name if the participant did not want to disclose her name.

The current literature in qualitative research expresses the importance of using technology to record interviews (Goodwin & O'Connor, 2006). I recorded the interviews using a laptop (MacBook Pro) computer equipped with a digital voice program. By using this software, an interview of any length can be recorded and my interpretations could be saved and backed up on an external hard drive. After recording the interviews, I transcribed them. To guard against the possibility of data loss due to technical errors, I also kept a hard copy of the data from interviews.

### **Interview Questions**

See Appendix F for a full description of the interview questions. I have provided the following interview questions as a sample:

#### ***Introduction and Background Questions***

1. "I noticed on your questionnaire, you were divorced in Korea (or in the United States). Can you tell me what was your life like before (in Korea) and how does that differ from your life here?"

- *Potential probes include inquiring about the participant's relationship, divorce and acculturation. It also compares what they think benefits or*

*disadvantages of this setting are.*

### ***Follow-up Questions***

2. “Could you tell me about your circumstances of your divorce? What happened?

How you are impacted by that?”

- *Potential probes include inquiring about the decision-making process and decision-making parties involved in the divorce.*
- *Potential probes “What part did infidelity play in your divorce?”*
- *Potential probes: “Were you or your husband ever concerned about physical safety before, during, and after your divorce?”*

3. “Divorce often impacts a lot of people. Can you tell what kind of impacts might happen to both your children, and your family, including your extended family and friends? Can you tell me about that?”

- *Potential probes include discussion of co-parenting and her identity within socio-cultural networks of family, friends, and extended family members.*
- *Potential probes include inquiring about the impact of divorce on the family, children relationship.*

4. “Divorce typically impacts life in many ways. Can you tell me if divorce has impacted you financially, emotionally, or in your health?”

- *Potential probes include inquiring how maintaining financial security can be related to divorce recovery, her health-related problems, depression, or hwa-byung (culture bound syndrome).*
- *Potential probes: “Have you experienced depression?”*
- *Potential probes: “Have you experienced hwa-byung (culture bound*

*syndrome)?”*

- *Potential probes: “How did you meet your emotional needs during this time? Was it effective?”*

5. “In such situation as divorce, people find things are helpful to them and things that were not helpful to them. Can you tell me about things that helped you to cope better? Things that you should not do?”

- *Potential probes include inquiring how or why the participants cope.*
- *Potential probes: “Are there any specific people, friends, or an institution that has been helpful to you?”*
- *Potential probes include inquiring how support from family, friends, institution(s), or professionals varied over the various stages of divorce.*

6. “Divorce often impacts the worldview. Can you tell me whether your divorce experience impacted who you are as a person, your view of the world, or your view of spirituality?”

- *Potential probe include discussing the participant’s sense of identity, the worldview, spirituality and how that affects her needs.*

7. “Was there anything that you were not able to share with your friends, family, or even God?”

- *Potential probes: “What might be holding you back from sharing certain things with God?” (i.e. guilt, shame?) (Intimacy Questions adapted from Zinke, 2012, p.103).*

8. “Divorce has phases of time from the beginning to end. Whether there was a phase of time, how would you describe the phases of divorce you think you went

through?”

- *Potential probes include inquiring about the different emotional feelings that have emerged over the various stages of divorce. Potential probes also include inquiring about the contexts in which the participant felt most free to talk about her feelings. As she went through these different stages, what did she need throughout these times?*

### ***Post-Interview Questions***

9. “What’s next for you? How do you see your future?”

10. “What advice do you have for other women, who have the same situation?

What would you hope for other women?”

11. “Is there anything else that I didn’t ask you about that you would like to share with us or discuss?”

A full and comprehensive interview guide can be found in Appendix G.

### **Background of the Researcher**

Researchers themselves are important tools in data collection for qualitative research. As such, it is important for researchers to be aware of their own backgrounds and the implications of these backgrounds. I am the primary researcher in this study and a marriage family therapist. Like the participants, I am a 1.5-generation Korean-American and can speak Korean fluently. I was born in Korea and received my secondary education in the United States. Many of my clients, as well as my close friends, have experienced divorce. As a result of this, I have what is described as an emic, or insider, perspective in interpreting participants’ experiences.

I applied Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) to analyze the transcribed interviews. IPA analysis supports discursive psychology and grounded theory analysis, approaches necessary for conducting a needs analysis of human experience (Willing & W. S, 2008). Moreover, IPA focuses on an individual's lived experience, and approaches the study of phenomenon from a personal perspective (Eatough & Smith, 2008). The method incorporates the individual's lived experience, and accounts for both conscious and subconscious expressions of experience (Willing et al. 2008). As such, I determined that IPA was an appropriate method for this study, one that could access and analyze all aspects of the lived experiences of divorced Korean-American women: their individual needs, emotional feelings, belief systems, behaviors, and most importantly, their coping processes.

As Giorgi asserts, IPA not only examines lived experiences, but understands the need for careful consideration and taking systematic steps to design appropriate methods for human sciences. Moreover, IPA focuses on interpretative features of analysis, and on the diversity and variability of human experience. It considers social constructionism's assertion that socio-cultural processes, such as language, are always embedded in the ways that we understand our lives. In this study, IPA offered a precise method for analyzing the interviews of first-generation divorced or separated Korean-American women.

### **Phenomenological Analysis**

The analysis method described by van Kaam (1969), Giorgi (1970), Manen (1984), and Colazzi (1978) has been accepted as one of the major phenomenological analysis methods for the past decade. Methods used by Colazzi (1978), Van Kamm

(1966), Giorgi (1985) were specifically influenced by the Duquesne School of Phenomenology and the philosophies of Husserl (1913/1983). These phenomenological methods emphasize describing the *meaning* of experiences and identifying essential themes through analysis.

While there are some similarities among all of these methods, there are some notable differences, especially with regard to the process of fact checking. Colazzi (1978)'s method returns to participants for validation. This is similar to IPA's approach to fact checking. Van Kamm (1966)'s approach emphasizes inter-subjective analysis with other expert (i.e. researcher) judgment. In contrast, Giorgi (2008)'s analytical method is more fitting for a solitary researcher, as Giorgi does not see the appropriateness of fact-checking or of incorporating views or perspectives external to that of the researcher.

A second school of phenomenology known as the Utrecht School mixes characteristics of descriptive and interpretative phenomenology (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008). Van Manen (1990) demonstrates how the mixed approaches work through description as an essential theme of analysis. Van Manen (1990) uses the holistic, selective (highlighting), and detailed (line-by-line) approaches to analyze the data. In a holistic approach, analysis depends on the researcher's ability to perceive the data as a whole and grasp its different meanings. The process is operationalized as phenomenological analysis. In a selective approach, researchers highlight statements or phrases that stand out and derive important themes from them. In a detailed approach, the researcher regards every sentence as a subject for analysis.

Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (Smith, J.A., 1994, 1996) originated from Birkbeck School within the University of London, and emphasizes that a participant's



experience of a phenomenon is crucial to analysis. In IPA, data analysis accounts for human perception, cognition of perception, and inter-subjectivity between participants' and researcher's perceptions. IPA also trends toward using small sample sizes, as well as idiographic and micro-level analysis, practices which have been found appropriate for health, counseling, and psychology research (Smith, 1991, Eatough & Smith, 2008). IPA is aligned with Husserl's (1913/1983) philosophy in that it seeks to construct a philosophical science of consciousness. It has been widely practiced among researchers in the United Kingdom and other countries. The chart below provides a survey on how studies have utilized and characterized IPA:

Table 4. *Phenomenology Analysis Chart*

	<b>van Kamm (1969)</b>	<b>Girogi (1970)</b>	<b>Colazzi (1978)</b>	<b>Van Manen (1984)</b>	<b>IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) (1994)</b>
School	Dugesne School: The first school of phenomenology	Dugesne School: The first school of phenomenology	Dugesne School: The first school of phenomenology	Utrecht School: The second school of phenomenology (Dutch Approach)	Birbeck School: University of London (The U.K. approach)
	Descriptive Phenomenology	Descriptive Phenomenology	Descriptive Phenomenology	Descriptive and Interpretative Phenomenology	Interpretative Phenomenology
Uniqueness of research analysis	Identification of phenomenon Expert's validation (other researchers)	Sole researcher Lengthy interviews that may take several sessions	Inter-subjective analysis (Validation from participants)	Holistic approach Selective approach Detailed approach	Validation from participants (fact checking) Inter-subjective perceptions of both researcher and participants. Health psychology, counseling and other psychology fields.
Data Analysis	1. Listing and Preliminary Grouping  2. Reduction and elimination  3. Clustering and Thematizing  4. Final identification	1. Read entire description (notes of transcriber) to get a sense of the whole.  2. Read again more slowly, identifying constituents not by frequency of occurrence, but by the intuitive judgment.	1. All subjects' oral or written descriptions are read in order to obtain a feel for the whole.  2. Significant statements and phrases pertaining directly to the phenomenon are extracted. 3. Meanings are	1. Turning to the nature of the lived experience -Turning to a phenomenon that seriously interests us and commits us to the world. 2. Existential investigation -Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it.	1. Read transcripts through several times, making notes and comments. 2. Identify and label emerging themes and meaning within the text. 3. Relate back and link themes to quotes in text, using cyclical process. 4. Look for potential links between themes that may lead to master/super-ordinate themes. For an example, if theme

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<p>3. Eliminate Redundancies in the units; clarify meanings of the remaining units by relating them to each other and the whole.</p> <p>4. Transform constituents parts from concrete language (in the subject's words) to the language of the interested science.</p>	<p>formulated from these significant statements and phrases.</p> <p>4. Meanings are clustered into themes.</p> <p>5. Results are integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon.</p> <p>6. Researchers returns to participants with description for validation. Any addition new data is incorporated into fundamental structure of the experience.</p>	<p>3. Phenomenological Reflection</p> <p>-Reflecting on the essential themes that characterize the phenomenon.</p> <p>4. Phenomenological writing</p> <p>-Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting.</p> <p>5. Utilizes researcher's personal experience.</p> <p>6. The study of an experience as one lives it, not as on conceptualizes it.</p> <p>7. Utilizes descriptions located in literature and art.</p>	<p>of women's needs in socio-emotion is appeared in this category, then it shows to appear in this category.</p> <p>For an example of the master/superordinate themes can be expressed as category.</p> <p>5. Repeat the process with subsequent transcripts.</p> <p>6. Connect/cluster the themes from the texts into super-ordinate themes, with related subthemes.</p> <p>7. Examine texts more closely to greater depth of meaning and interpretation.</p> <p>8. Produce a summary table of themes for the group, and a detailed, interpretative, reflexive written account (Pringle et al. 2011, 15; Smith et al. 2009)</p>
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### *Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis and Narrative*

Studies such as Reid, Flowers, & Larkin (2005) and Brocki & Wearden (2006) have highlighted the prominence of IPA in health psychology, particular in its development and usage in clinical, social, and counseling psychology. IPA emphasizes that understanding how people view and make sense of their lived experiences of illness are valuable to health psychology's own research objectives. As Merleau-Ponty (1945/2004) asserts, the body is caught up with our sense of self, life world, and relations with others. IPA, as Finlay and Ballinger (2006) explain it, is "a variant of phenomenology which aims to explore individuals' perceptions and experiences" through an analyst's interpretation (Finlay and Ballinger, 2006). In the needs assessment for this study, IPA was used to explore divorced Korean-American women's sense of self, relation with others, and their needs at the various stages of divorce and many factors that contributed to their experience (i.e. stage of divorce, age, spirituality, etc.). Accordingly,

Reid, Flowers & Larkin (2005) and Brocki & Wearden (2006) have observed that IPA has become established in health psychology and is beginning to be used in the areas of clinical, and social psychology (Fiske, & Taylor, 1991; Smith & Osborn, 2007; Williams et al., 2010). Therefore, the most appropriate analytical method for this study was IPA.

In IPA, transcripts and tapes are analyzed over and over again to gain what Burton (2000) describes as “naïve interpretation” (Burton, 2000). IPA is therefore more than a “descriptive” methodology as it seeks to bypass “closed systems of borrowed hypotheses and theories” (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006).

### *Steps of IPA Method for this Study*

1. Read transcript interview transcript several times, and make notes and comments.

2. Identified and labeled apparent themes and meaning within the text. For example, I determined if women’s experiences were related to their met and unmet needs at various stages of divorce, and then if these needs appeared as an emerging theme, I labeled and identified them.

3. Related back and linked themes to quotes in text, using a cyclical process. For example, if similar quotes gesture towards their needs at various stages of divorce, I linked the themes at various stages of divorce with the themes emerging from their needs. Cyclical process refers to the practice of relating back to themes.

4. If there were any potential links between themes that lead to master/superordinate themes, I made these links evident. For this case, the theme of the women’s various stages and their identity and the master theme of self-identity or superordinate theme of ‘reframe of identity’ were related. I linked together the themes

that related to the formation of women's identity, the reframing of their identity, and the development of social support within the divorced Korean-American women's communities.

5. Repeated the procedures with subsequent transcripts.

6. Connected/clustered the themes from the texts into super-ordinate themes, with related subthemes. For example, the theme of social support was connected to depression or spirituality; clustering allowed me to link themes relating to depression with themes relating to spirituality.

7. Examined texts more closely to reach a greater depth of meaning and interpretation.

For example, I viewed and interpreted 'self-identity' within the contexts of social networks, particularly their expectations and influence.

8. Themes were summarized as detailed themes, interpretative, reflexive written themes (Pringle, Hendry, & McLafferty, 2011, 15; Smith et al., 2009).

These steps allowed for meaningful and objective analysis of psychosocial issues (Reid et al., 2005). While the approach acknowledged the importance of the researcher's interpretation, it also established the rigor of such interpretations by leaving a "decision trail," and by providing explicit guidance for subsequent research (Dean, Smith, Payne, & Weinman, 2006; Koch, 2006).

### **Principles of Credibility and Trustworthiness**

The interview transcripts were read and analyzed by more than one researcher in order to establish the study's rigor and trustworthiness. In qualitative research, transcripts are examined and analyzed for their trustworthiness and credibility, rather than reliability

and validity. Establishing the transcripts' trustworthiness involved questioning whether the inferences the participants made are plausible and reasonable in view of the full range of alternatives. Moreover, the interview summary was given to participants so that they themselves could scrutinize and correct (if necessary) their own narratives. This allowed the participants a degree of control over their stories and its interpretation. I also paid careful attention to the participant's comments.

The study also took into account external validity, defined as consistency between the researcher's interpretation and the source material. Readers should be able to confirm the consistency between the researcher's model and the data from which it is developed (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

Qualitative researchers have also used the guidance of aesthetics for their work. The application of aesthetics to social science research implies that description should not only be consistent with the source phenomenon, but should also allow an "ability to point to a better world; one where democracy, empathy, and social justice prevail over oppression and marginalization" (Piercy & Benson, 2005, p. 110).

### **Additional Challenges to the Trustworthiness of the Findings**

In what follows, I show how I addressed common challenges in establishing the trustworthiness of the findings.

#### ***Interview Interaction Effects***

The interviewer and the questions asked can negatively influence a participant's interaction within the interview, leading to obstacles in establishing trustworthiness. This study mitigated the possibility of such obstacles in several ways. My presence as a female

interviewer with an emic understanding of first-generation Korean culture facilitated a rapport between the participants and myself. This rapport enabled the participants to feel comfortable in discussing their needs as divorced Korean-American women. The interview questions were reviewed for cultural sensitivity and whether they might cause emotional distress by people closely related to this needs assessment, such as the leaders of single women's ministries.

### ***Retrospective Bias***

Retrospective bias, a distortion in the reconstruction of one's memories, can cause a participant to doubt the veracity of their experiences (Gomm & Davies, 2000, 58). This can cause some difficulties when analyzing transcripts that are produced by research methods based on self-reporting. While I used fact-checking methods to help mitigate retrospective biases, I also imparted to the participant that their reconstruction of memory and past experiences did not have to stand as an exact record of the past (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000; Levine & Safer, 2002).

### **Strategies Employed to Maintain Credibility and Trustworthiness**

Specific strategies for establishing credibility and trustworthiness include bracketing and fact checking.

### ***Bracketing Interview***

Prior to conducting interviews, an experienced qualitative researcher, who was naïve about this research topic, interviewed me with the similar types questions that I asked the participants. This procedure is known as a bracketing interview (Rosenbaum, 2000; Stambaugh, 2011). The bracketing interview allowed me to be aware of my own

hypotheses, biases, and perceptions of separation and divorce. Bracketing interviews are useful in preventing researchers from interjecting his or her own views and perspectives into interviewees' stories (Stambaugh, 2011).

Atkinson (2005) also holds that maintaining trustworthiness in qualitative research means having an unbiased faithfulness to the phenomena as it is expressed, enacted, and embodied by the participants. I gave credence to participants' points of view and their accounts of phenomena (Gearing, 2004).

### ***Fact-Checking***

In IPA, fact checking and verification do not serve to validate a participant's experience, but serve as an extension of the interpretive process (Smith, 2009). "Fact checking" is when researchers go back to each transcript to examine the validity of the themes to each participant. The analyses retain the participants' own perspectives in their reference to the original transcripts.

Each transcript was reviewed from an emic, or insider, perspective. This perspective allowed me to uncover overarching themes in the participants' stories about divorce and divorce recovery. Following the initial analysis and interpretation, findings were shared between a faculty researcher and myself. A list of themes was then generated and refined. The faculty researcher speaks English fluently and is an expert in qualitative research.

Finally, the researchers identified themes that were present in the entire 20 sample, and themes that emerged only in separated and divorced Korean-American women.

### **Sampling Limitations**

The sample size in this study was small, as is typical of qualitative research. The group may have higher levels of similarities and or/religiosity than one would expect from a representative sample. One of the limitations of this sample size is the possibility of a “cohort effect” (Williams et al., 2005, p.31). A cohort effect describes how the relationship between a stimulus and a participant’s response outcome can be conditioned by the similarities within the group (Standovich, 1998). However, even if a cohort effect was operating within this study, it is not likely that it was an extreme limitation. Divorced Korean-American women’s post-divorce experience, after all, vary based on their socio-cultural identities and surrounding social networks (Kim et al., 2012).



## CHAPTER 6

### RESULTS

#### Overview of the Results

Each woman's story presents a unique view of her experience as she changed from married to unmarried status. Overall, however, these women's views of themselves were influenced predominantly by their relationship with God and by their sense of personal identity within the cultural community. These two factors enabled them to construct alternate views of their self-identities. I conducted interpretative phenomenological analysis on each of these women's stories to uncover these major themes.

#### Data Analysis

The data analysis made apparent five major themes:

1. A transition from a unilateral to a bilateral relationship with God;
2. A development of a new identity that was based on self-worth regardless of marital status;
3. A sense of self-progression from separated, to divorced, and to post-divorce;
4. A gradual change from seeking indirect forms of interactional support to seeking more direct forms;
5. A relational collectivist public facilitates women's healing.

#### *Theme I. Transition from a Unilateral to Bilateral Relationship with God*

A unilateral relationship with God is defined as a relationship that focuses on a hierarchical direction of communication with God (Esmiol, 2011; Bracey, 2007): God

communicates and people follow; God delivers messages and people obey. This unilateral view of God emerged from the traditions of the Korean Christian church, and a Confucian focus on hierarchy embedded within Korean culture. As discussed in the literature review, Korean Christianity reflects Confucian beliefs in hierarchy, especially in orientation toward God. Many Korean-American Christians view God as a higher power that conducts a one-way communication with His subjects. A unilateral relationship with God also connotes a negative, and judgmental concept of God. Whereas unilateral relationships center on obedience to God, a bilateral relationship implies that there are two elements at play: usually an interactive friendship and intimate relationship (Esmiol, 2011; Bracey, 2007). Obedience to God is not prioritized, rather, knowing God is emphasized, along with a belief that God is understanding and forgiving of our choices.

Most of the women's stories began with a unilateral relationship with God. Many of these stories, however, described how their particular experiences forced them to transition towards a bilateral understanding of their relationship with God. In the beginning of their separation, women viewed God as a distant, a being to fear, and someone with whom they are limited to having one-way communication. During the middle period of separation, women spent more time in prayer to guide them through their healing processes. Through this time of prayer, the women communicated interactively—or bilaterally—with God.

In the process of translating the women's stories from Korean to English, much of what may have been lost were the women's expressions of sadness in Korean, which were usually veiled through metaphors, but are commonly understood as the Korean way

of expressing feelings. With such potential losses in mind, I translated the meaning that is implied by their metaphors, but have also provided the original Korean characters.

Kate's relationship with God and her view of God show a rule-based and fear-based orientation toward a hierarchical God.

Kate: 저와 하나님과의 관계는 율법과 형식에 따랐어요. 저는 항상 하나님에 대한 두려움이 있었어요. 하나님과 대화는 생각을 해보지 않았어요. 하나님과의 관계는 형식위주였어요.

Kate: My relationship with God was based on the laws and rules that I had to follow out of my fear of Him. My relationship with God was always one-way, and one-directional. I did not have a chance to question Him or interact with Him. It was just a one-way relationship with Him.

Kate: 기도를 하면서 생각을 하게 되고 제가 생각하는 것을 말할 하게 되었어요. 하나님께서 나에게 말씀하세요. 말씀과 기도를 통해서요.

Kate: I prayed to God to meet my needs fulfill my desires. I also heard His answers through prayer and in my reading of the Bible. I interacted and communicated with Him.

Kate: 이과정을 통해서 하나님을 만났습니다. 힐링과 은혜, 자비를 경험했지요. 하나님의 은혜를 통해서 내가 남편을 바라보는 면과 제자신을 바라보는 것이 변했습니다. 하나님께 기도를 통해서 대화를 했어요. 하나님을 묵상기도를 하면서 홀로 시간을 보냈습니다. 기도를 통해서 저는 회복이 되었습니다. 하나님은 나를 변화를 시켰어요.

Kate: Through this process I surrendered to Him. After that, I experienced healing, mercy and grace. By His grace, my views towards my husband and myself changed. I communicated with Him with prayers. I also listened to His words through silent prayers, and I spent time alone. I was healed through prayer. He transformed and healed me.

Kate: 저는 하나님께 모든 것을 의지하고 있어요.

Kate: I have only God. I share everything with God.

Kate: 저는 남편을 그렇게 의지하고 있었는지 몰랐어요. 저는 지금은 정말로, 하나님을 물론 사랑하고 기대를 하고 하지만, 하나님을 두려워하면서,

하나님께서저를불꽃같이 지켜보고있다는것을알게되었어요.  
하나님께서눈동자와같이보살펴주고있어요.

Kate: I did not know how much I was relying on my husband in my former marriage. Now, I really love God and expect so many things from God. I both revere and fear God in the knowledge that He is watching over me. He protects me and watches over me all the time.

Kate: 저는예전에는올법적인사람이었어요.  
저는하나님앞에서신앙을어떻게해야하는지몰랐어요.  
지금은기도를해도자유스럽게해요.  
엄마아빠하고시간을정해놓고하는것은자유스럽지않다고생각이 들어요.

Kate: Before I was divorced, I was a very religious person. I thought of God as distant. I feared Him. I felt like I had to pray every day, and within certain hours. My relationship to God was based on duty. After I got divorced, my view towards God changed. Now I see God as a loving and kind God. I see Him more as a loving Father. I was having a difficult time in my marriage because of my husband's infidelity. I felt betrayed. I was very sad and hurt. But God was there for me no matter what. God was there when I was going through this tough time. He never left me alone. When so many people made negative comments about my broken marriage at church, God was there and listening to my hurt and pain. He heard my sorrow and prayers. I felt like I was alone in a dark cave. He listened to my agony, and gave me His love. During this time, my view towards Him shifted. Not only that, but also, I accepted my situation.

Kate: 하나님을바라보는뷰가 자유스러워졌어요.  
예전에는제가이런이런한사람이어야했어요.  
그런데지금은아주텅비었어요.  
지금은흐뜻한사람으로하게하는것같아요.

Kate: My life has become more flexible with regards to my faith and spirituality. My view of God is more flexible than before. In the past, I had to follow rules or laws. But I surrendered my rigid beliefs, and now have an intimate and flexible spirituality. I'm happy about my changes because my life is better.

Kate's story reveals how she relied on her husband while she was married.

In the past, Kate viewed God as a distant father and reverent Father, and had a negative view of Him. During the transition in her marriage, to separation and to

divorce, Kate developed a faith in God, which helped her deal with uncertainty. During the separation, she spent time with God. Her separation periods increased her intimate time with Him. After her divorce was finalized, she felt that something had been uplifted. Post-divorce, she became more flexible and learned she could let go of her rigidity.

Kate: 저는 기도를 많이 하었어요. 혼자 있는 시간에 하나님앞에서 많이 기도를 하었어요. 새벽기도를 하였고 기도원에 가서 기도를 하었어요. 제게는 기도가 정말 중요한 것이었어요.

Kate: I spent a lot of time in silent prayer. I spent almost every day in prayer. To me, prayer was very important. Bilateral prayer is God's way of communicating with me.

Kate experienced God's direction, support, and encouragement through prayers. This new interactive relationship with God led her to experience spiritual transformation in her life, something that her initial relationship with God did not.

Uncertainty became the time and setting for miracles to take place. Many of her prayers were answered and her needs were met by prayers. This experience changed her life and shifted her view of spirituality to a more dynamic and vivid one. The past rigidity and rule-based orientation are contrasted with her new experience and outlook. Her bi-directional relationship with God led Kate to develop a more flexible spirituality that in turn brought meaningful progress.

Another participant, Emily, also experienced a change in her relationship with God.

Emily: 저는 이기간동안에 하나님에 대해서 알게 되었어요. 이기간은 하나님을 더 많이 알게 되는 시간이었어요. 하나님없이 이혼을 하게되는 것은 아니었어요. 내 남편이 나와 함께 하지 않았지만 저는 인생에서 평화를 느낄 수 있었어요.

Emily: During my situation, I got to know God and meet Him at a more intimate level. It would have been difficult for me to survive my divorce without my new God. Even though my former husband is no longer here with me, I feel more peaceful and my life is happier than before.

Interviewer: Do you have anything that you cannot share with God?

Emily: 하나님과의 관계에서 저는 모든 것들을 다 놉니다. 하나님과 저는 함께 대화를 하고 제가 좋아하는 것을 이야기를 하고 제가 힘든 것들에 대해서 이야기를 합니다. 그리고 하나님은 저를 위로해주십니다. 하나님은 저에게 모든 것을 그냥 순종만 하는 것이 아니라 제게 무엇이 중요한지 여쭙보십니다.

Emily: I share everything with God. There is nothing I hide. I communicated with Him and He gave me comfort. I did not just follow what he said. It's an interactive relationship with Him.

Emily left her drug-addicted husband and currently stays in a shelter with her child. Emily spends time in prayer and fills her sense of loneliness with God. Emily experienced two-way (i.e., interactive) communication with God and views God as an intimate friend and supporter.

Both Emily's and Kate's stories represent how their relationship with God was modeled as a hierarchical, one-way communication pattern (where they obeyed what they believed were God's rules for them) before beginning the separation and divorce process. During their transition, both Emily and Kate used spirituality and prayers to meet their needs. Prayer eventually led these women to develop a new, more intimate relationship with God, which was characterized by a two-way flow of communication.

Abigail: 저는 하나님과 매일 이야기를 합니다. 제가 스트레스를 받았을때는 밖에 나가서 걸어다니면서 기도를 합니다. 달을 보면서 이야기를 하기도 하구요. 제가 가지고 있는 어려움을 하나님과 이야기를 합니다. 하나님과 친밀하게 대화를 하다보면 하나님께서 제게 많은 이야기를 하는 것 같습니다. 저는 혼자 있기때문에 이런 어려움을 나눌수 있는 사람들이 없습니다.

하늘에 계신 내 아버지는 제 이야기를 듣고 제게 위로를 주고 사랑을 줍니다. 하나님께서는 제 이야기를 듣고 기도를 듣습니다. 제가족들의 기도도 들어요. 제게는 두명의 딸이 있어요. 제가 혼자서 키웠어요. 제딸들의 기도도 하나님께서는 잘 들어주세요.

Abigail: I talk to God every day. When I am stressed, I go outside. I walk around and start praying. I look at the moon and pray. I share my vulnerability or difficulties with Him. I talk to Him like a friend. I am alone. I have no one with whom I can share my difficulty and pain. My heavenly Father talks with me. He gives me comfort and love. He is always there to listen to my prayers and stories. He also listens to my family's prayers. I have two daughters whom I raise by myself, and He also listens to their prayers. The prayers are answered right away. I experienced so many miracles through my family's prayers. Many of my prayers were answered. God is gentle and pays special attention to me.

Abigail's stories report that she communicates her vulnerabilities to God. Her bilateral relationship with God fills her loneliness and emptiness and gives her comfort and love. For women like Abigail, a new relationship with God helps them cope with the social losses incurred as a result of marital separation. The new relationship is marked by a spiritual intimacy and friendship. Betsy, another participant, receives confirmation and direction during her transition out of marriage.

Betsy: 진짜로비밀스러운이야기는소리내어서기도를하지않아요.

Betsy: I don't share my secret stories with others. I use silent prayer.

Betsy: 기도가운데서 “기다리지말고붙들지말라” 라는확신을받았어요.

Betsy: I heard confirmation from God: “Don't hold onto him and don't wait for him.”

Betsy: 하나님께서“상황이걸리더라도그냥있어라” 라는마음을주셨어요.

Betsy: I heard God's confirmation: “Even though it takes time, just wait.”

Betsy also developed a two-way relationship with God. She consistently prayed morning and night during her separation, and received assurance from Him that she was

on the right path. God affirmed that she should let go of her abusive relationship with her husband, an action that brought her internal peace.

Coco: 저는 하나님 앞에서 많이 기도를 하면서 저의 억울함을 하나님께 호소했어요. 그리고 예수치심도 하나님께 함께 기도로나누었어요. 친구나 가족들은 별로 도움이 안되었어요.

Coco: I placed my burdens in God's hands. I cried out to God. I also shared my shame with God while I was praying. My friends and family did not really help me.

Abigail, Emily, Kate, Betsy, and Coco reported that they had a unilateral relationship with God in the beginning of each separation or even at the divorce stage. As they went through the divorce process, these participants developed a more intimate relationship with God that transformed their experience of transitional experience, and provided a much needed source of strength.

On the one hand, participants who reported a unilateral relationship with God tended to have an image of God as distant and not responsive to their needs. In contrast, participants who spoke about having a bilateral relationship with God tended to have an image of God as intimate and loving. The different relationships with God involve different perceptions of God's qualities.

The friendship-like (bilateral and interactive) relationship with God also alleviated the women's feelings of emptiness and loneliness. The uncertainty of the life-transition period encouraged these women to spend time in prayer and reading the Bible. The more time women spent in prayer, reading scripture, and worship, the more they experienced an intimate friendship with God. Participants spoke about receiving nurture, care, love, and comfort from God that supported them during times of loneliness, isolation, and pain. The new relationship with God also contributed to a new sense of



self-identity, which can also be pivotal in the healing process.

### ***Theme II. Development of a Self-Identity***

This new relationship with God also influenced participants' sense of self-worth and self-identity. Self-worth is how women see their values and appraise their actions (McGee, 2003). Self-identity is how they see themselves (Gubrium & Holsten, 1999). Their experience with God as a friend and in a more relational way has made these women feel less shame and more free to recognize their own value as God does.

Anne described her self-worth as based on her relationship with God. Anne's husband left their marriage of 30 years because of financial difficulties and her illness. Anne's words speak about forming a new self-identity as a mother, rather than a wife.

Anne: 자녀들과의 관계가 내게 청지기 사명이 다라는 것을 알게 되었어요.  
우리는 셋이 하나가 되었어요.

Anne: During the divorce, I realized that my calling from God was to focus on my children as a mother. I was experiencing financial difficulties. My husband left me. He told me that he did not like that I was sick all the time. But now, my two children and I have developed more unity as a family. Both of my two children are very supportive of me. They helped me cope during the divorce process. My two children grew up to be very mature and independent. Yes, I am no longer a wife to my husband, but I am a mother to my two children. I see myself as a mother. I also view my self-identity as who I am. My identity is not based on someone else.

In contrast, Lena, another participant, presented her new self-identity as a missionary. She came to the United States seven years ago to provide for her son's education as a *girogi* parent. *Girogi* parents are parents who choose to usually live apart, both in Korea and the United States, to allow their children to be educated in the United States. Usually, the mother cares for the children as they go to school in the United States, and the father lives in Korea to work and

support the family. Lena was a *girogi* mother with middle to upper socio-economic class of South Korea. Lena did not separate from her husband, but in the traditional sense, but her family arrangement means that she lives apart from her husband to educate her son.

Lena: 결혼에 처음부터 문제가 있었어요.  
미국 유학 시절에 알코올 중독 문제가 있다는 것을 알게 되었어요. 제가 절망을 했었어요. 공부를 마치고 한국에 왔어요.

Lena: Right after I got married, my husband and I came to United States for school. We came back to Korea after few years. My husband had an issue with alcohol addiction. I was very discouraged by my husband's negative behavior and his addiction. I was disappointed about my marriage and my life.

Lena: 사람에 대한 절망감이 생겼어요. 포기했던 것 같아요.

Lena: That experience made me so distrustful of other people. I gave up.

Lena: 제 남편은 많은 것을 가진 집안에서 자란 사람이었어요.  
남편은 술을 마시면 다른 사람이 되었어요.  
아들이 있었고 집안이 부유했고 저도 나름대로 박사 공부를 하면서 대학에 서 가르치는 강사였기에 제 결혼 생활에서 오는 불화를 무시하기로 했어요

Lena: My husband came from an upper-middle class family from South Korea. He became a different person whenever he drank. He has an alcohol addiction. I have a son, and am studying for my doctoral degree. I also teach classes at college. I denied that I had marital problems.

Lena: 남편과 나는 한 집안에서 살았지만 각 방을 쓰면서 남들에게는 좋은 가정으로 보이면서 살았어요.  
그러다가 아들이 미국에 조기 유학을 오게 되면서 저도 자연스럽게 미국에 와서 우리는 기러기 부부가 되었지요.

Lena: Even though my husband and I lived in the same house, we slept in separate rooms. People thought we were a great couple. We decided that our son would come to the United States for school. My son came to the United States to study when he was young. That gave me an opportunity for me to be a *girogi* mother.

Lena: 기러기 부부가 되면 더 이상 결혼 생활에서 오는 불화를 느낄 필요도 없고 나라도 미국에서 공부를 할 수 있었고 남편은 한국에서 직장에서 일을

했고시댁에서생활비와모든경비를대주었어요.  
저는사회적으로누리는것이  
많았어요. 그러다가서서히남편이이혼서류를신청했어요.  
남편에게여자가생겼거든요.  
어쩌면저는남편이다른여자가있는것을알았지만그냥무시한것같아요  
왜냐면내가누리는많은것들을이혼으로포기할수없었거든요.

Lena: I felt that I couldn't fight with my husband because of the opportunities he gave me. My husband had paid for my living expenses while I was studying in the United States. In the past, I felt that I was privileged to be his wife, even though I was aware of his infidelity. I could not let go of the marriage. Then, my husband initiated divorce because he wanted to marry his girlfriend. That was my life before the divorce.

Lena described her past self-identity in terms of her roles as a mother and a wife. She has had difficulties in resolving her marital conflicts. Lena's self-identity was based on the relationships she had with others, primarily her husband. Finally, Lena did not want to give up her privileged life as a wife in Korea. But she had to come to the United States to educate her son as a *girogi* mother, which gave her a good excuse to escape her marriage conflict.

Lena: 미국에 와서 교회를 가게 되었고 신학을 공부하게 되었고 지금은 전도사로 있습니다. 전에는 이혼에 대해서 굉장히 많은 죄책감을 갖고 있었어요. 기도를 하면서 서서히 하나님께 물었지요. 하나님 왜 저에게 이런 일들을 허락하셨나요?

Lena: I came to the United States seven years ago. I go to a seminary school now and preach as a part-time pastor. In the past, I had huge guilt. During my life transition, I questioned myself all the time. I shared my questions and uncertainties with God.

Lena: 죄책감과 슬픔을 주님과 기도하면서 말씀을 읽으면서 나눴어요. 그리고 서서히 깨달음이 왔어요. 제가 세상에서 찾으려고 했던 기쁨, 사람들에게서 얻으려고 했던 행복을 이제는 주님 안에서 그리고 크리스찬 공동체 안에서 느끼게 되었어요.

Lena: I shared my guilt and sadness in prayers. I read the Bible. The meditation time gave me insights about the happiness, joy, and love that I experience in Christ and in the Christian community.

Lena: 주님이저를참많이사랑하시거든요.  
저는육신의아버지에서사랑을많이받지못했어요.  
그러나기도를하고말씀을깨달으면서하나님이저에게쏟아부으시는사랑을  
제가경험했어요. 힘들고어려운가운데주님의사랑이제게쏟아지는순간,  
저는저의사명을깨달았어요. 저는선교사가되어서복음을전하려고합니다.  
다른나라와오지에게가서복음을전하려고합니다.  
선교지에주님의마음이있거든요.

Lena: Jesus loves me so much. My own father didn't give me as much love as Jesus. God delivered His love during my prayers and Bible meditation. God pours out His love to me. My own father and my husband never received this love. The love of God and His intimacy gave me confirmation of my new calling. I want to be a missionary, someone who shares the Gospel to places outside of the United States such as third-world countries. God loves missionaries.

Lena: 내가 속고 있었어요  
많은공동체에서편하게놀수있었던것..  
사람을통해서받을려고했던것.또채워도채워도채워지지않는것들이  
있어요.계속죽을때까지...

Lena: I see now that love comes from God; that this love can come only from God. God will fill the void. People cannot fill the void.

Through her theological education and her new sense of identity in spirituality, she has come to understand her self-worth. She also found her new self-identity through her experiences as a part-time pastor and a missionary. Lena's separation period lasted close to seven years. Right after her divorce was finalized, she experienced depression and sadness. However, her post-divorce phase indicated that her education in theology, her relationship with God, and her new view of God gave her emotional, physical, and spiritual healing.

Another women's group leader, Amy, discussed the importance of spiritual training and how it impacts the healing process of these women. Amy has served as ministry leader for single women for over ten years.

Amy: 정말 중요한 것은 영성 훈련인 것 같다.

Amy: Spiritual training has a huge impact on these women.

Amy: 자신의 나쁜 점들이 이혼을 하면서 다 드러나는 것이다.  
자신의 죄성이 드러나고. 그리고 방종,  
타락들이 시작한다. 나는 싱글맘으로서 모든 것을 다 경험했고..  
이혼 가정에서 태어나서 디스펍션 널한 모든 것을 다 경험했다.  
그리고 나를 알기 위해서 많은 공부를 했다.  
죽으라고 공부하고 박사 학위를 받고 성공을 하면  
우리 애들이 괜찮을 줄 알았어요.  
저희 남편은 90년도에 40대 초 정도에 죽었어요.  
그런데 제가 석사 학위를 두 개를 마칠 무렵에는 저희 가정은 엉망이었어요.  
우리 아이들은 마약 중독에 빠지고 저는 죽으라고 공부를 하였고 언은 것은 없었  
어요. 그때 전 카운셀링의 중요성을 알게 되었어요.

Amy: My husband passed away in his early 40s. As a single mother, I experienced all of these corrupting behaviors myself. My parents are divorced. I came from a dysfunctional family. To understand my family and myself, I pursued my doctoral studies. I wanted to succeed in academia. I studied so hard. I was a single mother, and my children became addicted to drugs. It was a negative way for them to cope with the loss of their father. When I was intervening in my children's drug addictions, I realized the importance of counseling.

Amy: 자신이 죽는 경험을 해야 합니다. 십자가에서.  
그래서 영성 훈련이 중요하고.. 상담과 그룹 상담의 중요성을 알게 되었어요.  
사역을 하더라도 그것이 진짜인지 아니면 가짜인지 알 수 있습니다.

Amy: It is important to be trained in both spirituality and counseling. I also believe that my education changed my self-identity. But this is my own experience that combines counseling and spirituality that change people. I reach out to divorced women and give them hope.

Amy: 그분들과 함께 교제하고 놀고 하는 것이 아니라 지금은 근본을 치료해야 한다고 생각해요. 자신을 십자가에 내려놓을 때 옛 자가 죽습니다.  
그리고 새로운 성령의 사람이 생기지요.  
내가 변하지 않고 내 안에 이런 모습이 있다는 알지 못하면 어떻게 죽겠어요.  
그런데 요즘은 그런 생각이 들어요. 가장 근원적인 영성으로 문제를 십자가로 문제를 해결해야 한다는 생각이 들어요.

Amy: I worked with these women for a long time. I realized that being there with them in their social lives is not going to heal them. The most important transformation starts when we heal the root.

Amy told the story of her own personal experiences meeting the needs of single

motherhood. Amy's story reveals how the first-generation Korean-American woman seeks academic success to achieve self-worth. The negative coping skills of her own children, who struggled with drug addiction, drew her towards counseling as well as spirituality. The personal stories Amy shared of finding her self-worth, illustrate how she now has a healthy conception of self-worth largely enabled by her spirituality. Amy's experiences as a counselor point to some important implication for this study as a whole. Amy successfully met this success by spending time with a support group, and through her own experience strengthening her self-worth through spirituality, and counseling.

Betsy: 처음에는 왜 나한테 이런 일이 생겼을까?  
왜 미국에 와서 살아야 하나 하는 생각이 들었어요.

Betsy: In the beginning, I questioned why this happened to me. I also questioned what was making me stay in the United States.

Betsy: 그러나 이제는 이곳에서 살아야 되는 목적을 하나님께서 제게 알려주고 그때를 기다리고 있어요.

Betsy: But then, God spoke to me and told me my purpose of life here in United States. I am waiting for God's coming. That gave me a new self-identity. To me, my purpose of life defined my self-identity.

Betsy said that God has given her a sense of purpose. Her belief is that God has given her a stronger sense of purpose that supports developing new self-identity. She further spoke about her struggle with both gender oppression and acculturation stress, as well as her experience and her inner struggles as a single mother. Within her current socio-cultural context, her previously more traditional view of the Korean woman

disappeared. In its place, Betsy created a new self-identity through spirituality and a divorce care group.

Another participant, Sharon, was able to combat the hidden discourse of women's oppression through her coping skills gained from her relationship with God. This immigrant woman created a new self-identity with a new sense of purpose.

Sharon: 학교에 갈생각을 하고 있어요. 학교를다닐려고기다리고있고 아동교육학을공부를 하고 싶는데 일단 영어공부를 해서 실력을 기르고 쉼터에는 공부를할수 있는 쉼터와일을 할수있는 쉼터가 있어요.

Sharon: I plan to study child development. In this shelter, there is a place you can study and work.

Sharon: 도움을줄수있는곳은대개많아요. 자기자신을감추고위축하고다니면안되요.가정법률소를다니고.. 그러는데내가당당하지않으면, 안되요. 당당하지않으면살수가없어요.

Sharon: There are many places that support the needs of divorced women. It is always important to be confident. If you are not confident, then you cannot live.

Sharon previously experienced shame and guilt. Being a mother and pursuing her education in child development led Sharon to become more assertive and strengthen her self-worth. Instead of living with depression and isolation, Sharon learned to voice her needs and stand up for herself. She recommends that other single women assist others to discover their voices. In making such recommendations, she is expressing her new identity as a woman who recognizes and meets her own emotional and professional needs rather than as someone who sees her self-worth as something based on others.

Elizabeth:그 남편이지금너무귀하고요.

Elizabeth: I realized that my husband is very important to me.

Elizabeth:남편은잘되었어요.

Elizabeth: I pray for my husband to receive a blessing from God.

Elizabeth: 기도를 계속했어요. 설사 안 되었다 하더라도요.

Elizabeth: Even though my relationship with my husband has not recovered, I surrendered my burdens to God's hands.

Interviewer: What were the things that were helpful?

Elizabeth: 인내하고 참는 것이 가장 중요한 것 같습니다.

Elizabeth: Patience is very important.

Elizabeth: 내가 처한 상황을 이해할 수 없었어요.

Elizabeth: I could not understand my situation, such as my children's death and my separation from my husband.

Elizabeth: 전적으로 품는 사랑을 품게 하셨어요.

Elizabeth: During this time, I realized that I should just love my husband even though we are separated. God asked me to love him for who he is.

Elizabeth: 신학을 공부해요. 지금은 콜링이라는 것을 알게 되었어요.

Elizabeth: I am studying theology now. I realized that being a pastor is my calling. I want to work for single women.

Elizabeth's case is especially unique in that she lost her two children in a car accident and then became separated. Elizabeth accepted her life transitions through prayer and a more intimate relationship with God. When people experience transition and adversity in their lives, finding a new basis for self-worth is necessary for navigating that transition. Elizabeth found that the purpose of her suffering was to help her become a



more humble person. She now sees God as the agent of her self-worth, as well as her husband's self-worth, and wants to become a pastor.

All of these women so far discussed discovered a new calling through their separation, which in turn led to formation of a new sense of identity and purpose: mother, Christian, missionary, student, or pastor.

Kimberly: 애아빠하고사이가안좋아지면서하나님과관계가좋아졌어요.  
나는그런마음으로살려고해요.  
하나님께서이애빠랑모든관계가깨지고 나서 모든게다풀려요..  
애넷데리고.. 누가공부할려고하는것이에요.  
일을하려고하는데..정말..때가있어야해요.  
잡이안찾아지면그땐해야할것들이있어요. 그러니까그냥누리세요.

Kimberly: During the difficult relationship with my former husband, I became closer to God. After divorce, everything worked out. I studied and completed my doctoral degree while raising my children. I also worked. There is season or time for everything. I just experience joy and gratitude in every situation. Enjoy your life.

Kimberly's accepts her situation and finds joy and gratitude in her life. She believes that everything has its own timing and thinks of her self-worth as part of a bigger picture in God's view. To Kimberly, letting go of her marriage is her escaping an "Exodus" experience. Exodus is a helpful metaphor for describing her struggle to break free and gain spiritual, emotional, and socio-cultural independence. Another participant, Kody, presented her story:

Kody: 제 상황에 대해서 슬퍼하고 싶지 않아요. 저는 저와 비슷한 상황에 있는 사람들을 도와주고 싶어요. 그게 저의 소명입니다. 그리고 저와 비슷한 목적을 갖고 있는 사람들과 함께 일하고 싶어요.

Kody: I don't want to be sad about my situation. I want to help other people who are going through a similar situation as mine. That's my calling. I also want to work with people who have similar goals.

Kimberly, Lena, and Kody developed a new sense of self. Kimberly found her new identity as a mother. Lena discovered her new identity as a missionary. Kody wanted to help other people who also have gone through divorce. Each person developed a new identity based on a deeper understanding of who they were in God's eyes and by making the decision to choose a new basis for self-worth.

While the second major theme is the formation of a new identity, the next major theme is how participants experienced their own progression as they went through the phases of separation, divorce, and post-divorce. The women in this sample indicated that development of self-worth is related to developing a relationship with God. Self-worth is defined as the value one places on one's self (McGee, 2003). Identity is how they see themselves (Gubrium & Holsten, 1999). Twenty out of twenty of the sample women in this study reported that their relationship with God was very important. Once their identity and self-worth were more affirming and accepting, the progression through the different phases of divorce was possible.

The next major theme I will discuss is how participants experienced their own progression as they went through the stages of separation, divorce, and post-divorce.

### ***Theme III. A Sense of Self-progression from Separated, to Divorced, to Post-Divorce***

My interviews chart the development of self-identity as it progresses through specific phases. These phases are time-marked as: (1) separation, prior to making the decision to divorce; (2) the time that the divorce is finalized; and, (3) six months after divorce, or post-divorce. These various phases of the divorce affected each woman's

view of her identity. Katherine's story illustrates her individual progression through these phases.

Katherine: 별거기간에는 슬픔과 우울증을 겪었어요.  
이혼전에는항상외로왔어요.  
오랜기간을 외로움속에서 살았어요.  
이혼을 결정을 하기까지 십년이 걸렸어요. 그후 마음이 후련했어요.  
이혼을 하고나서 기도를 했고 평화가왔어요.

Katherine: While I was getting divorced, I was very depressed. Right after my divorce, I prayed and felt so much more peaceful.

Katherine experienced her depression during the separation period, which lasted a full ten years. After her divorce was finalized, however she reports feeling peaceful.

Katherine:기도를하면서 이 외로움을극복을하게되었습니다. 6개월안에는 많은 외로움과 죄책감을 느꼈습니다. 성경말씀을 읽으면서 극복하였지요.

Katherine: I overcame my loneliness through prayer. I experienced depression and guilt for six months after the divorce. I also felt loneliness and shame after divorce.

During the post-divorce phase, Katherine used spirituality (i.e. prayer and meditative Bible study to strengthen her faith) to overcome her loneliness.

Katherine: 이혼을 하고 6개월뒤에는 오페라공부를 위해서 독일에갔어요.  
성악을하고오페라를했어요.

Katherine: After six months of post-divorce, I started studying opera. So, I decided to go to Germany and study opera.

Katherine: 이혼하고서 6개월뒤에는  
하나님께서는상상이상으로저를더좋은길로저를이끌어주었어요.

Katherine: After six months of divorce, God blessed me and gave me direction for this decision. I became recognized as an opera and classical music singer.

Katherine: 이혼을 한뒤에는 제 앞날을위해서기도를하는데  
주님께서저를학교로인도를해주셨습니다.

Katherine: During the post-divorce phase, I prayed for direction and God directed me to the school.

Katherine had a ten-year separation period with her husband. During the time, her emotions changed from very depressed, isolated, and lonely to an onset of sadness. In contrast, right after her divorce was finalized, she felt something was uplifted. Then, she experienced shame and guilt within the six months that followed her divorce. After six months, however, she felt at peace with her decision, despite lingering feelings of loneliness.

Monica: 저는죄책감에서걸렸어요.  
하나님께서허락하신가운데이혼이세가지가있어요.

Monica: I had guilt, even though I knew from the Bible that there were several reasons that God permitted divorce, such as adultery, etc.

Monica: 프로그램을하고있는데용서가안되었어요.

Monica: I am taking a divorce group class. Forgiveness is the most difficult for me.

Monica: 용서는봐누기도하고용서는결단이다하고 이야기를했어요.

Monica: We shared an understanding that forgiveness is a decision.

Monica: 용서는내가해야하는 것이었어요.

Monica: Forgiveness starts from me.

Monica: 이혼자로싱글생활을할때십년간제자신을드러낼수없었어요.

Monica: For the past ten years, I could not reveal my situation to the church community. I had a long period of depression.

Monica: 이혼자로공동체로일하는것이힘들었어요.  
교회공동체는그렇지않잖아요.

Monica: Being a divorced woman in the church community is very difficult. But as a divorced person, it is important for me be part of the church community.

Monica: 죄책감! 불가피하잖아요.

Monica: In my case, I initiated divorce so I had huge guilt. It is difficult to deal with guilt, and I had to deal with it.

Monica: 스스로를이렇게까지하면안되겠다.

Monica: I realized it is important to take off the burden of guilt.

Monica: 이과정을통해서이혼하는여성들의마음을이해하게되었어요.

Monica: Because of that experience, I now understand what divorced women go through. It is very difficult to understand these women unless you experience their sense of burden or guilt.

Monica: 섬겨야하는분들을이해해야겠다.  
겪지않은분들은이해를하기가어렵겠구나. 이중삼중고를겪고있는구나.  
정신적으로우울하고힘든일들이상처들을받는것이잖아요.

Monica: It is very difficult for some people to handle these feelings. It is a tough pain, to have to go through that cycle of depression and vulnerability.

Monica: 누군가를동등하게일하는것을주셨어요.  
제가교회속에서도얼마나힘들까?  
이런한마디가위로가되는데겪지않은분들은잘모르시더라구요.  
저희교회삶이모든것이영향을주잖아요.

Monica: Treating everyone the same, with equality, is very important. It is very important that the church community help these women lift their burden and guilt. Encouragement from the church community is very influential. Our life is based in the church.

Monica now serves as a single-women's group leader. The negative emotions of guilt, shame, and isolation are commonly experienced during the initial separation and after divorce. Many first generation Korean-American women experience long periods of sadness and depression, often lasting for many years. This woman's conversation also demonstrates the recurring theme of forgiveness. Monica's healing process was apparent from the way in which she was able to open herself to her genuine feelings, deal with her guilt, extend forgiveness, and develop a new sense of self and her capacity for growth. Monica later became a leader in supporting many other divorced Korean-American

women. Her healing eventually led her to assume leadership positions to create a healing community. Her development of self-worth and her progressively stronger self-identity facilitated the divorce-recovery.

Another participant, Kelly, shared her story of being an independent single woman.

Kelly: 화가나기도하고사람들과있다는자체가많이힘들었어요.  
그리고외롭기도하고지금은홀로서기를하고있지요.

Kelly: I got angry and lonely. It was difficult for me to deal with people. I felt depressed. Now, I am in the process of being an independent single woman.

Kelly: 저는지금도가끔씩우울증이올라와요.  
기도를하면서홀로서기를하고있어요.

Kelly: Sometimes, I am depressed. However, I am learning to become independent through solitary prayer.

Kelly: 지금은신학교를다니고있고한국교회를다니면서전도사의자리를알아보고있어요.  
교회에서전도사로일을하고있고외국으로선교지로파송을받고싶습니다.

Kelly: I went to seminary school. Now, I am looking for a job as a pastor. After working as a pastor, I want to be an international missionary.

Kelly's case also demonstrates how one experiences depression and anger during the divorce and the post-divorce stage. But later, Kelly received support through the various stages of divorce from the single-women's group, spirituality, and by finding a new vocation. Healing, growth, guilt, meaning, and forgiveness are sub-major themes demonstrated by Kelly's and other women's cases. The growth and healing during post-divorce reframed their meaning and values. Table 1 below summarizes how self-identity generally progresses during the process of separation, divorce, and post-divorce.

The next set of quotations demonstrates how spirituality, social connection, emotional health, ‘getting validation’, and ‘presence’ support significant impact coping for divorced women.

Pastor Werner, who serves as a single women’s group leader, points out how negative self-pride and self-ego are inversely associated to healing during the divorce-recovery process.

Pastor Werner: 말씀이에요. 말씀이 변화를 시켜요.  
우리는 성경공부를 통해서 말씀이 기본이 되니까 치유가 돼요.  
상담을 하면 자기의 자존심이 있어서 깨기가 어렵잖아요.  
예전에는 자신의 관점으로 보았는데 이제는 하나님의 관점으로 바라보니까 회복이 되지요. 그러지만 극히 드물어요. 우리에게 한계가 있어요. 그래서 전문가, 상담가에게로 의뢰를 합니다. 영적, 정신적, 사회적인 도움을 주어야 합니다. 그렇게 하므로써 자아와 정체성의 회복이 이루어집니다.

Pastor Werner: Reading and meditating over the words of the Bible transforms people. The foundation of healing is in the words of God. When I provide pastoral counseling, I recognize that it is difficult for people to break their attachment to ego, their self-serving focus. We seek marriage family therapists or others outside professional counselors to assist us in this process. It’s important to provide emotional and social connections for divorced women in order to heal and provide them with a new sense of self.

Pastor Werner’s reflections on the progression of self-development of during separation, divorce, and post divorce, shows that he believes that changing one’s character (less selfishness) and respecting other people’s self-worth, are related to the development of a new self-identity. He also articulates the crucial components to restoration for divorced Korean-American women provided by spirituality, counseling, and consistent social connection. His role as a pastoral counselor is limited, but his support for these women is important. These personal stories fit well into the body of research done on this topic.

The present study explores the process of transitioning into a new self-identity based on research data analysis. The table below shows a general model of this process and how it is related to an individual's relationship with God.

Table 5.  
*Progression Timeline. Self-Identity and Relationship with God*

	During Separation	Finalize Divorce	Divorce (within 6 months and after 6 months of divorce).	Outcomes
Transition into a new self-identity	- A submissive wife -Transition from marriage status -Not knowing	-Acceptance of divorce situation	-Discovered their purpose of life -Freedom -Independence -Seeking an egalitarian relationship with a new partner	-A new self- identity -Respecting self-worth -Egalitarian relationship -Independence -Independent children -Some women have difficulty developing a sense of self.
The Relationship with God	-A unilateral Relationship with God -View of God as fear-inducing, distant, and negative	-Transition from a unilateral to bilateral relationship with God -Interactive and Intimate relationship -View of God as friendly and positive.	-Bilateral relationship with God -Discovered deeper meaning with God -Two way communication -Interactive, positive, and intimate understanding of God.	-God fills former husband's place -Meaningful relationship with God -Women who experience gender oppression, who must obey God and their abusive husband do not have much of a sense of self. -Surrendering one's life plans to God
Emotional Domain	-Depression -Confusion -Loneliness -Isolation -Anger -Sad	-Heaviness and burdens are lifted -Let go	-Isolation -Guilt -Shame -Happiness -Peacefulness -Let go -Pain -Acceptance -Forgiveness -Anger -Depression -Sadness	-Relief -Peace -Connectedness -Forgiveness -Acceptance <b>Negative:</b> - Disconnect - Left Church - Buffer to Support - Felt judged, condemned.

During the separation period, participants used faith and prayer to manage their life transitions. Through prayer, faith, community, and hope, these women were able to



move to the next stage of divorce. After the divorces were finalized, their faith played a major role in the coping and healing process. They spent this time reconstructing their new identities as single women.

Not only did these women develop in their relationship with God and within themselves, they also changed in their social relationships, which is well documented by the next two themes, interactive support, and a relational collectivist public.

#### ***Theme IV. Gradual Change in Preference for Indirect Interactive Support to more Direct Forms***

Based on the stories of these women, 12 of the 20 women stated that they preferred indirect support. ‘Direct’ support refers to a more Western perspective adopted by marriage family therapists (MFTs), in which direct intervention treatment and approaches for discussing a client’s problems and listening to their stories is preferred. In contrast, ‘Indirect’ approaches involve a more Eastern perspective of support which may not involve the problems directly. Examples of an indirect approach include spending time with individuals, not discussing divorce or providing advice, allowing the separated or divorced woman to be in control of the topics and the pace of the discussion, and in general, validating the woman’s presence. Throughout, security and safety are paramount. The other person does not discuss the woman herself or her divorce, but may tiptoe around these topics. The indirect approach is especially beneficial in instances of infidelity and domestic violence, when often direct discussion of these events would lead to emotional wounds being reopened.

For Korean-American women, the lengthy adjustment process is partly due to their guarded cultural practices. As discussed in the Literature review (Chapter 4), many

first-generation Korean Americans deal with emotional struggles internally and share problems only with family members. Keeping family secrets is a practice inherited from generation to generation. Part of the influence of Confucianism in modern Korean American culture is that sharing family problems with others is still at times inappropriate (Kim, 2006).

The women's stories in this section indicate that they find indirect approaches of support beneficial. Their stories give details as to how exactly the indirect approach supports them.

**Miriam:** 저는 사람들이 저에게 동정을 보여주는 것이 싫어요. 나이드신 권사님께서 저를 보시면서 우시면서 똑똑한 여자 재주가 많지만 팔짜가 세다고 하셨어요. 사람들의 동정과 그런 말들을 듣는게 싫었어요. 그러나 다른 한경우는 제 친구같은 경우예요. 제친구는 제게 아무말을 하지 않고 저와 함께 교회에서 기도를 밤낮으로 했어요. 새벽기도, 철야기도를 했어요. 저는 그친구가 저와 함께 있는 시간들이 좋았어요. 말로서 도와주는게 아니라 함께 있어주는 것이요. 간접적으로 도와주는것이 좋았어요.

**Miriam:** I did not like it when some women expressed their sympathy towards me. One older lady even told me that, usually a woman with talent, including intelligence, has a 'tough destiny.' It felt bad to listen to people's sympathy or such comments. However, it was very helpful for me when my friend was there with me and did not say anything to me. She was being there like a mother and we pray together in the church sanctuary during the night and the early in the morning. I like her presence.

Miriam's words illustrate how divorce can be effectively healed through indirect means. Emily also demonstrates how the indirect approach provides benefits during the healing process. In the following excerpt, Emily states that her spirituality led her through the healing process. This is a form of indirect support, as she was not required to speak openly with other individuals about her divorce

situation.

Emily: The only thing that I felt was helpful was my relationship with God. I prayed to God. I read Bible and prayed. I did not share my marriage struggles and conflicts with any of my family or friends. When I received confirmation from God that it was okay to leave my husband, I felt relieved. I received reassurance from Him.

Emily's main coping mechanism was spirituality. Instead of getting direct counseling from other people, her choice of healing was to pray and talk to God. The indirect method of support was more effective for many of these women. These participants preferred to have direct communication with God. Such practices reflect a more Asian style of internal meditation for gaining insight into one's problems. Asian cultural practices tend to avoid sharing vulnerability in social contexts, and prefer to express vulnerability internally through shared moments with God. The women's stories below show that dedicated prayer time in a prayer center was the primary coping mechanism in the recovery process.

As time progressed, the participants saw the benefits of direct support, such as the kinds of support one might find in a divorce care group, and shared their own vulnerability within those groups. A Marriage Family Therapist (MFT) role is to be sensitive to cultural differences and to provide indirect, yet gradual direct counseling to these women. These approaches are significant to these women, and they fill gaps between spirituality, current research, and clinical MFT treatment intervention.

The next sets of quotations touch on benefits of direct counseling and group support.

Kathy: 학교에서 선배로부터 도움을 받았어요. 그녀는 이혼을 경험을 하고 재혼을 했는데 당당하고 성공한 선배였어요. 그녀가 미국에서는 이혼이 한국과 같이 심각하게 생각하지 않는다고

하었어요. 나에게 그녀의 도움과 상담이 제게 참 많은 도움을 주었어요. 저는 다시 자신감을 회복을 했고 다시 데이트를 하게 되었고 저의 두번째 커리어를 시작하게 되었어요.

Kathy: I got support from a classmate at school. She is divorced, and has remarried. She said that divorce here is not viewed as seriously as it is in Korea. She told me to live with confidence. She seemed to be successful, and had confidence about who she is. Her support and direct advice changed my views about divorce. Since then, I have regained my confidence. I started dating a man, and focused on my second career.

Mille: 디보스그룹웍샵을 저는 세번 반복해서 들었어요. 그룹에서 저의 어려움을 나눠줄 수 있었고 그들이 저를 이해해주었어요.

Mille: I liked indirect support from other people prior to attending a divorce care group. I started attending a divorce care group, and I liked group's support. I attended a divorce care group three times. I shared my pain with other divorced women there. They understood what I was going through.

Judith: 제 어려움을 제 룸메이트와 상의를 했어요. 그사람도 이혼을 했어요. 그녀는 저를 편견으로 대해주지 않았고 저를 저 나름대로 받아주셨어요. 일터나 다른 곳에서는 항상 무엇을 입고 있었어요. 또 그룹에서 제가 입은 마스크를 벗을 수 있었어요.

Judith: At work or other places, I did not share my divorce or marriage problems with others. Yet, there was an exception. I shared my difficulties with one of my roommates, who is also divorced. She understood and showed no judgment. In the beginning, I wore "masks" while I was at work and elsewhere. But whenever I went to the divorced women's group, I took off these masks. I shared my problems and liked their feedback. They understood my situation and accepted me.

Sandra: 내놓는 사람은 회복이 되요. 나는 상처 없다 하는 사람은 회복이 안되지요. 그래서 상처가 안된 사람은 내놓지 않아요. 이야기를 하면서 회복을 해야 하는데, 내가 사람들에게 이야기하는 것도 회복이 되는데, 내가 내안의 상처를 회복해야 합니다. 저도 교제를 하면서 회복이 된다고 생각이 됩니다.

Sandra: I began to share with others as we connected over the course of a divorce care group. If you share your pain, then you can heal. If one denies one's wounds or injuries, then it will be difficult for one to heal. People who do not share their vulnerabilities cannot heal themselves. The healing process happens when we share with others.

Kathy, Mille, Judith, and Mini reported the benefits of a graduating to a more direct approach within the single women's group and divorced friends. Sandra, who is also a leader of a single-women's group, believes that a gradual transition from the indirect approach to the direct approach is helpful for these women's healing and recovery processes. Such a mixed approach balances different cultural approaches. In particular, multicultural feminism and Western approaches emphasize the importance of voicing women's needs and valuing their concerns. From the view of Western feminism, the indirect approach does not promote feminist goals. Yet, from the Korean-American perspective, indirect approaches can be very compatible with strengthening a woman's self-identity. We need to better understand and bridge the gap between Korean-American feminism and other multicultural feminism.

***Theme V. A Relational Collectivist Public Facilitates a Difference in Women's Healing***

One of the common themes I uncovered throughout my analysis of these women's stories was a tendency to fear the collectivist Korean-American Christian cultural community. The women reported that they experienced negative reactions from the Korean-American community, such as rejection, condemnation, judgment, and prejudice.

**Gwen:** 도움을 준 것은 별로 없었어요. 그런일이 생기고 나니까 관계를 끊었어요. 뭐라고 이야기를 못하고, 교회사람들도 도움이 안되었어요. 엄마, 친정엄마가 가장 많은 도움을 주었어요. 기도를 많이 했어요. 도움이 된 사람들은 없었어요. 그 사람들은 내가 잘못했다고 몰아부쳤어요. 그래서, 진정으로 나를 이해해주는 사람은 없었어요. 그런데 그 사람들은 ..그래서 안왔으면 하는 생각이 들었어요.

**Gwen:** After my marriage ended, I stopped going to church. The church people were not helpful at all. My mother was the one who helped me the most. I prayed

for a long time. There was no one at church who was helpful. They all told me that I was the one who had made a mistake.

Christy: 내가족들에게는내가이혼을한것이굉장히심한수치심으로다가왔다. 내가사역자였기때문에이혼을하므로서가족들은나를피했고내게연락을하지 않았다. 나는한국교회에서고립이되었고아무도나를도와주지않았다. 나는하나님과내자녀때문에살아남았다. 내자녀는그당시 2 살이었다. 사람들은내게기도하겠다고하고충고를한다고했는데그것들은내게도움이 되지않았다.그때는사람들을만나고화가나고해서오히려공동체속에있는것자체가너무나힘들었다. 심한수치심속에서살았다.

Christy: My divorce was a huge shame to my family. After I got divorced, my family members avoided me, especially because I was a minister. They stopped contacting me. I was isolated within the Korean church, and no one helped me. I survived because of God and my child. My daughter was two years old at the time. People told me that they would pray for me. They also gave me advice. However, the advice was not helpful at all. Back then, I was very angry. It was very difficult for me to stay in the church community. I lived with a lot of shame.

Christy: 나는기도를하면서힘을얻었고미국교회에서 사람들이나를저녁에같이초대를해서저녁을먹었다. 그것이내게가장도움이되었다. 한국교회에서는이혼을한사람이없었기때문에내게도움을줄수있는사람이 없었다. 가족들은수치속에서나를멀리했고, 가족들중에서내게도움을줄만한가까운형제나가족이없었다. 그사람들은내게도움을주고나를받아주었다. 그리고이혼을한사람들이많이있었기때문에많은도움을주었다. 미국교회에서사람들이많이저녁에초대를해주시고했던것들이많이도움을주었어요.

Christy: I got my strength through prayer. At an American church, people invited me over for the dinner.

Not many people in the Korean Christian churches are supportive of divorced women. The Korean Christian church could not really help me. My family avoided and distanced themselves from me. I don't have any brothers or sisters who were willing to help me.

They accepted me for who I am. There are many people in the American church who are divorced. I received help from them.

It was very helpful for me that people in the American church invited me to dinner. They gave me support.

Christy: 한국사람들은편견으로보고충고를한다고했는데우울증이심하게 있을때는그렇게기도를해주겠다고하는것들은도움이되지않았어요. 지금은싱글맘미니스트리를다니고있는데그것도도움이되고있어요. 기도와내아이가내게도움이되었어요.

Christy: Many Korean people viewed me with prejudice. My depression was not treated over the course of my separation, and eventual divorce. I also attended their single mom's ministry, and that really helped with my recovery process. For me, my prayers and my daughter are the major sources of coping.

Christy had a difficult time gaining acceptance from the Korean church community particularly because she was a pastor. Her support system came primarily from her American Christian Community, and from her child. Her other main source of support was prayer.

The next set of comments are from women who felt that they were treated badly within the Korean Christian Community. These comments come directly from other people's experiences in their church communities:

Amber: 교회커뮤니티에서 제가 이혼을 했다는 것이 참 힘들었어요. 비난은 엄청났어요.

Amber: It was very difficult to reveal to the church community that I was divorced. The condemnation was so harsh

Maya: 우리교회에는 500 명이상의 사람들이 이혼을 했어요. 그러나 교회에서 이혼을 했다는 밝히지 않아요. 싱글모임이나 디보스리커버리프로그램에 참여하고 싶어하지도 않아요.

Maya: We have more than 500 divorced people in our church. But they don't want to reveal to the community that they are divorced. They don't even want to join the single women's group.

Coco: 이혼을 했다는 것은 주홍글씨로 “디”를 글씨로 셔츠에 새기고 다니는 느낌이에요. 교회내에서요.

Coco: Being divorced means that you are wearing a “scarlet letter” in the church community. I felt like I was wearing those shirts, with the letter “D.”

Sue: 제가 리더의 자리에 있었기 때문에 모든 사람들이 제이혼에 대해서 교회에서 이야기를 했어요. 교회내의 자매와 형제들에게 많은 실망을 했어요.

Sue: Because I was in a leadership position, everyone in the church spoke about my broken marriage. I was so disappointed by my brothers and sisters from the church.

Mille: 교회에 나이드신 권사님들이 제게 오셔서 “불쌍하다” 면서 우셨어요. 정말 싫었어요.

Mille: I did not like how the elderly women from church came to me and wept for me. “Poor things,” they said. They were showing pity. I hated it.

Ellen: 교회에 있는 사람들은 제게 많은 비난을 했어요. 제 이혼에 대해서요.

Ellen: I did not like people from church at all. They talked about my marriage, and condemned me.

Beatrice: 싱글우먼 미니스트리를 시작할때 교회리더분들의 도움을 받기가 참 힘들었어요. 싱글우먼 미니스트리그룹을 교회밖에서 하는 것이 더 쉬었어요.

Beatrice: It was very difficult to get support from the church leadership in starting a single women’s ministry. It would be easier to do a single women’s ministry outside of the church.

Dana: 교회의 목사님들과 리더분들은 싱글이 되신 분들이나 이혼을 하신 분들을 돕는다고 해요. 그러나 정말로 그 분야에 관심이 있는지 모르겠어요. 교회에서는 중요하다고 여기는 게 따로 있잖아요.

Dana: The pastors and the church leadership all say that they support single or divorced people. But I am not sure they are really interested about helping divorced people and their family members. The church has its own agenda.



These women reported that they experienced condemnation, criticism and prejudice from the Christian community and churches, and because of it they sought alternative communities for support.

Betsy: 제 남편과 이혼을 하고나서 저는 미셔너리의 지도자 위치에서 제 자리를 내려 봐야했어요. 교회지도자분들이 제게 그만 두라고 하셨어요.

Betsy: I had to resign my position as a missionary leader because I divorced my husband. The church leadership asked me to resign.

Mini: 교회에가는 것을 중단하고 지금은 불교명상에 심취되어있습니다. 저는 교회분들로 도움을 받지 못했지만 교회밖의 다른 분들로부터 도움을 받았어요.

Mini: I stopped going to church, and now I am into Eastern Buddhism. I did not get support from church people but people outside of the church supported me.

Betsy and Mini left their home church and community, and moved to the other places or churches, where no one recognized that they were previously married. Many other women also reported they received negative support from church community or leaders. Other participants did not like stigma or prejudice from the church community.

A relational view is a theme that emerged from the interviews, that women have positive community support from church, and their social network. It is defined as 'positive', 'supportive' and 'validating' view toward divorced women. For example, Alison's experience of community and social network was viewed as relational (i.e. positive, validating, and supportive).

Alison: 저는 싱글미니리스트리안에서 저의 두자녀를 키웠어요. 제 아이들은 어떤 문제없이 잘 자랐어요. 아버지가 없었지만 잘 자랐어요. 제 딸은 지금 의대 일학년이 진학하고 있고 다른 딸은 커뮤니티센터에서 다른 사람들을 도와주면서 봉사를 하고 있어요.

**Alison:** My children grew together with the families in the single mother's ministry. So, my children did not have any trouble growing up without their father. My daughter is now attending her first year of medical school, and my other daughter volunteers as a teacher in the community center to help other people.

Allison's case was unique in that when the church leaders or community were supportive of Allison's family, they were able to get healing faster and to receive positive support.

Progressive changes in media, and the influences of both Korea and the United States, have changed the public's stance on divorce and traditional family structure. Having community awareness and support of church leadership increases acceptance of divorced women. When church leaders adapt critical, judgmental views and internalize the community's negative view toward divorced women, shame is increased, and the guilt and isolation for these women makes the recovery process slower.

Therefore, the importance of the leadership in a community to shift from the negative view to a positive view impacts the power of collectivist public. Similar to the butterfly effect, within collective culture, when the leader of the community supports divorced women (such as Pastor Werner), then divorced women receive support and can experience true healing and recovery.

One barrier to recovery is the presence of buffers, that prevent divorced women from receiving support from other community leaders. These buffers come in different forms, and mainly arise from their own social and relational community. This is an unfortunate outcome because very often moving to a

different community is the ideal way for many of these women to find places of support, and non-judgmental treatment.

Pastor Werner leads the single women's weekend retreat for the ministry.

In speaking about his own personal difficulties he shares women's beliefs that their divorce problems are gender-specific.

Pastor Werner: 본인이나 아픈이있는사람들에게간증을해요.  
자기혼자라는게아니라는것을치유될수는과정이에요.

Pastor Werner: I usually share my difficulties, or share my own healing testimony. When people realize that they are not alone, then, they can heal.

Being able to share the trials that a person has gone through with an understanding group of people leads these women to give voice to their inner thoughts. When this does not happen communities hide issues and place guilt on these women, which creates dilemmas. These dilemmas are also related to a social gender discourse, and the oppression of divorced women. However, very often these struggles are addressed and the women are given support by the leaders from the community. The next section will discuss how this support can aid recovery efforts.

The following stories demonstrate how the community's support provides a place of healing for these women.

Pastor Werner: 제방침이말씀과찬양으로중심으로되어있어요.  
아픔을나눌수있는것이에요. 봉사자들이케어를많이받아요.  
봉사하신분들이많이가요. 이프로그램을통해서,  
이런아픔을겪고토해내는그런면에있어요.

Pastor Werner: The program is based on meditating on passages in the Bible, and praise songs. Divorced or single women share their vulnerabilities and pain with others. We also share stories of our healing and wounds. The volunteer teams who come to support the single women's group have usually received more healing and grace than the others. For this program, our volunteer teams and the pastors pray for nine

months prior the initial meeting. In this program, many people share their pain.

Pastor Werner: 이동산을거쳐서이전보다는 활동하는면에서는좋아졌어요.

Pastor Werner: People who participated in the group program reported that they live with fewer burdens. I have also noticed that their behavior towards others is less guarded.

Pastor Werner: 그분들중에서우울증이화병보다는 많지요.

Pastor Werner: These women suffer more from depression than *wha-byung*. (*Wha-byung* is cultural bound syndrome that is experienced by Korean people. It is mixed feelings of anger and depressive symptoms).

Pastor Werner: 와서좋다고해요.

저희들이느끼기에는처음에는참석하시는분들을보면본인만의 바운드리를만들어요. 마지막에본인이직접간증도해요. 본인이많이힘들었는데요. 마음이많이가라안았다고해요.

Pastor Werner: The participants in the program usually have positive outcomes. We have observed that first-time participants usually create boundaries between themselves and others. However, as these women progress through the program, they eventually share their own testimonies with other people. These women have reported that this sharing was so painful, but now they have found some peace in their hearts.

Pastor Werner: 이프로그램이다른디보스케어프로그램 에서는상담하고치유받는프로그램보다는 다른 면이 있는 데 프로그램을 만든 분이 말씀이나기도로활용을해요.

Pastor Werner: This program is different than other secular divorce recovery programs. The program developer builds the program off of the words of the Bible and prayer.

Pastor Werner conveyed his support for these women in the community.

Pastor Werner: 그분들의 아픔을 이해하고 어떻게 교회안에서 성장할 수 있을까 알게 되었습니다. 일단은 상대가 변화가 되기를 기대를 하는 것 보다는 자기의 자존감을 높이고, 하나님과의 바른 신앙안에서 자라야 하고, 폭력적인 면에서는 전문가가 참여해야합니다.

Pastor Werner: Spirituality, faith and counseling are the most important sources of healing for these women. They are also important for these women to create their new self- identities.

The community's relational view and the leadership's support will encourage these women to stay and grow in the Christian community so that these women can find their self-worth and so that the relational community leader can promote the equality of women, regardless of their marital status. The intimate, relational, and caring community view promotes the formation of a voice for these women. The influence of spirituality and multicultural feminism delivers a clear message about the direction of the community. Multicultural feminism situates divorced Korean-American's experiences in a broader social context and describes their identities at the intersection of racial and gender oppression. It supports that divorced Korean- American women may embrace acculturation into American society, that stresses independence and self-sufficiency for women more so than does traditional Korean culture. Divorced Korean- American women's intersectional identity based on acculturation, traditional values, and gender identity are drastically different from a second wave feminism paradigm, since they are both women and non-white. This intersectionality (Collins, 1998) allows for the various aspect of divorce for Korean-American women and can give a professional therapist information and guidance on how to better support the women's transition into singlehood.

The preceding interviews with Korean- American women at all different phases of the divorce timeline demonstrate that the relational views of the church, the community, and leaders, will quicken the healing processes. Thus, the relational view of the community is directly related to the women's spiritual, emotional, and socio-cultural well-being.

## CHAPTER 7

### DISCUSSION

The findings of needs assessment from the qualitative analysis reframes and extends the current research in Korean American women's divorce recovery, and creates a source of information for building a new therapy program here titled *New Life*. This chapter provides analysis on the unique experiences that divorced Korean- American women face in their transition from married to unmarried status. The central findings include the prevalence of the following five themes: the transition from a unilateral to a bilateral relationship with God; the development of a new identity that is based on self-worth independent of marital status; the sense of self-progression in transitioning from separation, to divorce, and to post-divorce; the gradual change from seeking indirect forms of interactional support, to seeking more direct forms; and the importance of a relational collectivist public in promoting these women's healing. These findings in part mirror existing research on Korean American culture and church communities, and directed the creation of the New Life program that can specifically support these processes.

The key findings also demonstrate that the sense of self-progression from separation, to divorce, to post-divorce is related to each woman's transition from a unilateral to a bilateral relationship with God, and the community's relational and positive view towards separated and divorced Korean-American women. In this way this project does not only address the divorced women, but the entire community they are a part of. These women also sought a gradual shift from indirect approaches to their healing to a more the direct approach at the same time they developed, to the decision to

divorce, to the six months after divorce and to the post-divorce stage. This was a part of the study that made clear that women move through these phases at all different rates, and require different amounts and types of support along the way.

The emotional domains of these women included confusion, depression, isolation, relief, and acceptance. Their emotions also shifted as they accepted their new identity and their marriage transition. The divorced Korean American women typically experienced long periods of separation before making the decision to divorce. In fact, the study indicates that it usually took six to ten years of separation before the decision to divorce. During this lengthy separation stage, these women experienced depression, isolation, loneliness, and “*hwa-byung*,” a culture-bound syndrome that involves both anger and depressive symptoms. This emotional journey is challenging, and the program has been designed to deal with each of these emotional states.

The study demonstrates, moreover, that silent prayer, and meditation on Bible verses support these women’s spiritual domains of recovery. The study therefore reveals diverse spiritual, emotional, physical, and relational domains of these women’s needs at the different phases of divorce. A relational view with both God and the collective Korean-American society combine to provide a foundation for these women’s needs and the evolution of their new senses of identity. The study isolates crucially important themes that contribute vitally to this process, specifically identifying five key characteristics that contribute most to the development of new self-identities and understandings of self-worth. Together, all of these characteristics are helpful considerations in thinking about how to address the issues that Korean-American women face in their transition out of their respective marriages. The program I designed will

therefore seek to promote, holistically, the socio-cultural, emotional, spiritual, and relational well-being of these immigrant women in a constantly globalizing, twenty-first century.

The major results of the study, determined through conducting a needs assessment, guided my creation of following prototype program, which I have decided to call the *New Life* program.



## CHAPTER 8

### PROTOTYPE PROGRAM (NEW LIFE)

#### Overview

This chapter describes the design for the prototype program, *New Life*, and how the design draws from the results from the needs assessment of divorced Korean-American women.

The key principles of this program are: (1) Transition from a unilateral to a bilateral relationship with God (including the use of daily prayers and meditation on specific Biblical verses and passages); (2) Development of a new identity based on self-worth independent and regardless of marital status; (3) Development of a sense of self-progression from separated, to divorced, to post-divorce; (4) Gradual change from relying on indirect forms of interactional support to relying on more direct forms; (5) A relational collectivist public facilitates women's healing

More specifically, the program uses interactive reflections in group settings, role-play, journal writing, and interactive dialogues with God (serenity prayers) to offer more flexibility and creativity for each woman's self expression. These together will indirectly provide alternative scripts through interactive reflections in group settings in order to challenge internalized beliefs that condemn the character and lives of divorced women. Each of the key components of the program will give a space for these women to become more comfortable with direct approaches during their transitional, healing periods. Moreover, safety, respect, and trust are key principles for helping first generation Korean-American women discover new senses of self-identity.

Incorporating components of spirituality, prayer, and a more intimate relationship with God will also help non-spiritual participants experience more than they could solely through marriage family therapy (MFT) clinical intervention. Mixing serenity (silent) prayer, and using interactive reflecting teams strengthen Korean-American women's socio-spiritual support, that combines the people around them and their connection to God. This is what distinguishes the *New Life* program from other divorce-recovery programs currently available in the United States: *New Life's* focus on socio-spiritual, as well as cultural-emotional-relational domains makes it unique within the field of marriage and family. The section below will describe in greater detail the prototype program.

### **Description of the Prototype Program: New Life Program**

The *New Life* program is designed to provide a psychological, social, and spiritual educational group for Korean-American women going through separation, divorce, and post-divorce transition. Key principles from the qualitative needs assessment are: transition from a unilateral to a bilateral relationship with God; development of a new identity based on self-worth independent of marital status; experience of self-progression when transitioning through stages of separation, divorce, and post-divorce; gradual change from seeking indirect forms of interactional support towards more direct forms; the building of a relational collectivist public to counteract the negative dominant discourse and facilitate women's healing.

The goal of this program is to use these principles to provide support for divorced Korean-American women. The *New Life* Program emphasizes development of women's new self-identity in five domains: spiritual, emotional, social, cultural, and physical.

Support is to be provided to these women during the various stages of the transition process (which I have demarcated as separation, prior to decision to divorce, the time of final decision to divorce, after six months of divorce, and the extended post-divorce period).

The *New Life* Program consists of eight consecutive weeks of two-hour long group workshops. The workshop is interactive, and the women are expected to gradually increase their levels of interactive participation through role-playing, journal writing, and group discussion. In format calls for interactive reflecting teams, volunteers (those who have already recovered from divorce) and group leaders, to role play typical separation and divorce situations, including those that are similar to participants' stories. Short pretest-posttests will be given before and after the workshop to gauge effectiveness. Group members' ability to integrate new stories into their daily interactions and journal writing will be observed weekly and discussed every week. The group leaders will also participate in leadership meetings, held every week. In these leadership meetings, they will focus on each participant's experience based on an understanding of the various phase of divorce and monitor each participant's level of interaction.

In the beginning stages of the group, volunteer women serve mentorship roles within the group and participate in the reflection team's role-play activities. The main discussion of the volunteer women's role plays and testimonies will no doubt stir up emotional pain, vulnerability, and grief of the participants, but making these feelings public will hopefully encourage them to eventually open up in turn. Having someone who has gone through the same experience will make it easier for these women to discuss their issues.

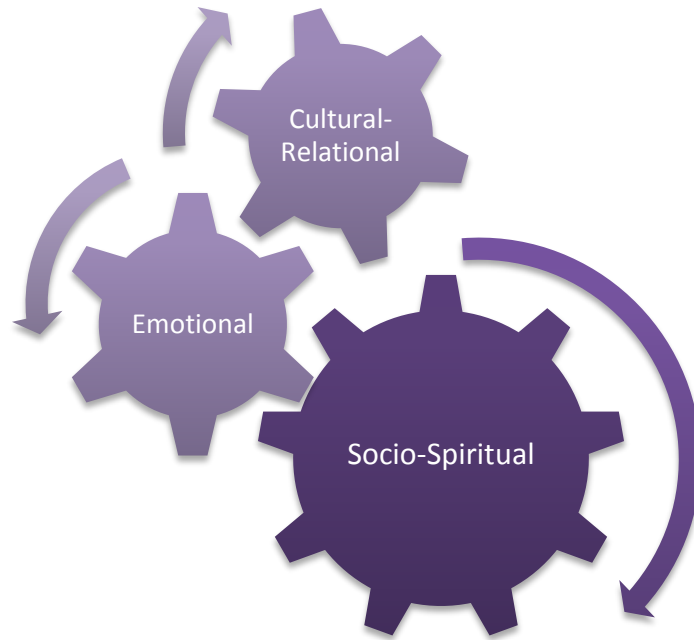
These components of the program will give space for participants to gradually move into a more direct approach for seeking support. During the third to fourth weeks of the program, the leader should focus on giving participants a safe, trusting environment so that participants can begin to tell their own stories. During this time, the leader and volunteers guide women to experience and understand their own self-worth by offering respect, trust, and nurturing care. Through the facilitation of volunteers and group leaders, the interactive reflecting team in sum fosters a positive relational view of community. Safety, respect, trust, and patience are the key principles that allow these women to open up and share their vulnerability, thoughts, and feelings with others in the program. It also allows for more introverted Korean- American women to gain insights into themselves and their own experiences through hearing and experiencing the testimonies of other women in a more indirect way. While such an indirect approach may seem like a passive form of learning from a Western cultural perspective, indirection is not only a culturally sensitive approach but an extremely effective one in the context of Korean American culture, voiced by the women in the needs assessment. Finally, the approach also allows and supports progressive, gradual healing.

Many women have developed problems of trust, understandably, as a result of their experiences of trauma, whether in the form of domestic violence, infidelity, or both. These women will participate in observing other volunteer's role-playing in interactive reflecting teams. The scenario to be role-played within the interactive reflecting team is to be based on the participant's personal story. Beforehand, each participant will write her personal story on a piece of paper. These stories will then be shuffled so that they are anonymous. The interactive reflecting teams will then role play a skit based on one of the

written stories and reflect on its meaning. This more discreet approach, especially towards sensitive, traumatic issues, enables women to slowly develop the courage needed to face their difficult past experiences.

The interactive reflecting teams will integrate experiential as well as interactive components into their functioning processes. The interactive reflecting teams will use *narrative* and *gestalt* therapy's treatment interventions (i.e., 'role-play', 'presence', 'creating a story', 'journal writing', and 're-authoring a story', etc.). As the group progresses each week, the leader will encourage the newly separated or divorced women to make more contributions to the discussion with their interactive reflecting teams. More importantly, the process of emotional healing and letting go of pain will be contextualized within a spiritual framework. Through the story-telling methods of the interactive reflecting teams, participants will be encouraged to form deeper, bilateral relationships with God. This will eventually help each woman's develop a new sense of self-worth. Listening to the reflection team's stories, testimonies, and examples of building a relationship with God will help these women initiate their own intimate relationship with God. Participating in group activities, such as 'interactional journal prayer', 'serenity prayer', and meditation on Bible verses in quiet settings or in nature may also change their relationship with God, and how they can structure their interactions with Him. Interactional journal prayer is an activity in which one writes prayers in a personal journal. This process is improved if the writing takes place in a quiet place, where each woman can slow her own thoughts and tune into God's presence. Journal writing is not just for documenting a one-way conversation, but keeping track of a true dialogue. The serenity prayer portion of the activity involves prayer in a quiet place and

focuses on the meditation, and consideration of God’s words from a specific biblical passage. The serenity prayer activity will start from the biblical Book of Psalms.



*Figure 1.* The New Life Program’s Core Components of Clinical Design

Another advantage of the *New Life* program is that it meets Korean-American women’s needs at various phases of the divorce process. Furthermore, the program will seek to deliver media and daily devotional video-clips to offer additional support to participants on a weekly basis. A group leader will send out the media and daily devotional video clips in order to underscore the major points of each workshop. They will also send daily, Biblical devotional verses from Psalms. Participants have a choice to view these materials at home and review the major highlights of the each weekly workshop. Psalms contains the most relevant passages for these workshops because in Psalms, David experiences agony and suffering, and then communicates interactively

with God. The devotional video clips will feature the leader reading passages from Psalms out loud and asking participants to write their reflections after reading Psalms. True reflection means these women will write their own thoughts, how they feel, and what the daily implication of their activity with others has been. It is similar to ‘quiet time’ (a term which refers to the daily devotional routines for Christians), and in this instance it is something focuses on participant’s healing and reflection for emotional, spiritual, and relational purposes.

Each participant will also participate in serenity prayer with one or two other participants within a smaller group. After each workshop is finished, the group leader will evaluate each activity through her own observations of each participant as well as weekly survey questionnaires that gauge life satisfaction.

During the daily devotional workshop, women will write in their own journals and record their own words, thoughts, feelings, and stories. The women will write in either a composition book, on a women’s group workshop website, or on their personal computer. Each woman will have a choice as to which medium to use. At the end of every workshop, participants will share their journal and reflection on a purely voluntary basis. Together, these writings will also form a record of the *New Life* program that participating women can look back on in the weeks, and months that follow for continued guidance and reflection.

Over the eight weeks, the workshop seeks to incorporate less anonymity over time. The skit format, moreover, will allow each women to be more assertive in telling her story when she feels ready to do so. Group leaders must create a safe environment, provide respect, and offer trust to women so that they may feel comfortable to share.

Volunteering women should also encourage each participant to feel secure within group.

Overall, the program specifically provides effective intervention, treatment, and life skills for divorced first-generation Korean-American women ranging in age from 30 to 60. The participants will be divided by the following, various indices: stage of divorce, age, occupation, acculturation process, and how they identify their current relationship with God. These indicators will help ensure that the women will interact with others who share similar backgrounds. The program also involves various types of prayer as tools for healing, forgiveness, and communion. All of these topics will be covered in a fluid and comprehensive process that supports women as they develop a new self-identity during their major life transitions.

### *Participants*

The program is designed to support first-generation, divorced Christian Korean-American women aged 30 to 60.

This study includes divorced Korean-American women from 30 to 60 years old who have not remarried.

In addition those who do not meet the inclusion criteria, potential participants will be screened for significant mental health issues to ensure that they will benefit from the program. It is expected that participants will exhibit some mental health symptoms such as depression, anxiety, nervousness, sleeping disturbances, etc. To deal with this risk, the *New Life* program director has been trained, and is a certified mental health provider and has been instructed not to include individuals who identify as having severe mental health-related limitations.



### ***Length of Program and Location***

Group sessions will be held for two hours each, once a week for eight weeks. The location of community or church building will be in Southern California.

### **Goals and Objectives**

The goal of this program is to provide spiritual, psychological, social, cultural, and emotional support for separated and divorced Korean-American, especially in relation to stressors that follow separation, divorce, and post-divorce.

The second goal of the program is to assist separated and/or divorced Korean-American women build a positive spiritual, cultural, emotional, and social community to counteract external and internal discourses regarding the automatic negative status of divorced women.

The key components of program are described as below.

1. Importance of relationship with God
  - Definition of the relationship with God
  - Learning how to increase intimacy/build trust with God
2. Development of a new self-identity
3. Understanding the positive relational view from the community
4. Providing activities that gradually transition from less direct to more direct forms of interactional support

### ***Key Components of Emotional Experiences and Transition Relationship with God***

The content goals of group workshop are described as below.

1. Understanding separation and divorce

2. Coping with multiple losses (such as relationships, friends, or church communities)

3. Understanding the fear of getting close to others in community

4. Finding meaning in going through separation and divorce

5. Developing a new self-identity

The process goals of group workshop are described as below.

1. Verbalize the process of development in reflection teams

2. Use language to give voice to stories and share with others

3. Express feelings and thoughts through journal writing

*Table 6*

*Key components of spiritual, social, emotional and cultural experiences and the transition in the relationship with God during transition from married to divorced*

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6	Stage 7	Stage 8
<b>Title</b>	Let's mingle.	My life is quite complicated?	My Father, and me?	Who am I?	Let's talk about that man!	Do I belong here?	Let's go another round!	Now what?
<b>Theme</b>	Joining	Understanding separation and divorce	Transition in the relationship with God	A new self-identity	Mutual relationship with new partner	Community fear or support	Creating a story	A New Life

### *New Life Program Outline*

A church, organization, and community buildings can be used for the space.

Marriage family therapist interns (MFTI) and doctoral students in marriage and family therapy programs will be participated as staff members.

The Project Planning Activities are described as below.

- Identify the goals of the individuals attending *New Life* and obtain written statement of commitment to their goals in participating in the program.

- Identify grants, sponsors, and funding for *New Life*.
- Meetings will be held at secure places, such as church.
- Recruit target population by promoting events in church newspapers and bulletin boards, web sites, and local Korean media.
- I will develop a network of those working with divorcing women who will refer potential participants.
- An MFT will screen clients in an initial assessment.
- Clients will file the necessary application forms.
- An MFT will interview clients.
- Upon admission, all clients will receive a program booklet that will include the project description. The project description will state the rules, including the confidentiality policies. The project population will sign all the forms, project activities, and statement of goals.

### **Survey Questionnaire (Pre-Test and Post-Test)**

A Pre-test and Posttest Social Support Questionnaire (SSQ) will be given to the participants in order to evaluate the outcomes of the prototype program. A full copy of the SSQ is provided as an attachment in Appendix H. The SSQ has been used before among Korean-American female populations in Chang (2003) with validity. A Survey of group and individual will be used for pretest and posttest, and participants' journal portfolios will be reviewed by MFT to observe the outcome.

The marriage family therapist (MFT) and will perform the assessments intake and a program developer will ensure that the assessment is conducted in accordance with the

guidelines he or she has set. The staff will meet periodically with an outside consultant and administrator.

## **Week One — Joining**

### ***Session One: Let's Mingle!***

This is an initial joining session where New Life participants, group leaders, and marriage family therapists will meet for the first time and become familiar with one another. This is a two-hour session.

The goal of Session One is to join together and to explore the separation, divorce, and post-divorce experience of others by watching the Korean film “Actresses.” The film shows four Korean female movie stars’ self-narration about their separation, divorce, post-divorce, and their struggles along the way. Throughout this film, participants will gain an understanding of other Korean women’s separation, divorce, and post-divorce experiences and will reflect on their own transition experiences from married to unmarried.

The content goal of Session One is joining and understanding other people’s experiences of separation and divorce.

The process goal of Session One is to determine their goals in attending the program. Staff members participate in joining with other women. Participant is to watch the film, “Actresses.”

The activities are to get to know other people, to break the ice and to share their own hobbies and interests, goals, and current status with participants in a small group setting.

The objectives of session are described as below.

- Introduction of marriage and family therapists and group leaders.
- Introduction of the *New Life* Program.
- Refreshments and introduction of each participant.
- Reflection on media clips from the film “Actresses” (2009).

The methods and techniques are described as below.

- Participants are registered at the door and receive information brochures
- Participants are assigned to seats at specific tables
- Light snacks and tea are served at each table
- Each participant writes her name on a name tag
- Staff members, including marriage family therapists and group leaders, introduce themselves

## **Week Two — Understanding of Previous Relationship and Divorce**

### ***Session Two: My Life is Quite Complicated?***

The content goal of Session Two is to understand the range of emotional and relational experiences of writing separation and divorce.

The process goals of Session Two are to write their separation and divorce stories in a piece of paper without their name (the leader will collect the paper). The stories will be used for discussion within the reflection teams

The objectives of session are described as below.

The Interactive reflecting teams can be described as follows. The scenario is given to two main volunteer participants who have fully recovered from divorce. The volunteers are given the following scenario during the session. The participants’ divorce

stories are collected at the beginning of the session. The group leader selects stories from the participants and shares them with volunteers. Volunteers will role play and discuss their own thoughts and feelings. Volunteers will share their own divorce and separation experiences.

Share their own reflection by discussing with others.

- Participants break into small groups to discuss with their reflection teams.
- Participants share their feelings, thoughts, and experiences in a small group.
- After small-group reflection, participants debrief in a larger group.
- Each participant writes the process, feelings, and insights on a piece of paper.
- After small-group reflection, participants fill out survey questionnaires to help facilitators determine the outcomes of the session (see Appendix).

### **Week Three — Transition in the Relationship with God**

#### ***Session Three: My Father and Me?***

The content goal of Session Three is to understand the changing nature of their relationships with God and create the basis of a bilateral relationship with God.

The process goals of Session Three are described below.

- Observe the reflection team.
- Fill out survey questionnaire about their relationships with God and their sense of His scale.
- Understand bilateral relationships with God.
- Verbalize their own relationships with God, and listen to others doing the same.

- Verbalize their emotional pain, rejection, expectations, and healing by sharing in prayers together.

In this session, reflection team volunteers discuss various types of relationships with God and their views of God. They also talk about the grief and loss they experienced in their own relationships. The focus is on emotions such as loss, betrayal, trust, shame, and guilt, also including anything about balancing these feelings by expressing them to God.

Volunteer participants will share their reflections, feelings, and thoughts with other participants. Participants write on a piece of paper their feelings and thoughts. The participants share what they have written with God through individual prayers and also to one to two other people, in a comfortable setting. Participants are allowed to go outside in to pray in more natural settings.

The objectives of the session are described below.

- Pray about their feelings of vulnerability. Identify losses with the feelings they experience.
- Observe participants in reflecting teams speak about loss, change, and growth.
- Share their vulnerability and experiences with God in prayer.
- Surrender their pain and open themselves to the possibility of healing through prayer.

The methods and techniques are described below.

- Participants watch and learn from the reflection team. Participants write about loss and grief on a piece of paper.
- Participants discuss their loss and their ways of coping through silent prayer.

- Volunteers discuss and identify positive and negative coping skills.
- After group discussion, participants debrief in silent prayer.
- Participants discuss their loss with prayer.
- Participants write down what was helpful and not helpful.
- Participants share their emotional vulnerability with God.
- Participants acknowledge their loss and grief.
- Participants understand the process of grief.
- Participants learn how to reach out for support from God.
- Participants learn about their relationships with God.
- Participants use prayers to share their vulnerability with God.
- Participants reflect on their views of God and how the relationship may have changed.

The activities are described below.

- Observe the reflection team.
- Discuss in a small group setting.
- Write about their loss and grief during journal writing after group.
- Pray to God about their vulnerability and become open to healing.

## **Week Four — Developing a New Self-Identity**

### ***Session Four: Who am I?***

The content goals of Session Four are described below.

- Participants create stories about any changes they have noticed in how they view themselves.



- Participants share their sense of self-identity and relationship with God.
- Participants discuss their stories with other participants.
- Participants write their stories down in their journals.

The process goals of Session Four are described below.

- Participants share their reflections with others.
- Participants discuss their strengths.
- Participants discuss the emergence of a self-identity, possible differences in their individual progress (some participants may develop at a slower pace, but they should still feel they have a place in the group).

The activities are described below.

- Reflection Team: Participants observe reflection team.
- Small Group: Participants share their reflections in a small group at a table setting.
- Journal: Each participant writes about her new self-identity.
- Participants find a comfortable place outside of the facility and reflect through journal writing (maybe also letter writing, any kind of daily writing format). Suggested topics include:
  - What have they learned about their former sense of self and new one?
  - What does a new identity mean for them?
  - What have they learned from this process of shedding an older self for a newer one (e.g. molting)?
  - What are their discoveries through this process?
  - Have any new goals emerged regarding career, and relationships?

- Share these written observations with other participants and debrief in a large group.

## **Week Five — The Qualities of a Mutually Supportive Relationship**

### *Session Five: Let's Talk About That Man*

The content goals of Session Five are described below.

- Participants create relationship expectations of a new partner
- Participants discuss how their relationship with God changes their expectation (if there is any)
- Participants write about their relationship expectation in their journal

The process goals of Session Five are described below.

- Participants share their reflections with others
- Participants discuss the mutual relationship with partner (if the partner remains present in her life) and feelings towards that partner

The activities are described below.

- Reflection Team: Participants observe the reflection team
- Small Group: Participants share their reflection in a small group at a table setting
- Journal Entries: Write about expectations for a new partner
- Participants find a comfortable place outside of the facility (e.g., a natural setting such as a park, or some other quiet place).
- Participants write their reflections in journal writing (maybe also letter writing, any kind of daily writing format).

- Participants may also write down their prayers. Suggested topics may include:
  - What have they learned?
  - Is their relationship with their partner mutual?
  - What have they learned from this process?
  - What are their discoveries through this process?
  - Write down their goals regarding career, and relationships.
- Share these written observations with other participants and debrief in a large group.

### **Week Six — Community Fear or Community Support**

#### *Session Six: Do I Belong Here?*

The content goals of Session Six are described below.

- Developing community support.
- Participants understand differences between positive and negative forms of community support
- Participants determine if there is any fear of other people or the community during their transition from married to unmarried.
- Participants assess if they have developed any negative thinking toward community.

The process goals of Session Six are described below.

- Discuss what positive community support looks like.
- Discuss anxiety or fear of others and the community.

- Gain awareness about the ways in which they have changed their views towards others and their communities after divorce and/or separation.
- Check in with their sense of their social status within the community and what they now expect from others and the community.
- Participants write a letter or journal about their feelings, thoughts, and expectations.

The objectives of Session Six are described below.

- Observe, during the reflection team meeting, issues regarding the community's support and other community leaders' support for developing their coping skills.
- Participants share feelings and thoughts with one another.
- Discuss participants' relationships with other people and how these relationships with other people in their respective communities have changed.
- Discuss participants' positive behaviors in relation to others and their communities.
- Discuss participants' negative behaviors in relation to others and their communities.
- Discuss participants' fear of others and their communities, if there are any.
- Discuss participants' anxieties about others and their communities, if there are any.
- Discuss participants' expectations of others and their communities, if there are any.

Homework: Each participant will write down their reflections on this session in their journal.

The activities are described below.

- Reflection Team: Participants conduct observations within the reflecting teams.
- Small Group: Participants share their reflections in a small group at a table setting.
- Journal Entries: Write about community support and personal experiences with community.
- Participants find a comfortable place outside of the facility (e.g., a natural setting such as a park, or other quiet place). Participants write their reflections in journal writing (maybe letter writing, or any other form of daily writing). Participants may also write down their prayers.

## **Week Seven — Creating a Story**

### ***Session Seven: Let's Go Another Round!***

The content goals of Session Seven are described below.

- Find new understanding through experiencing life transitions.
- Participants use their own language to create a re-authored story out of the pain and suffering they have experienced (e.g. heroine vs. victim).
- Participants use their own language to create a story about their gains or insights they came to through pain, previous marriage, and the transition from marriage to divorce.

The process goals of Session Seven are described below.

- Participants share their feelings, thoughts, and anything else with the reflection team.
- Participants share what they notice from their time with the reflecting teams.
- Participants share their own gains or insights developed during their marital transitions since the program has started.
- Participants write the meanings they have discovered while they transitioned from married to unmarried in their journals.

The activities are described below.

- Reflection Team: Discussions about meaning derived from the participants' experience and their thoughts about separation, divorce, and transition.
- Small Group: Participants share their reflections in a small group at a table setting.
- Journal writing: What is their meaning in separation, or divorce and transition?
- Participants also find a comfortable place outside of the facility. Participants write their reflections in journal writing (maybe letter writing, or any other form of daily writing). Suggested topics include:
  - What have they learned?
  - What is the meaning of divorce and the new transition?
  - What have they learned from this session?

## **Week Eight—The New Life**

### ***Session Eight: Now What?***

The content goals of Session Eight are for participants to verbalize their progress and a new plan.

The process goals of Session Eight are described below.

- Participants share how they have changed as a result of the workshop.
- Participants discuss their perspectives about the group workshop from the beginning to the end.
- Participants listen to other group members' progressive journeys and the leader's own reflections about the members.

The activities are described below.

- Discuss and fill out exit-interview questionnaires (the question of the SSQ).
- In a final journal entry, answer the question: Discuss what it was like for participants to attend the New Life Program.

### **Summary**

The goal of this study is to provide a basis for a divorce recovery program for first-generation Korean-American women called *New Life*. Through qualitative interviews, this study examined the varied needs of separated and divorced women and developed a psycho-social-spiritual recovery program calibrated to meet those unique spiritual, social, and community needs. The needs assessment discusses how these women related to the various phases of divorce, how their relationship with God changed, and how they developed new self-identities. How these women navigated the process of separation varied according to their respective acculturation processes, who initiated

divorce, and their respective forms of spirituality. The influences of Confucianism and multicultural feminism (MF) in Korean- American literature reviews are discussed in order to provide a broader, socio-cultural understanding of separated and divorced Korean-American women. The results of in-depth qualitative research methods (interpretative phenomenology analysis) and needs assessments were motivated towards designing a strong, systematic support program for separated and divorced Korean-American women. In short, this is a program that has been tailored specifically to the needs and challenges of the newly separated or divorced Korean American Women, and is sensitive to their heritage and experience.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

Before concluding, I address some important limitations of the study and recommend some directions for future research. First, this study has been conducted in only southern California, and may not be representative of the entire country. As a result, the Christian separated and divorced Korean-American women's experiences that this study analyzed may be significantly different from those of non-religious or non-spiritual separated and divorced Korean-American women. Second, the findings are based on women's stories over the course of their separation, divorce, and post-divorce experiences, and like any phenomenological research, is reliant on their honesty and their ability to accurately recall their emotional states over a given time period. The local nature of this study is both a strength and a limitation; for it provides a program sensitive to the needs of Christian Southern Californian women, but not reflect issues from other US regions.

In order to draw more general conclusions about the relationship between



spirituality, separation, divorce, and post-divorce coping among Korean-American women, further research should be conducted using larger sample sizes from different socio-cultural contexts other than the Christian southern California context. It would also be interesting to design research comparing separated and divorced Korean-American women who consider spirituality as a resource vs. women who do not. It may also be worthwhile to use grounded theory for the analysis portion of the study. That way, coding and grounded theory analysis will be used to find new theories.

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **CONCLUSION**

To summarize, the needs assessment has developed the following recommendations for marriage family therapists as they work with separated and/or divorced Korean-American women. First, the findings emphasize the importance of the five themes discussed in the results chapter, culled from in-depth interpretative phenomenology analysis. A holistic understanding of separated and divorced Korean-American women's socio-cultural contexts enables the development of proper clinical treatment and intervention. In particular, social support from community as well as from family and friends are especially important for the recovery process. In the pilot program, separated and divorced women are encouraged to share their experiences with others to gain social and emotional support and counterbalance the negative attributions directed to divorced women within the Korean-American community. Second, the findings suggest that these women should be encouraged to create new support networks within their communities that validate their emotional experience of growth and change during the life transitions. Third, the study brings specific attention to the hostile community that disable many of these women from receiving positive social support. Fourth, the findings also suggest that for spiritually oriented divorced Korean-American women, major coping skills may come from developing a new relationship with God as well as the formation of a divorce-accepting social community. Because separation, divorce, and the post-divorce recovery process are likely to have long-term effects on individuals, it is important to understand that it takes a long time to heal. It is important, moreover, to compare and contrast separated, divorced Korean-American women who have a spiritual

focus with those who do not (although this is outside of the scope of the present study).

Finally, the findings also focus on the immigrant experiences these women go through and how these experiences affect their separation and divorce. These findings may be beneficial for not only Korean-American immigrants, but also immigrants from other parts of the world. Of course, these Korean-American immigrants' coping skills and their needs may be different than those of other immigrants. It is important to compare and contrast in order to find similarities and differences, with the goal, ultimately, of supporting other immigrants' particular needs. Overall, the pilot program I have designed seeks to address the major needs of the population the study has focused on through evidence-based, clinical treatment and intervention. This program, while providing some answers, also raises specific questions about this population, and how to build therapy plans.

The *New Life* program's strategies depend on key themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis of the research and needs assessment. These key themes are: a bilateral relationship with God, the development of new self-identity, the importance of a positive relational community, and a gradual shift from a more indirect approach to a more direct approach of receiving support. This study fills important gaps in research and clinical intervention approaches in current marriage and family therapy (MFT) practices by implementing a program especially for separated and divorced Korean-American women. The study also advocates for the human rights of separated and divorced Korean-American women's as they go through the various phases of transition out of a marriage. The program specifically supports Korean-American women's separation and divorce recovery and suggests clinical and research guidelines for other marriage family

therapists, healthcare providers, program developers, policy makers, and other community leaders who may be working with this population. The study and program seek to integrate spiritual, emotional and socio-cultural domains in order to develop a more holistic view of this high-needs community. Finally, the study and program also seek to bridge gaps between pastoral staff members (such as the pastor, church administrators, and other religious community leaders) and marriage family therapists to provide systematic care for separated and divorced Korean American women that is based on their reported needs and sensitive to their cultural characteristics.

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## APPENDIX A

### RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

#### **When contacting churches**

Hello, my name is Jua Kim; I am a marriage family therapist intern and a doctoral candidate at Loma Linda University. I am looking for volunteers to participate in a needs assessment project for divorce recovery. I am asking if your church's single women's ministry would be willing to participate in my project for my doctoral degree that will be supervised by a faculty member.

Brief background of the project: The project is about listening to women's stories about their divorce. After completing a brief survey, each woman will be asked if she would like to be interviewed. The interview will be conducted face to face, much like a conversation. She will not be paid to participate in this study. If she consents to an interview she will be asked to contact me at 213-925-5939 or [gracejuak@yahoo.com](mailto:gracejuak@yahoo.com).

## APPENDIX A-1

### RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

#### **Sample letter or bulletin folder insert**

You are invited to participate in a needs-assessment project on divorce recovery. If you have experienced divorce or are in the process of divorce, and are a Korean American woman from the age of 30 to 69, please let me know if you would like to participate in this study. After completing a brief survey, you will be asked if you would like to be interviewed. If you consent to an interview you will be asked to contact Jua Kim at 909-647-8153 or [gracejuak@yahoo.com](mailto:gracejuak@yahoo.com). I would be grateful for your participation.

## APPENDIX B

### PARTICIPANT SELECTION SCRIPT (TELEPHONE)

Hello, my name is Jua Kim. I am a doctoral student at Loma Linda University. May I speak to (name)?

I received your name from ... who thought you may be interested in participating in a research study on divorce recovery. I am looking for Christian Korean American women, first generation immigrants, divorced or are in the process of divorce, from the age of 30 to 69.

I am an independent project facilitator. Our team includes a professor and graduate students of Loma Linda University. If you are interested in helping us with this project I would like to meet with you and ask a few questions for 30-90 minutes about your experience with divorce. I would like to meet with you either in your church, counseling office, community center, or a place that is convenient for you. You will be asked to talk about your experiences of divorce, such as the reasons leading up to it. These are some examples of interview questions: "Can you tell me what your life was like before (in Korea), and how your life differs here?"; "Could you tell me about the circumstances of your divorce?"

I plan to interview 40 Korean American women, and after I have talked to all 40 women, I will develop a pilot program that addresses women's issues throughout various stages of divorce recovery. I hope that these interviews will help create guidelines for marriage and family therapists, and other professionals to develop more effective support programs for divorced Korean American women.

Would you be willing to meet with me and hear more about this study, and/or possibly refer someone who you think might participate in the study?

**[If Yes]** Please feel free to contact me at (909) 647-8153 or [gracejuak@yahoo.com](mailto:gracejuak@yahoo.com).

**[IF NO]** Thank you for your time. I appreciate you taking the time to hear about our study. If you decide later that you want to participate, please contact me at (909) 647-8153 or [gracejuak@yahoo.com](mailto:gracejuak@yahoo.com).

## APPENDIX C

### PARTICIPANT SELECTION SCRIPT (LETTER/OR EMAIL)

Dear (name of participant):

Thank you for your interest in our independent study on divorce recovery. I am Jua Kim, a doctoral student at Loma Linda University, and the independent project facilitator. Our team includes a professor and graduate students of Loma Linda University. I plan to interview 40 Korean American women about their experiences of divorce. I hope that these interviews will help create guidelines for marriage and family therapists, and other professionals to develop more effective support programs for divorced Korean American women.

Although I am aware that there are other experiences that do not fit our definition of divorce, I am limiting the study to people whose experience of divorce fit a certain criteria. I am looking for participants who fit the following description:

(1) You have experienced divorce or are in the process of divorce, (2) you are an adult Korean American woman, (3) you were born in Korea and came to U.S., (4) you are willing to discuss your own experience of divorce, (5) you have not remarried, (6) you are willing to give informed consent to participate, (7) you are between 30-69 years old, (8) you do not have severe depression, or anxiety, or psychiatric psychosomatic symptoms.

Does this describe you? If so, would you like to participate by giving me an interview on your experience with divorce? The interview will take about 30-90 minutes and can take place in your church, counseling office, community, or a place that is convenient for you. You will be asked to talk about your experiences of divorce, such as the reasons leading up to it. These are some examples of interview questions: "Can you tell me what your life was like before (in Korea), and how your life differs here?"; "Could you tell me about the circumstances of your divorce?"

If you are interested in learning more about this study, please contact me at 909-647-8153 or [gracejuak@yahoo.com](mailto:gracejuak@yahoo.com).

APPENDIX D

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN PROJECT



LOMA LINDA UNIVERSITY  
ADVENTIST HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

School of Behavioral Health

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN PROJECT

**Title:** Needs assessment of divorced Korean American women  
**SPONSOR:** None  
**PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:** Douglas Huenergardt, PhD.  
909-558-4547 ext. 47006

**PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES**

The purpose of the study is to assess the needs of immigrant Christian Korean American women as they transition from married to unmarried status. This needs assessment will be used to develop a pilot program that addresses Korean American women's issues throughout the various stages of divorce recovery. This study is led by Dr. Douglas Huenergardt, a professor, and Jua Kim, a doctoral candidate, at Loma Linda University School of Behavioral Health, Department of Counseling and Family Sciences. The study is being carried out by Ms. Kim to fulfill one of her requirements for a doctoral degree in Marital and Family Therapy.

**WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?**

We hope that the findings in this study will help create guidelines for marriage and family therapists, and others who seek to develop more effective support programs and policies for divorced Korean American women.

**HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

Approximately 40 Southern California women will participate in this study.

**HOW WILL I BE INVOLVED?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your participation will involve an individual interview lasting about 30-90 minutes. You may be contacted later by telephone if we have any additional questions.

**Interview Procedures:**

Interviews will take place in quiet and safe settings such as churches or counseling offices. The interview will be conducted face to face, much like a conversation. I will ask that you sign a consent form, which will give me permission to record our interview. After the interview, I will transcribe our recorded conversation for further study.

You will be asked to provide background information about yourself, such as your level of education, your job, your current family situation, and so on. You will also be asked to talk about your experiences of divorce, such as the reasons leading up to it. Here are some examples of interview questions: “Can you tell me what your life was like before (in Korea), and how your life differs here?”; “Could you tell me about the circumstances of your divorce?”; “Could you tell me how you coped with divorce?”

**WILL THERE BE ANY BENEFIT TO ME OR OTHERS?**

While participation in this study may be of no direct personal benefit to you, the information and knowledge learned from this study will benefit other Korean American women as they go through separation and divorce. The information that you provide will help us develop activities that support divorce recovery for Korean American women.

**WHAT ARE THE REASONABLY FORESEEABLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS I MIGHT HAVE?****Legal Risks**

As a mandated reporter, I am obligated to report thoughts of hurting yourself or someone else, child abuse, or elder abuse.

**Risk**

The potential risk posed to you, by participating in this study, is minimal. Some individuals may find that some questions in the interview make them feel uncomfortable. If you do not wish to answer a question, we can skip it. If you, at any time during the interview, do not wish to participate any further, we can stop the interview.

**Threats to Privacy**

The primary risk of a signed consent would be breach of confidentiality. All information you share is confidential, which means all identifying information about you, such as your name, will be removed from the interview transcripts. The digital recorder’s data and the transcript, as well as any other information provided by you, will be kept under lock and key in a secure cabinet.

**WHAT COSTS ARE INVOLVED?**

There is no cost to you for participating in the study.

**WILL I BE PAID TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY**

You will not be paid to participate in this study.

**WHO DO I CALL IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?**

If you have any questions about this study you can contact the study researchers. Please feel free to contact Jua Kim, or Dr. Douglas Huenergardt, by phone at (213) 925-5939 or (909) 558-4547 ext. 47006 or by email at gkim1@llu.edu or dhunergardt@llu.edu.

If you wish to contact an impartial third party not associated with this study regarding any questions about your rights or to report a complaint you may have about the study, you may contact the Office of Patient Relations, Loma Linda University Medical Center, Loma Linda, CA 92354, phone (909) 558-4647, e-mail patientrelations@llu.edu for information and assistance.

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**Informed Consent statement**

I have read the contents of the consent form and have listened to the verbal explanation given by the investigator. I have been given a copy of this consent form to keep. My questions concerning this study have been answered to my satisfaction. Signing this consent document does not waive my rights nor does it release the investigators, institutions, or sponsors from their responsibilities. I may call Jua Kim (doctoral candidate) at 1-213-925-5939 or Dr. Douglas Huenergardt, faculty project supervisor at 1-909-558-4547, ex 47006 if I have additional questions or concerns.

*I hereby give voluntary consent to participate in this study. I understand I will be given a copy of this consent form after signing it.*

---

Participant’s Signature for Consent

---

Printed Name of Participant

---

Date

APPENDIX E

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

I will read these questions to participants.

Please answer the following questions:

1. Age.....
2. Country of birth.....
  - 2 A. If other than Korea, how long have you been in the US?.....years
  - 2 B. How fluently do you speak English?
    1. Not at all
    2. Some
    3. Average
    4. Good
    5. Fluent
  - 2 C. How often do you speak English?
    1. All the time
    2. Very often
    3. Often
    4. Rarely
    5. Never
  - 2 D. How often do you eat Korean food at home?
    1. All the time.
    2. Very often
    3. Often
    4. Rarely
    5. Never
  - 2 E. How would you identify your former spouse's Race/ethnicity?  
.....Korean .....Korean American .....Caucasian  
.....Black/African American .....Hispanic/Latino American  
.....Asian American



3. Religious organization/denomination that you most closely identify with.....
4. Current place of work.....
5. Marital Status.....
  - 5 A. If you are divorced, how long ago was the divorce? .....years as of today.
  - 5 B. Date of divorce .....
  - 5 C. Age of divorce .....
  - 5 D. Number of divorces? ..... First Divorce..... Second Divorce..... Other.....
6. Years in current relationship.....
7. Number of children.....
  - 7 A. biological children.....
  - 7 B. step-children.....
8. Number of children living at home .....
9. How important is it for you to have a relationship with a higher being or God?
  1. Not important
  2. Somewhat not important
  3. Mixed feeling
  4. Somewhat important
  5. Very important
  6. Extremely important
10. How often do you pray or participate in religious services?
  1. None
  2. Once a day
  3. Once a week
  4. Once a month
  5. Other:.....
11. Number of family (sibling or parents) living in the U.S.....
12. Number of family (sibling or parents) living in Korea.....

13. Number of family (sibling or parents) living in other countries.....

14. Who initiated the divorce?

1. Self
2. Husband
3. Mutual

15. How often do you use substances, such as drinking, cigarettes and/or drugs?

1. drinking ( \_\_\_\_\_ per a day, \_\_\_\_\_ per a week, \_\_\_\_\_ per month)
2. smoking.....
3. drugs .....
4. others.....
5. none .....

16. May I contact you about the questions about our interview?

(In this kind of study, it is common for interviewer to contact an interviewee to ensure clarity.)

1. Yes .....

**[If Yes]** You will be contacted by telephone clarify your exact meaning of some answers.

2. No.....

**[If No]** Thank you for your time. I appreciate you taking the time to hear about our study. If you decide later that you want to participate, please contact me. I will be able to tell you how you can reach us.

## APPENDIX F

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### *Introduction and Background Questions*

##### **Opening Questions**

1. “I noticed on your questionnaire, you were divorced in Korea (or in the United States). Can you tell me what was your life like before (in Korea) and how does that differ from your life here?
  - *Potential probes include inquiring about the participant’s relationship, divorce and acculturation. It also compares what they think benefits or disadvantages of this setting are.*

##### **Follow-up Questions**

##### **Circumstances (infidelity, decision-making, initiator)**

2. “Could you tell me about your circumstances of your divorce? What happened? How you are impacted by that?”
  - *Potential probes include inquiring about the decision-making process and decision-making parties involved in the divorce.*
  - *Potential probes “What part did infidelity play in your divorce?”*
  - *Potential probes: “Were you or your husband ever concerned about physical safety before, during, and after your divorce?”*

##### **Co-parenting, children, family, extended family, friends and social network:**

3. “Divorce often impacts a lot of people. Can you tell what kind of impacts might happen to both your children, and your family, including your extended family and friends? Can you tell me about that?”

- *Potential probes include discussion of co-parenting and her identity within socio-cultural networks of family, friends, and extended family members.*
- *Potential probes include inquiring about the impact of divorce on the family, children relationship.*

**Finance, emotional and physical health:**

4. “Divorce typically impacts life in many ways. Can you tell me if divorce has impacted you financially, emotionally, or in your health?”

- *Potential probes include inquiring how maintaining financial security can be related to divorce recovery, her health-related problems, depression, or hwa-byung (culture bound syndrome).*
- *Potential probes: “Have you experienced depression?”*
- *Potential probes: “Have you experienced hwa-byung (culture bound syndrome)?”*
- *Potential probes: “How did you meet your emotional needs during this time? Was it effective?”*

**Coping:**

5. “In such situation as divorce, people find things are helpful to them and things that were not helpful to them. Can you tell me about things that helped you to cope better?

Things that you should not do?”

- *Potential probes include inquiring how or why the participants cope.*
- *Potential probes: “Are there any specific people, friends, or an institution that has been helpful to you?”*
- *Potential probes include inquiring how support from family, friends,*

*institution(s), or professionals varied over the various stages of divorce.*

**Worldview and Spirituality:**

6. Divorce often impacts the worldview. Can you tell me whether your divorce experience impacted who you are as a person, your view of the world, or your view of spirituality?”

- *Potential probe include discussing the participant’s sense of identity, the worldview, spirituality and how that affects her needs.*

**Intimacy (Attunement):**

7. “Was there anything that you were not able to share with your friends, family, or even God?”

- *Potential probes: “What might be holding you back from sharing certain things with God?” (i.e. guilt, shame?) (Intimacy Questions adapted from Zinke, 2012, p.103).*

**Phase of divorce:**

8. “Divorce has phases of time from the beginning to end. Whether there was a phase of time, how would you describe the phases of divorce you think you went through?”

- *Potential probes include inquiring about the different emotional feelings that have emerged over the various stages of divorce. Potential probes also include inquiring about the contexts in which the participant felt most free to talk about her feelings. As she went through these different stages, what did she need through out these times?*

**Post-Interview Questions:**

9. “What’s next for you? How do you see your future?”

10. “What advice do you have for other women, who have the same situation? What would you hope for other women?”
11. “Is there anything else that I didn't ask you about that you would like to share with us or discuss?”

A full and comprehensive interview guide can be found in Appendix G.

APPENDIX G  
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

I will begin the interview by greeting the participant and expressing my appreciation for her participation. During the introduction, I will pay special attention to the participant's non-verbal cues, language, comments and facial expressions.

I will assure the participant that the research team will do anything possible to make sure she is comfortable throughout the research experience. I will then address any concerns that the participant raises.

I will then invite the participant to have a seat and request that she relax. I will ask if the interview location is suitable and comfortable for the participant, and whether I, can further accommodate the participant.

After the participant has settled in, I will explain the significance of participant's contribution in the interview process and needs assessment. I will then provide the objective and the purpose of the study and how the researcher can support participant's interview and the research process. The participant will then know what to expect from the interview and from the researcher.

Then, I will explain the interview procedures, including preview, directing interview procedures, digital recording process, and note-taking process.

I will then ask if the participant is agreeable to the procedures, making sure to follow up on any verbal or non-verbal cue.

**Obtaining Informed Consent**

The participant will be given a copy of the Informed Consent Form (Appendix D).

After explaining and discussing the risks and benefits of participation, the participant can make a fully informed decision regarding her participation. I will also invite participant to interject with questions at any time.

After the participant has signed both copies of the Informed Consent Form, I will provide one copy to the participant for her own records. I will keep a researcher's copy in a locked box.

I will make it clear to the participant that I will not judge or stigmatize a participant's story, even those experiences that are perceived as negative. Rather, I will make it clear that all experiences and strategies are important and constitute as areas of interest to the researcher.

I will then gather foundational information about the participants and their experience of divorce, and their needs in the recovery process, described in Appendix E. Should the participant have any difficulty or skepticism in disclosing information, I will also let the participant know that while all information is important, she does not have to disclose anything she does not wish to talk about.

### **Conducting the Interview**

Consistent with ethnographic interviewing styles (Leigh, 1976), I will emphasize and make note of the participants' use of language, word choice, and expressions.

During the last part of the interview, I will express gratitude for their voluntary participation and for sharing their stories of needs and recovery.



## APPENDIX H

### SSQ6 (SOCIAL SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE)

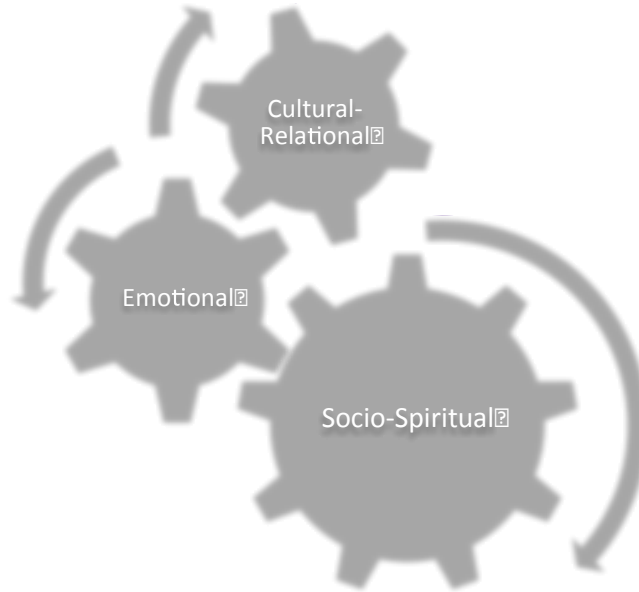
The six questions of the Social Support Questionnaire:

1. Whom can you really count on to be dependable when you need help?
2. Whom can you really count on to help you feel more relaxed when you are under pressure or tense?
3. Who accepts you totally, including both your worst and your best points?
4. Whom can you really count on to care about you, regardless of what is happening to you?
5. Whom can you really count on to help you feel better when you are feeling generally down-in-the-dumps?
6. Whom can you count on to console you when you are very upset?

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## APPENDIX I

Diagram 1. The New Life Program's Core Components of Design



*Diagram 1. The New Life Program's Core Components of Clinical Design*

APPENDIX J

Demographics/Frequency of Sample Women

Age	30-39 (1)	40-49 (12)	50-59 (5)	60-65 (2)
Marriage status	Divorced (16)	Separated (1)	Engaged (1)	Remarried (2)
Career	Unemployed (2) Pastors (2) Non-profit (1)	Sales-Finance Company (2) Theology Students (2)	Business owner (2) Graduate students (2)	Store clerk (1) Teacher (1) College Student (1)
Education	Beyond graduate and doctoral degree (4)	College graduate (10)	High School (6)	
Religion	Buddhist (1) Reformer Christian Alliance (2)	Presbyterian (2) Non-denominational (15)	Baptist (1)	Seventh-day Adventist (1)
Years in the US	1-9 years (1)	10-19 years (5)	20-29 years (2)	Over 30 years (11)
Age of immigration to the US	Average age (31.16)	17 (2)	20-29 (3)	30-39 (13); 40-49 (2)
English language proficiency	95-100% (6)	80-94% (5)	60-79% (3)	Less than 60 % (6)
Ethnicity of former spouse	Korean (15)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Generation Korean-American (2)	Caucasian (1)	Middle Eastern (1)
Number of divorce(s)	1 (16)	2 (3)	0 (1)- separation	
Date of separation	80's (1)	90's (2)	2000's (10)	2010's (5)
Years in marriage	1-2 years (4)	3-9 years (6)	10-15 years (8)	20 -25 years (2) 26-30 years (1)
Years in separation	0-6 months (7) Average years in separation: 4.9 years	1- 3 years (3) 4- years (1)	6-9 years (3)	10-14 years (3) 18 years (1)
Year divorce occurred	Within 0-5 years (4) 6-10 years ago (9)	11-15 years ago (2) 16-19 years ago (1)	20-25 years ago (2)	26-30 years ago (1)
Separation-Divorce initiator	Husband (9)	Mutual (6)	Self (5)	
Causes of divorce/separation	Infidelity of husband (10) Financial failure (7)	Domestic violence (6) Drug, alcohol or gamble addiction of husband (5)	Incompatibility (4)	Terminal illness of husband (1) Death of children (1)
Experience of Depression	20			
Experience of Hwa-byung*	19			
Relationship with God	Very important (100%)- (19)	Somewhat important (50%) -(1)		
Church attendance per a week	7 times (1)	3-4 times (4)	1-2 times (12)	None (1)
Prayer time	All the time (10)	Very often (9)	Often (1)	
Indict or direct counseling	Indirect (12)	Direct (8)		

\*Hwa-byung: Korean culture bound syndrome. \*\*Total sample women: 20