Korean Immigrant Women’s Experience of Marital Abuse and
Post-Divorce Adjustment
by
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(Under the Direction of Patricia Bell-Scott)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience and adjustment of Korean immigrant women who left abusive marriages. Grounded in a constructive paradigm, the qualitative methodology with semi-structured in-depth interview and grounded theory analysis was used. Five divorced Korean immigrant women participated in this study; they were between 35 and 50 years of age, have resided in the U.S. less than 10 years at the time of divorce, and left abusive marital relationships at least one year ago.

Korean immigrant women’s narratives revealed that they went through several stages in their journey from abused wives to self-reliant divorced women.

Stage I was characterized by a premature marriage. It was characterized by family and social pressures on marriage, early evidence of relational problems and abusive behaviors by the future husbands, and women’s lack of knowledge about abuse.
In stage II, a frightening pattern of physical, emotional, financial abuse and isolation emerged. Wives resorted to a number of coping strategies; praying to God, concealing the problem, and fighting back verbally and physically. While some wives recognized their husband’s behavior as abusive and wrong, religious teaching, cultural norms, and children discouraged them from considering divorce.

During stage III, Korean immigrant women experienced a turning point that was associated with a specific violent event. This turning point led women to adopt problem-focused strategies.

The post-divorce period, stage IV, was characterized initially by economic hardships, experience changes in family relations, and mixed reactions in the community. Nevertheless, women developed a new sense of self, a renewed connection to God, close relations with the children they raised, and a positive outlook on life. Many said that their willingness to participate in this study came from a desire to help other women who may have faced abuse.

Recommendations for future research and practice were also discussed in this study.

INDEX WORDS: Korean immigrant women, marital abuse, wife abuse, post-divorce adjustment, qualitative methodology, grounded theory analysis.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

“If a hen [a woman] crows, the household crumbles.”

“In order to get tender, women and dried fish must be beaten every three days.”

“If you [a man] let a woman go three days without a beating, she will turn into a fox.”

These old Korean sayings reflect one aspect of a strong patriarchal tradition in Korean culture that silently permits wife abuse, including wife beating. It is a culture whose norms emphasize collectivism and where women are expected to sacrifice themselves for family harmony and unity (Song, 1996). For this reason, it is not surprising that Korean women are at high risk of wife abuse (Kim & Sung, 2000; Rhee, 1997; and Song, 1996). It is also for this reason that I have chosen wife abuse as the primary issue for my study. Violence between family members is one of most serious social and health problems in Korean families (Kim, 1996; Warren & Lanning, 1992). Although this phenomenon has undoubtedly existed for centuries, only in the last thirty years has it received academic attention (Pati,
2002). I have chosen Korean immigrants as my study population and the focus of this study for two reasons: (a) my personal identification with this group; and (b) Korean immigrants’ unique and brief history in the United States.

In general, Koreans immigrate to the U.S. for economic and not political reasons. They have a strong Christian affiliation, have one dominant language tradition, and place exceptionally high value on children’s education and the development of family businesses (Kim, 1997; Min, 1998b). The number of Koreans in the U.S. has increased rapidly in the past few decades, from 38,711 in 1970, 289,885 in 1980, 568,387 in 1990, to 701,000 in 2000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).

Because Asian Americans, including Korean Americans, are perceived as a “model minority” with stable and problem-free families (Glenn, 1998), the issue of wife abuse in this population has not been addressed. Consistent with this perception, Koss et al. (1994) found that the reported incidence of wife abuse in Asian American families and the rates at which Asian immigrant women leave abusive male partners were low compared to those of other ethnic groups. In addition, among Asian Americans, the divorce rate, which is often used as a measure of marital instability, is about half of the divorce rate for non-Hispanic Whites (U. S. Bureau of the Census, 2000).
Despite the reported low incidence of wife abuse and divorce, Kim and Sung (2000), Rhee (1997) and Song (1996) found that actual risk of wife abuse among Korean immigrant families was high. 60% of the participants in Song’s (1996) study experienced physical abuse in their marriages. Kim and Sung (2000) found that 33% of the wives, whose husbands assumed a dominant role in their marriage, experienced at least one incidence of physical assault during the previous year. According to Rhee (1997) and Chang (2003), wife abuse was the primary reason for marital dissolution given by Korean immigrant women. Physical abuse in Korean immigrant families was commonly associated with a traditional cultural background (e.g., patriarchy, emphasis on family harmony) and particular institutional characteristics (e.g., social discrimination, economic hardship, lack of information about American culture, etc.) (Glenn, 1998).

Little attention has been given to the adjustment and resilience of Korean immigrant women who leave abusive marriages (hereafter I will refer to Korean immigrant women as KIW). They have been characterized as passive individuals who are strongly attached to the family, their ethnic group, and traditional culture and whose destiny is controlled by other people and the conditions surrounding them. Kim (1996) and Walker (2000) have asserted that a syndrome similar to learned helplessness, in
which individuals who have been repeatedly traumatized come to believe that their own actions cannot protect them from adversity (Walker, 2000), has led Korean women to accept partner abuse.

Women in abusive marriages vary in their resilience and vulnerability. Many researchers (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Cascardi & O’Leary, 1992; Perilla, Bakerman, & Norris, 1994) have found that abused women reported significantly lower self-esteem than non-abused women. However, the participants in Walker’s (2000) study of battered women rated themselves high on self-esteem. In a study comparing abused women to other women with serious relationship problems, Campbell (1989) found that both groups reported low self-esteem with no significant differences between the two groups. Campbell also suggested that low self-esteem was not a product of abuse per se, but a product of the problematic relationship in general.

In order to understand the adjustment of women who leave abusive marriages, those factors that promote women’s resilience in the face of adversity must be identified. Resilience is defined as “the ability to confront and resolve problems and the capacity to utilize personal or social resources to enhance limited possibilities” (Cochran, 1992, O’Leary, 1992, and Rutter, 1987, as cited in Parra & Guarnaccia, 1995, p. 433). Personal characteristics, affectionate ties, a strong support system of
family and friends, and an active search for external support systems sustain and reinforce resilience, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (O’Leary, 1992, as cited in Parra & Guarnaccia, 1995; Werner-Wilson, Zimmerman, & Whalen, 2000). Because of language barriers, isolation from the family of origin, and unfamiliarity with a new country, KIW who experience abuse are likely to be physically, psychologically, and socially vulnerable.

Why study wife abuse in Korean immigrant families? It is important to study wife abuse among Korean immigrant families for several reasons. First, Koreans are one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States, and their experience deserves academic attention. Second, there are few studies of Korean immigrant families that focus on women’s lives. Third, given that Korean immigrant history is relatively brief compared to other Asian immigrant groups in the U.S., it is likely that cultural and institutional factors play key roles in KIW’s decision to leave or remain in abusive marital relationships. Fourth, by examining women’s adjustment after leaving their abusive partner, this study moves beyond the general question of “why do they stay?” to “how do they survive?”

Although Korean women’s social status has improved dramatically, they still experience gender inequity in the family and society. It is hoped that this study contributes to
our understanding of KIW’s experience generally, as well as how marital abuse affects their lives. Since the focus of this study is the adjustment of KIW who leave abusive marital relationships, it is also hoped that the findings contribute to the development and expansion of intervention and prevention programs for women who leave abusive relationships.

Purpose of the study

Grounded in a constructive paradigm, this study explored the experience and adjustment of KIW who left abusive marriages. I used qualitative methodology with semi-structured interviews and grounded theory analysis. The study sample was comprised of five divorced KIW between 35 and 50 years of age, who have resided in the U.S. less than 10 years at the time of divorce, and who left abusive marital relationships at least one year ago.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following questions:

a. How do KIW describe their experience in abusive marital relationships?

b. What factors are associated with KIW’s decision to leave abusive marital relationships?

c. What factors are associated with KIW’s adjustment after leaving abusive marital relationships?
Chapter 2
Review of the Literature

In this review of the literature, the following relevant issues are examined: (a) the historical precedence, prevalence, nature and types of wife abuse; (b) Korean immigrant families; (c) Korean women’s lives; (d) wife abuse in Korean immigrant families; (e) women’s decision to leave abusive marriages; and (f) the consequences of wife abuse and adjustment.

Historical Precedence

For decades, wife abuse in the United States remained behind closed doors in silence. An old precedent about wife abuse is the rule of thumb--the doctrine that permitted husbands to punish their wives with sticks no thicker than their thumb (Blackman, 1989):

In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purpose, her master--the law giving him power to deprive her of liberty, and to administer chastisement (Declaration of Sentiments, 1848, as cited in Lents, 1999, p. 9).
In the middle of the nineteenth century, there was no federal legislation against husband’s violence against wives, but there was public debate about the rule of men and the legal status of women (Lents, 1999). Even after wife abuse, which was generally defined as wife battering, was outlawed by legislation, both the law and the state condoned violence within marriage (Davidson, 1977, as cited in Pati, 2002). Only in the 1970s did the U.S. justice system begin to view domestic violence as a crime, and only then was it labeled wife abuse and defined as a social problem. (Loseke, 1992; Summers & Hoffman, 2002).

The term, wife abuse, refers to the physically and emotionally violent and abusive behavior of husbands toward their wives (Bograd, 1988). This term is used interchangeably with domestic violence, family violence, intimate partner violence, violence against women, marital violence, spousal abuse, wife assault, wife battering, and, most recently, intimate partner abuse (Carlson & Choi, 2001). The lack of a universal definition of wife abuse has hampered our understanding of the nature of this problem (Barnes, 1998). How researchers define the term in their studies is important because their definitions shape our conceptualization of the problem, the scope of future inquiries, the perception of who is affected by it, and the determination of what should be done.
about it (Carlson & Choi, 2001). The nature and dynamics of abusive relationships are discussed in the following section.

**Prevalence of Wife Abuse**

The prevalence of wife abuse varies across studies according to researchers’ definitions, targeted populations, and sample size. In most national surveys, researchers have examined the incidence of physical and sexual violence among males and females who are married, separated, divorced, and non-married. These surveys have included current spouses, former spouses, current boy/girlfriends, and former boy/girlfriends.

In an analysis of 3,520 nationally representative survey samples, Straus and Gelles (1986) found that 28% of married couples reported at least one episode of physical violence over the course of their relationships. From this, Straus and Gelles speculated that approximately 1.5 to 2.0 million women were severely abused by their spouses.

According to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), which is based on data from U.S. residents age 12 and older, the overall rate of intimate partner violence against women was 10 victimizations per 1,000 in 1993, and 5.8 in 1999 (Rennison, 2001). Women separated from their husbands were victimized by intimates at rates higher than married, divorced, widowed, or never married women. Six months after their initial participation in the NCVS survey, 38% of the married women who
had experienced abusive relationships terminated their marriage through divorce and separation. 62% were still married. Because marital status may be related to a woman’s willingness or ability to disclose husband’s violence, we have to be cautious in interpreting intimate partner violence from the NCVS data. Married women may not view, may not wish to view, or may be unable to report the behavior of their husband as violent. In addition, women who were already institutionalized were absent from this survey (Rennison, 2001).

The National Violence against Women (NVAW) project surveyed eight thousand women and eight thousand men who were 18 years older in 1995 and 1996 by telephone (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Researchers found that 1.3% of the women reported physical assault during the previous 12 months. 22% were assaulted during their lifetime. Given that 48% of the estimated 4 million battered women in the U.S. did not report incidents of intimate abuse, the rates in NVAW are presumed to be underreported (National Crime Survey Report, 1994; as cited as Mills, 1998).

Ethnic differences in violence against women were founded in the NVAW survey. 12.8% of Asian and Pacific Islander women, 21.2% of Hispanic women, 21.3% of White women, 26.3% of African American, and 30.7% of American Indian and Alaska Natives reported having been physically assaulted by an intimate partner (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). The lower rates for Asian and Pacific
Islander women may be disguised by two cultural forces--the shame and disgrace associated with battering and the belief that marital failure is the wife’s fault (Eng, 1995).

**Nature of Abusive Relationships**

There is a longstanding debate among scholars regarding the cause and nature of intimate partner abuse. Feminist scholars contend that the cause of wife abuse is rooted in male domination fostered by a patriarchal system that is reinforced through existing economic, social, and political structures (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Schecter, 1982, as cited in Yick, 2001). The origin of the abuse is men’s need or desire to control their female partners. Once men establish a pattern of victimizing women, the violence escalates and can not be stopped without intervention (Carlson & Choi, 2001).

Scholars who support the family violence perspective argue that family violence can be initiated by any family member, and is not always motivated by the desire to control. Murray Straus and Richard Gelles (1979; 1990) assert that violence is normative in the family, that the family is, perhaps, the most violent social institution, and that family violence is statistically frequent and culturally and socially endorsed. According to the family violence perspective, socioeconomic status, minority status, and family structure are associated with intimate partner abuse (Salari & Baldwin, 2002). Family
members who are threatened by a lack of resources, difficult working conditions, financial insecurity, or discrimination due to minority status often experience stress and discord in the response to the unbalanced distribution of resources. This status inconsistency can threaten men’s patriarchal authority and their belief system. Feelings of inequity, stress and frustration may escalate, especially when they feel inferior to female partners. Under these circumstances, men may use violence to compensate for their lack of power over family members (Kurz, 1993; Yick, 2001).

Johnson (1995) has attempted to resolve the debate between those holding the family violence and feminist perspectives, by pointing out that family violence researchers and feminist researchers have studied different populations. This difference in populations has led to different conclusions about gender and power. Family violence researchers, who typically used large national data sets, have found gender-symmetric (reciprocal) physical violence to be less frequent and less severe than feminist researchers’ findings. By contrast, feminist scholars, who have relied upon data from clinical populations in hospitals, police logs, and safe houses, have found that batterers used violent as well as nonviolent tactics to control their partners (Leone et al., 2004).
Because of the difference in samples and methods, Johnson (1995) argued that family violence and feminist scholars have examined two different phenomena -- intimate terrorism and situational couple violence (Leone, et al., 2004). Intimate terrorism is the terroristic control of wives by their husbands, and it involves the systematic use of not only physical violence but also economic subordination, threats, isolation and other control tactics. Situational couple violence is the product of a violence prone culture and the privatized setting of households (Johnson, 1995). The central difference between intimate terrorism and situational couple violence lies in:

...the motivation underlying the physical violence, rather than severity or frequency. One way to determine an individual’s motivation to use physical violence in an intimate relationship is to examine its context, specifically the broad pattern of nonviolent controlling behaviors within which the violence is exerted (Leone et al., 2004, p. 473, emphasis added in Italics).

In other words, intimate terrorism is connected to a pattern of violent and nonviolent behaviors and motivated by a need or desire to control. It is likely to escalate over time, is less likely to be mutual, and is more likely to result in serious injury (Johnson & Ferraro, 2003). Situational couple violence
occurs in the context of a specific argument where one or both of the partners lash out physically at the other. Since motivation to control is not involved, situational couple violence is not likely to escalate over time, is not likely to result in severe violence, and is more likely to be mutual (Johnson & Ferraro, 2003).

Types of Wife Abuse

Serious study of wife abuse began in the 1970’s, and initially, researchers focused on physical abuse in married and cohabiting couples (Morse, 2003). Physical violence is defined as throwing an object, pushing, shoving or slapping, punching, choking, beating, burning, cutting, and other acts of physical aggression. Sexual abuse is defined as the act of forcing someone to have sex against their will or to have sex with another person while the perpetrator watched (Carlson & Chio, 2001). Over time, scholars learned that physical and sexual abuse were not the only type of abuse women experienced. They found that non-physical abuse, specifically emotional/psychological abuse, economic coercion, or isolation, occurred simultaneously with physical abuse.

Physical abuse is visible and may leave scars on the body. Emotional abuse is invisible, but it can result in long lasting psychological scars and eventually destroy women’s self-esteem. Even in situations where emotional abuse exists without any
physical violence, the damage to women’s well-being has been found to be comparable to that of physical abuse (Ali & Toner, 2001). Emotional abuse includes restricting freedom, threats of physical harm, threats to do harm to children, humiliation, fostering dependence, psychological manipulation, and financial abuse (Ali & Toner, 2001).

Kornblit (1994) has distinguished between abuse and violence;

*Abuse* refers to actions which are harmful physically and mentally for the victim, committed or resulting from omission, carried out intentionally or not. *Violence*, in a limited sense, refers to physical aggression (Kornblit, 1994, as cited in Loue, 2001, p. 1).

In other words, the term “violence” implies a narrower range of behavior than the term “abuse.”

In this study, both physical and emotional abuse are considered. In this sense, I am following Carlson and Choi’s (2001) definition of intimate partner abuse, “... as a pattern of behavior involving the threat or use of physical or sexual violence or emotional or psychological abuse perpetrated by an intimate partner with the potential to cause injury, harm, or death” (p. 688). In this study, wife abuse is defined as “a pattern of behavior involving threat or use of physical/sexual
violence or emotional/psychological abuse perpetrated by a husband with the potential to cause physical and emotional harm and injury."

Korean Immigrant Families

In this section, the brief history of Korean immigration and the unique characteristics of Korean families in the U. S. are reviewed with the hope of providing a context for understanding the experiences of KIW.

Migration History

There have been three waves of Korean immigration to the U.S. The first wave consisted of approximately 7,200 male laborers who migrated to Hawaii to work on plantations from 1903 to 1905, and 1,100 picture brides who joined them after 1910, to find economic and educational opportunities. Students, intellectuals, and political exiles were also among this first-wave of immigrants (Kim, 1997; Tran & Jardins, 2000). Following the Korean War, a second wave of Koreans came to the U.S. from 1951 to 1964. They were Korean wives of U. S. servicemen, war orphans, and students. The third wave of Korean immigration occurred after the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which eliminated the restrictive quota system established in 1924 (Ryu & Vann, 1992). Since 1968, the U.S. government has allowed 20,000 to 30,000 Koreans to immigrate every year (Min, 1998a; Tran & Jardins, 2000).
Compared to the earlier waves of Korean immigrants, the third-wave was highly educated and came to U.S. primarily as family units (Yamamoto, Rhee, & Chang, 1994). Their main motive was to improve economic status and to provide children with better educational opportunities, particularly college (Min, 1998a). Given that South Korea has already achieved economic success, children’s education may be a more important motive for immigration than economic reasons (Min, 1998a). Third-wave Korean immigrants represent the largest segment of the current Korean American community in the U.S. They have built a culture that distinguishes them from other ethnic groups.

The Uniqueness of Korean Immigrant Families

In this section, the regional distribution, language, religious affiliation, and occupational status of Korean American families are discussed. Since these characteristics are representative of first-, second-, and third-generation Korean-Americans, I will use the term Korean immigrants and Korean-Americans interchangeably.

As for regional distribution, 44% of the Koreans in the U.S. reside in the west, and about 33% in California (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993). Koreatown in Los Angeles is a unique geographical and cultural landmark of the Korean community in the U.S. It is an area where nearly 3,500 Korean-owned businesses are denoted by Korean-language signs (Min, 1998a).
Whereas 81% of the Japanese immigrants and 53% of the Chinese immigrants live in the western U.S., Koreans are more geographically dispersed (Ryu & Vann, 1992). 23% reside in the eastern region, with 12% and 5% residing in Queens, New York, and New Jersey, respectively. Koreans have settled in large metropolitan areas, such as New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles or Washington D.C. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993).

Koreans speak one language that varies little by region. Thus, there are no communication barriers among Koreans. This single language makes Korean immigrants a homogeneous group that is more cohesive than any other Asian ethnic group. Korean immigrants depend strongly upon the ethnic media (e.g., ethnic daily newspapers, television, radio programs) for information about the U.S., the homeland and entertainment. While this strengthens ethnic ties within the Korean American community and to the home country, it hinders Korean immigrants’ assimilation into American society (Min, 1998a).

Approximately 75% of Korean immigrants are affiliated with Korean Christian churches, although only 25% of the population in South Korea is Christian (Kim, 1997). Besides religious functions, Korean churches provide opportunities for fellowship and ethnic networking. In church meetings, Korean immigrants share information about the U.S. system, and celebrate Korean traditional holidays by sharing traditional foods and wearing
traditional clothing. Churches also run Korean language school for second-generation Korean immigrants.

Even though Koreans congregate in metropolitan areas, they often feel isolated by the loss of extended kin. Korean ethnic churches serve the role of extended family, by providing social and psychological support (Kim, 1997). Just as women in South Korea are expected to serve extended family members in harmonious ways and to remain silent, women in Korean ethnic churches are expected to carry traditional women’s role. KIW are expected to maintain harmony and not to reveal personal or marital problems in the church setting. The church is a surrogate for extended family.

Korean immigrants have made a unique economic adaptation in the U.S. They are highly concentrated in small family businesses. These businesses are limited mainly to Korean grocery markets, restaurants, liquor and dry cleaning services, and retail sales of Asian-imported manufactured goods (Min, 1998a; Rhee, 1997). These businesses are run by family members, usually husbands and wives, and fellow Koreans, who speak the Korean language and observe Korean customs. This context strengthens ethnic ties and ethnic solidarity. It does not, however, promote Korean immigrants’ contact with mainstream culture in the U.S. and this sometimes causes conflict in low-income minority neighborhoods (Min, 1998a). Women who work in Korean family business are
expected to adhere to traditional roles in and outside of household. The experience of KIW in family small businesses is discussed in the following section.

*Korean Women’s Lives*

**Traditional Korean Values and Women’s Lives**

Chinese Confucian cultural tradition has had a profound influence on Korean society (Min, 1998c). The traditional family in East Asia was patriarchal. Roles were clearly defined, with males, particularly the father and oldest son, having the dominant roles. Females, relegated to a subordinate position, were expected to please and obey their fathers and, if married, were subordinated to not only their husbands but also their husbands’ parents (De Vos, 1984; Hsu, 1967; Kitano, 1985, as cited in Wong, 1998). Filial piety, respect, and obedience to parents and ancestors, was highly emphasized. Respect was paid by persons of lower rank to those of higher rank, from children to parents, and from wife to husband (Wagatsuma, 1977, as cited in Kitano & Kitano, 1998). According to this traditional culture, a wife had to obey three people: her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and her son after her husband died (Eshleman, 2000).

Within this cultural context, Korean women have been socialized to be dependent and subservient to their spouses, and to see their sole purpose in life as caretaker for their spouse,
children and parents-in-law. Harmony and unity in the home were to be maintained at all costs. Women were expected to make concessions and sacrifices (Yu, 1993). When women failed to carry their duties well (e.g., did not serve parents-in-law satisfactorily, did not produce children, were lecherous or jealous, had an incurable disease, talked too much, or stole), they could be divorced (Song, 1996). Under no circumstance, however, could women initiate divorce (Song, 1991). Divorce, which was equated literally with “being sent home by one’s husband,” was the ultimate disgrace for a woman, as well as for her family (Yu, 1993). Women who failed in marriage were permanently deprived of the only legitimate role through which they could participate in the society. Given this cultural standpoint, Korean women had no alternative but to endure and suffer abuse.

Korean Immigrant Women’s Lives

Korean immigrants bring traditional attitudes to their new homeland because they are a homogeneous group with a high level of ethnic attachment (Min, 1998c). At the same time, 70% of Korean American families in a study by Kim and Sung (2000) faced occupational and economic stress that was positively associated with language barriers, unfamiliarity with the culture, and social discrimination. Many Korean immigrants who come to the U.S. with relatively high socioeconomic status experience
downward mobility initially (Kim & Sung, 2000). Given the male-dominated culture from which they come, Korean immigrant men often feel insecure and threatened when their deficiency in English and unfamiliarity with the American culture are exposed. They become defensive and resistant to change and adaptation.

The generic stress of adjustment to American society makes intimate relationships difficult for most immigrants. Changing gender roles is a major cause of marital discord in Korean immigrant families (Nah, 1993). Wives who need to work outside of the home to increase their family income find jobs more quickly than their husbands (Min, 1998b), largely because they are more willing than husbands to take jobs beneath their educational status. Their employment makes them independent, which is inconsistent with traditional Korean values (Kim, 1996).

Theoretically Korean immigrant wives’ employment increases her marital power; however, this power depends on the cultural context of marital relations (Min, 1998c). Given that there is a tendency for Korean immigrants to concentrate in small family businesses, KIW who work in these businesses are disadvantaged in power and status, as they are usually unpaid workers irrespective of their contribution to the family income (Min, 1998b).

Despite the change in Korean immigrant wives’ economic roles, husbands are unlikely to change their traditional gender
role attitudes. Korean immigrant husbands have reported consistent fears of wives’ challenging their male dominance in families (Kim, 1996). According to Lim (1997), husbands whose wives leave full-time homemaking to join the labor force worry that their wives may bargain for new marital relations based on their newly derived earning power.

Wives’ employment and husbands’ traditional gender role expectations result in tremendous overwork for KIW. The majority of Korean immigrant wives who work for pay or in the family business continue to do most of the housework and provide care for spouses, children, and extended family (Kim & Kim, 1995; Min, 1998 b). Korean immigrant wives’ physical burnout, due to overwork and to adjustment problems in the labor force and the new western culture put tremendous strain on the marital relations.

**Wife Abuse in Korean Immigrant Families**

*Traditional Patriarchal Cultural Values*

Scholars who have examined wife abuse in cultural perspective view patriarchy as a major cause of violence within a family, especially husband to wife violence (Kim & Sung, 2000). Feminist theorists assert that patriarchal ideology buttresses much of a social structure that creates and maintains male domination over women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Schechter, 1982, as cited in Yick, 2000). Song (1996) reported that battered
Korean American women stayed because they had no other choice, or because of they are in unavoidable circumstances. Traditional values and the stigma associated with divorce also played an important role in KIW’s decision to stay in an abusive marital relationship.

“Saving face” is a strong cultural value, and abused KIW feel an obligation not to hurt the reputation of their family. They lack autonomy; they are dependent; they lack survival skills; and they feel incapable of striking out by themselves. Over a period of time, a syndrome similar to learned helplessness develops, and women give up trying to leave or change the situation (Kim, 1996).

Cultural and Marital Conflict in the U.S.

Many immigrants face language barriers, lack social support systems, have inadequate employment, and experience prejudice and discrimination. The distress that these conditions create increases the risk of family conflict, including domestic violence (Sluzki, 1979, as cited in Yick, 2000). Kim and Sung (2000) found that 70% of the Korean American families in their sample experienced occupational and economic stress as a result of language barriers and social discrimination.

Many Korean immigrants who come to the United States have a relatively high socioeconomic status. Upon arrival, however, they experience downward mobility (Kim & Sung, 2000). Wife
battering most commonly occurs in households in which husbands have difficulty adjusting to the new environment. These husbands experience high levels of stress associated with the discrepancy in their employment statuses before and after immigration (Rhee, 1997; Song, 1996). Korean women reported that the frequency and level of violent episodes escalated after immigration to America (Kim, 1996).

Nah (1993) found that Korean American men who battered their wives complained that the domestic violence laws in America were unfair. These men believed that domestic violence should be dealt with only by the family, and that government agencies have no business interfering in what they see as a private affair. In addition, Korean society informally sanctions wife abuse as just treatment for women’s wrongdoing. For this reason, it is not surprising that few community members are willing to help Korean women whose spouses mistreat them (Song, 1996). Yoshioka et al. (2001) examined attitudes toward marital violence among Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Cambodian adults living in the United States. Although Chinese and Korean adults were less likely than Vietnamese and Cambodian adults to endorse attitudes supporting male privilege and the use of violence, Koreans, especially males and the elderly, regarded domestic violence as a private matter.
Obligation to the children is another reason that women stay in abusive marital relationships. Many abused Asian women reported that they must tolerate the abuse “for the sake of my children” (Bauer et al., 2000). Because children’s education and social mobility are the primary motivation for many immigrants, children’s social and psychological well-being comes first. In addition, mothers feel an obligation to stay in the marriage until the children are married. This may be linked to a social bias against children of divorced parents. These children are seen as undesirable partners by other Korean Americans (Kim, 1996; Song, 1996).

There is general agreement among scholars that violent acts within families, such as assaults and fatal accidents, frequently involve heavy drinking (Kail & Cavanagh, 2004). Culturally, Asians are tolerant and permissive toward male drinking, while females seldom drink. According to Rhee (1995), alcohol-related battering is one of the most significant correlates of separation and divorce among Korean immigrant families. Husbands with drinking problems are likely to abuse their wives more frequently and seriously than those who have no problems with alcohol (Rhee, 1997; Song, 1996).

**Lack of Social Support**

Social support is defined as those contacts who provide emotional and instrumental support while enhancing self-esteem
(Cobb, 1976, as cited in McKenry & Price, 2000) and who promote recovery from stress or crises (McKenry & Price, 2000). Social support is vital to women’s re-discovery of themselves. Women with strong social support are more likely to believe that they have control over their lives. When stress levels are high, social support assumes major importance in enhancing divorced women’s adjustment (Campbell et al., 1995; Mc Kelvey & McKenry, 2000; Propst et al., 1986; Thabes, 1997).

Isolation is an important factor in marital abuse among Asian immigrant families. For many women, isolation was one of the most painful and disempowering aspects of marital abuse in a foreign country. More than half of the Korean American women whom Kim (1996) interviewed were isolated from their family-of-origin and their friends, due to restrictions imposed on them by their husbands. The isolation stems from women’s fear of their legal status, their economic dependency, lack of proficiency in English, restricted mobility, and the lack of information about viable alternative choices. Isolation tactics are deliberately used by the husbands to increase power and control over the wife.

It is not easy for KIW who experience partner abuse to seek outside help actively. Song (1996) found that the most common coping strategies battered KIW used were to assume that time will solve the problem (42%); to keep the problem in the family (35%); to pray (27%); to consult friends and relatives (12%);
and to seek professional help (5%). Rarely did battered KIW use formal support services; 70% of the participants in Song’s study (1996) were unaware that such services existed.

**Leaving Abusive Relationships**

Just as women leave abusive relationships for a variety reasons, women choose to stay in abusive relationships for several reasons. Women who stay may go through a decision-making process weighing pros and cons in the context of a multidimensional relationship (Pfouts, 1979; Schechter, 1982; as cited in Peled, Eisikovits, Enosh, & Winstok, 2000). Thus, careful interpretation is needed so as not to view all women who stay with an abusive partner as the same—that is socially and psychologically victimized to the point of helplessness (Peled et al., 2000). Given that the most effective way to end abuse is to terminate abusive relationships, only women who leave the abusive partner are discussed in this section.

Four models are frequently used to explain the abused wife’s decisions to terminate the marital relationships.

The **psychological entrapment model** focuses on the individual’s investment in a situation in which the probability of achieving the goal and the availability of resources to reach the goal are weighed. Thus, the more the individual invests, the harder it is to give up the goal. In other words, the more time and effort an abused woman invests, the harder it will be for
her to leave the relationship. Abused wives may be psychologically entrapped to continue investing rather than to leave abusive relationships (Haj-Yahia & Eldar-Avidan, 2001). Despite the appeal of this perspective, it provides an incomplete understanding of abused women’s lives within context (Choice & Lamke, 1997), and it blames women for their continued investment in the relationships (Haj-Yahia & Eldar-Avidan, 2001).

According to the learned helplessness model, women quit trying to cope with partner abuse because of the failure of their efforts or their disbelief that the relationship can be saved (Haj-Yahia & Eldar-Avidan, 2001). Although this model considers the difficulties abused women face, it may not represent the full scope of abused women’s decision-making process (Choice & Lamke, 1997). Empirically and practically some abused women actively respond and cope with abusive relationships, and still decide to leave abusive partners.

The investment model focuses on the question, “Will I be better off?” by considering the relative costs and benefits of abused women’s decision to stay or leave. Women weigh relationship satisfaction against the quality of alternatives, and the resources she has invested (Choice & Lamke, 1997; Haj-Yahia & Eldar-Avidan, 2001). Burstow (1992) criticized this model by suggesting that abused women may not have either free or ideal options to choose from. Burstow (1992) asserted that
abused women need outside professional help to assess and reassess their situation.

The transtheoretical model (also called the stage of change or model of change process), developed by Prochaska and DiClemente (1982, 1986), conceptualizes the behavior change process as five stages: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance (as cited in Burke et al., 2001). In the pre-contemplation stage, women do not recognize the abuse as a problem. They may believe that the husband abuses because he cares and the women are not interested in change. In the contemplation stage, a critical event causes the women to examine their relationship. This critical event is a turning point (Few & Bell-Scott, 2002). The women begin to recognize abuse as a problem. They weigh the costs and benefits of change. In the preparation stage, women develop the intention and a plan to leave, such as getting a job or looking for a place to live with their children. In the action stage, the women take action to end the abuse. Along the way in the action stage, women use various ways of disengaging (Landenburger, 1998), such as spending longer periods away from home, emotionally withdrawing, disclosing their husbands’ abusive behavior to others, and reporting the abuse to the police. In the maintenance stage, which is the final stage, women take steps to prevent a relapse after the abuse ends. They take responsibility for their lives
(Burke et al., 2001), and reestablish social networks and activities (Few & Bell-Scott, 2002). Landenburger (1998) added a final stage, recovery. During this stage, women work toward empowerment.

Illustrative of the transtheoretical model is a qualitative study of the decision-making process that heterosexual Black college women used to terminate psychological abusive dating relationships by Few and Bell-Scott (2002). Women in this study followed a four-stage process. The first stage began with an assessment of the relationship. This assessment involved recognition of the abuse and a calculation of the pros and cons of the relationship. This eventually led the women to assess turning points, to re-structure the relationships, and to make a decision to leave. The second stage involved physical and emotional separation from the abusive partner. In the third stage, the women reestablished social networks, and (re)engaged in social activities. At the final stage, women rebuilt their self-esteem, re-claimed their desires, and left their abusive partners.

Taylor (2002) investigated the disengaging-terminating process used by Black women who survived intimate male partner abuse. Three stages of disengaging were described. The first defining moment was when she rejected the violence. Second, they distanced themselves from the abuser by seeking shelter or a
safe place. Finally, they sought affirmation and support from family and friends.

Given the complexity of abusive relationships, it is not surprising that researchers find that women who leave abusive partners return and leave several times before they leave permanently (Martin, et al., 2000; Peled, et al., 2000; Werner-Wilson, Zimmerman & Whalen, 2000). Several factors affect women’s decision to leave abusive relationships and these factors are similar to the factors associated with women’s adjustment after leaving abusive partners. Women’s adjustment after they leave abusive relationships is discussed in the next section.

**Consequences of Wife Abuse and Adjustment**

Physical abuse is one type of abuse that will be examined in this study. Several researchers have demonstrated that abused women constitute a significant proportion of patients seeking emergency medical services, obstetrics care, and primary medical care (Bauer et al, 2000). In a study by Song (1996), 70% of the abused Korean women suffered bruises. They also suffered minor cuts and burns, concussion, damage to teeth, broken bones, and injury to internal organs. 9% of the women experienced miscarriages, and 29% experienced emotional/mental distress requiring medical care. 7% of the women were hospitalized due to physical injury from wife abuse (p.88).
Even though there are no large scale studies of the prevalence of partner abuse among Asian Americans (Bauer et al., 2000), the reports of stress-related symptoms among Asian American women suggest that many are victims of intimate partner abuse. All of the divorced Asian American women in Song’s study (1991) reported experiencing at least some stress-related symptoms, such as, difficulty in sleeping, occasional headaches, loss of appetite, and ulcers. The loneliness and isolation that characterize their lives can lead to emotional and then physical deterioration.

Researchers have found that 50% to 60% of battered women returned to abusive relationships after their discharge from shelters (Peled et al., 2000) because they experienced acute feelings of guilt and shame (Kim, 1996). They also experienced anxiety attacks about their financial dependence on abusive husbands and the lack of affordable housing. These women doubted their own ability to raise children without a husband present, and were pressured by family and church leaders to return to the family. Resignation to their fate and a belief that it is God’s will they fulfill a subservient role have led many women to stay with abusive husbands. Doing so puts them at risk for such negative psychological outcomes, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, low self-esteem, decreased ability to
trust, a tendency to be self-blaming, emotional dependence, and decreased self-worth (Werner-Wilson, Zimmerman, & Whalen, 2000).

Campbell et al. (1995) examined depression among battered women who used shelters. Even though the sample was only 1% Asian, the result was significant. 83% of the women reported at least mild depression after they left the shelter, while 58% were depressed 10 weeks later. There was not much change six months later. Women’s feelings of powerlessness, experience of abuse, and decreased social support contributed to their depression.

Divorce does not seem to alleviate serious psychological symptoms among Asian women. In a longitudinal study of divorce in Northern California, Asians who recently filed for divorce were interviewed and followed over 3.5 years (Chiriboga & Catron, 1991, as cited in Yee et al., 1998). The results showed that half of the sample exhibited high symptomatology, including insomnia, depression, and headaches. Asian females reported that the numbers of symptoms were unchanged overtime (from 12.7 to 12.8): The numbers of symptoms for Asian males, meanwhile, decreased over 3.5 years from 9.0 to 5.4.

People who strongly believed that marriage is a lifelong commitment report high levels of distress following divorce (Simon & Marcussen, 1999). Adjustment among these individuals may be difficult because they are troubled by the moral
contradiction of their belief and seeing their own marriage end in divorce (Amato, 2000).

Garvin et al. (1993) found that structural mediators such as self-esteem, locus of control, divorce control (perception of control regarding the decision to initiate divorce), family adaptability, and family cohesion are positively related to good post-divorce adjustment. Bogolub found that self-esteem, an optimistic and independent temperament, and vocational skills boosted post-divorce adjustment. Scholars have found an association between self-blaming and poor adjustment and between feeling that one had some control over one’s life and positive adjustment (Folkman, 1984; Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Tennen & Affleck, 1990, as cited in O’Neill & Kerig, 2000; Garvin et al., 1993; McKelvey & McKenry, 2000). Research on women’s resilient response to battering (Werner-Wilson, Zimmerman, & Whalen, 2000) found that resilience was associated with a combination of (a) personal strengths and active, hard work, (b) social support from parents, siblings, and friends, and (c) active involvement in seeking social support.

McKelvey and McKenry (2000) suggested that women in different cultures encounter different psychological and social experiences and have different coping strategies, which lead to differences in personal adjustment. A study of divorce adjustment across Anglo, Chinese, and Korean Americans families
revealed different adjustment patterns. Anglo and Chinese Americans considered divorce as positive and adjusted relatively well; whereas Korean Americans reported that post-divorce relations with their ex-spouses were worse than pre-divorce relations. Korean Americans experienced negative feelings, such as anger, shame, regret, and confusion (Tien, 1985, as cited in Rhee, 1998).

Chang (2003) studied psychological well-being among divorced KIW. When KIW divorced because of husband’s abuse, infidelity, and marital conflict, they experienced a higher level of psychological distress than those who divorce for other reasons. Self-reported health status was the most significant predictor of current psychological distress. KIW who perceived their health as good or very good were more likely to have low level of psychological distress. Given that the majority of immigrant women have low income, no health insurance, few job skills (except jobs that rely on physical labor), and unfamiliarity with language and culture, KIW who divorce in the U.S. are placed in double jeopardy.

O’Neill and Kerig’s (2000) investigation of resilience among abused women identified self-blame and perceived control as moderators of women’s adjustment to stress, including physical abuse. One striking finding was that almost all of the women interviewed in Kim’s (1996) study appeared to blame
themselves for the abusive episodes. They saw themselves as having provoked their husbands’ aggression with their emotional outbursts and impatience with husbands’ inappropriate actions. Given that self-blame is a negative predictor of healthy adjustment and Korean women tend to blame themselves in abusive relationships, it is critical for scholars to understand the dynamics of this unique ethnic attitude toward wife abuse.
Chapter 3
Theoretical Perspectives

In this chapter, two theoretical perspectives that have anchored the research on wife abuse are discussed. The theoretical conceptual framework for this study is also described.

Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbolic interaction theory is one of the most popular family perspectives today, possibly because it accommodates an interest in the individual within the context of family (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993). Symbolic interaction theory focuses on how human interaction occurs, as well as the extent to which those interactions are useful in understanding human behavior.

Klein and White (1996) divide symbolic interaction theory into four variations. First, there is the structural approach, which focuses on the concept of role. According to this perspective, social roles are learned and then enacted by people when they occupy positions in a social structure. One criticism of the structural approach is that it fosters the idea of the "oversocialized self" with little freedom to adapt to or change the environment.
The second variation is the interactional approach, which argues that the individual is “making” his/her role through interaction with others and his/her social context. This approach emphasizes the creative and problem-solving dimension of roles. A shortcoming of this perspective is that it ignores the constraints of the pre-existing social structure and its tenacity in maintaining the status quo.

The third perspective is the microinteractional approach. It emphasizes the fluidity and contingency of roles. The self is relatively fluid and defined by the way in which the person frames or schematically understands the context and the rules.

The fourth perspective is the phenomenological approach. It focuses on the taken-for-granted dailiness of life and the ways in which the meanings of that taken-for-granted experience are maintained. This approach is most often used to examine partner abuse. Phenomenological symbolic interactionists assert that families are to be studied as social phenomena emerging out of the interactions of their socially situated members (Erickson, 2003). These theorists have studied the phenomenology of family violence, rather than the history of violence or the impact of personality characteristics (Erickson, 2003).

Symbolic interactionists conceptualize family violence as “a situated, interpersonal, emotional, and cognitive activity involving negative symbolic interaction between intimates”
The basic premises of family violence research anchored in the symbolic interaction perspective are that: (a) behavior always takes place within a situation; (b) actors construct their behavior based on their definition of this situation; and (c) all situations involve the self and at least one other identity (Blumer, 1980; Hepburn, 1973, as cited in Erickson, 2003; Denzin 1984).

Since social interaction focuses on self in relation to others and the social interchanges between individuals and groups (Eshleman, 2000), it is important to consider how the situation is defined. The definition of the situation has to do with the definition of reality and the perceived consequences. In other words, a situation takes its meaning from how it is defined (Thomas & Thomas, 1928; as cited in Klein & White, 1996). Therefore, situating violence is critical, as it provides the context within which people develop their personal interpretations of a violent event. In an interaction where a man is threatening a woman, it is the women’s definition of the situation, rather than the objective characteristics of reality, that matter. How she define the situation is key to understanding her actions and her responses within the context of the relationship (Lempert, 1995).

The symbolic interaction approach allows the researcher to analyze women’s identity negotiation and discourses as an
inherently active self. This approach also demonstrates the importance of considering the intimate familial interactions within the dominant cultural context and institutionalized systems of power (Baker, 1997; Lempert 1995).

The Ecological Framework

Brofenbrenner (1993) defines human development ecology as: the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation, throughout the life course, between active, growing, highly complex biopsychological organisms and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as the process is affected by the relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded (p. 7).

In other words, a person’s behavior is a function of the interaction of the person’s traits and abilities with the environment (Klein & White, 1996).

Bronfenbrenner posits five levels of environmental systems: micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chrono-systems. The microsystem is a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting. Particular physical, social, and symbolic features of the developing person are sustained in their activities, and
progressively interact with the immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1993).

The next nested structure, the mesosystem, is comprised of the linkages and processes taking place between two or more micro settings containing the developing person. The exosystem is comprised of the linkages and processes taking place between two or more external settings. At least one of those settings does not contain the developing person. Although events occur in the setting where the person is not included, the events indirectly influence the person’s life (Bronfenbrenner, 1993).

The macrosystem consists of the overarching pattern of the micro-, meso-, and exosystems. The macrosystem is embedded in a given culture, subculture, or other extended social structure. The given culture can be represented by belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options, and patterns of social interchange (Bronfenbrenner, 1993).

Lastly, the chronosystem consists of those patterns that influence developmental change over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). There are two types of transitional events in the chronosystem: normative and non-normative events. Normative events are characterized as events that are universal and take place in an orderly procession in people’s lives (e.g., starting school, puberty, entering the job market, starting a family, and
Non-normative events tend to be more stressful than normative events because they are unexpected events (e.g., death of a family member, illness or disability, divorce, job loss, moving, or winning the sweepstakes) (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

The ecological framework provides four fundamental ideas about marriage; (a) that marriages are interpersonal systems; (b) that spouses’ personality shape their individual and collective efforts to maintain a successful marriage; (c) that marriage relationships are dynamic so that they change in context and evolve over time; and (d) that marital unions are embedded in a social context (Huston, 2000). In examining marital success and stability, Johnson (1999) asserted that the decisions spouses make to stay married or divorce reflect (a) the extent to which the spouses want to stay in marriage (i.e., personal commitment), (b) the extent to which they feel they are obligated to stay (i.e., moral commitment), and (c) the degree to which they think they have to stay (i.e., structural commitment). Personal commitment is influenced by the quality of the spousal relationships, how much time spouses spend together, and whether they pursue other relationships that might compete with the marriage. Moral commitment is rooted in a person’s value system and personality. Structural commitment is related to factors outside of the individual, such as financial
concerns, negative social sanctions, or lack of opportunity to form competing relationships.

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model is useful in studying violence against women. Heise, Ellsberg, and Gottemoeller (1999) used the ecological framework (see Figure I) to explain and integrate the origins of gender-based violence. They posited four sub-systems in their work: society, community, relationship, and individual.

Figure I: Ecological model

(Heise, Ellsberg, & Gottemoeller, 1999, adapted from Heise, 1998)
According to this model, at the outermost circle, the society reflects the general views and attitudes that permeate the culture at large. At the societal level, male entitlement/ownership of women, masculine aggression and dominance, rigid gender roles, acceptance of interpersonal violence, and acceptance of physical chastisement are important factors that predict violence against women (Heise et al., 1999). The community level represents the institutions and social structures of the workplace, neighborhood, social networks, and identity groups. In the community, women’s low socioeconomic status and isolation from families, and men’s delinquent peer associations are linked to violence against women (Heise et al., 1999). The relationship level represents the immediate context in which abuse takes place (Heise, 1998). Male dominance in the family, male control of decision-making, and marital conflict are strong predictors of partner abuse (Heise et al., 1999). Lastly, the individual level, the innermost circle, represents the biological and personal history that each individual brings to the relationship, including gender identity, witnessing marital violence as a child, being abused as a child, the experience of an absent or rejecting father, and husbands’ use of alcohol (Heise et al., 1999).
Theoretical Conceptual Framework for This Study

My review of the literature suggests that the conditions associated with wife abuse are cultural, institutional, and relational. Symbolic interaction is a useful approach for examining KIW’s view of themselves as women, and survivors of abuse within the family, society, and culture. The ecological framework is also useful for examining KIW’s behavior, as a function of the interaction of their abilities and traits with the family, community, and cultures of the U. S. and Korea.

I have drawn on the ecological framework and symbolic interaction theory to shape the theoretical framework for this study. According to Figure II, which is an illustration of my model, abused KIW are products of multi-layered settings. They are also dynamic people who actively re-discover themselves within settings.

The box on the left lists factors that are associated with KIW’s experience of abuse. At the societal level, a traditional patriarchal cultural norm that silently permits wife abuse and encourages rigid gender role contributes to partner abuse in Korean immigrant families. At the community level, immigration related-stress, such as the husband’s un/under employment, the lack of formal social services for Korean immigrant families, and women’s isolation from families of origin and society contribute to partner abuse. At the relationship level, marital
discord, and obligation to the children escalate partner abuse. Finally, at the individual level, women’s lack of vocational skills, language barriers, unfamiliarity to the U.S. system, and the husband’s alcohol use are associated with partner abuse.

Dynamics of Abusive Marital Relationship

- Patriarchy
- Acceptance wife abuse
- Rigid gender role
- Immigration related stressors
- Lack of formal service
- Isolation
- Marital conflict
- Obligation to Children
- Lack of vocational skill
- Language barriers
- Unfamiliarity with U.S. system
- Husbands’ alcohol use

Society

Community

Relationship

Individual

Dynamics of Women’s Post-divorce Adjustment

- Awareness of seriousness of wife abuse
- Formal social support (Institutional service, church)
- Informal social support (family, friends, neighbor)
- Self-esteem
- Self-mastery/control
- Adequate employment

Figure II: Factors associated with Korean immigrant women’s experience of wife abuse and their adjustment after leaving abusive marital relationships

The box on the right illustrates factors that are associated with healthy adjustment after KIW leave abusive marital relationships. At the societal level, awareness of the
seriousness of partner abuse is associated with women’s well-adjustment. At the community level, formal services and institutions that are culturally sensitive to women’s needs are important for women’s adjustment. At the relationship level, a web of informal social support from family, friends, and neighbor is critical to KIW’s adjustment. At the individual level, high self-esteem, self-mastery/control, and women’s employability or preparation for employment is critical for adjustment after leaving abusive relationships.
Chapter 4
Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore KIW’s experience of wife abuse and adjustment after leaving abusive relationships. A constructivist paradigm, qualitative methodology with semi-structured interviews, and grounded theory analysis were used to examine how KIW interpret their lives and the meaning of their survival.

Constructivist Paradigm

All research is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. The term paradigm refers to the researcher’s epistemological, ontological and methodological premises (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). At the most general level, four major interpretive paradigms structure qualitative research: positive-postpositive, constructivist-interpretive, critical, and feminist-poststructural (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Although it is possible for the researcher to identify multiple paradigms, I posit myself as a constructivist because I believe that there is no absolute truth, rather people see and believe things according to how they are constructed by the environment.
Denzin and Lincoln (2002) assert that:
The *constructivist paradigm* assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent cocreate understandings), and naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures. Findings are usually presented in terms of the criteria of *grounded theory* or pattern theories. Terms such as *credibility, transferability, dependability*, and *confirmability* replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 21, emphasis added in Italics)

This definition of constructivist paradigm is compatible with the *naturalistic paradigm* described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). There are five axioms of the naturalistic paradigm: (a) the nature of reality is multiple, constructed, and holistic; (b) the researcher and participants work together so that they influence one another; (c) the research inquiry is bounded by time and context; (d) all the entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, thus it is impossible to distinguish cause from effect; and (e) the researcher cannot be free from her own biases and subjectivity, therefore her personal experience influences the process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
The strength of naturalistic inquiry is that it centers the participants’ perspectives and experiences. It also allows a focus on the active interaction between the participant and researcher. Moreover, participants are empowered through this interaction process to negotiate meanings and interpretations of the data with the researcher (Few, 1999). For instance, as part of a pilot study, I conducted an interview with a Korean immigrant woman. She and I interpreted the meaning of abuse based on incidents she had experienced. Through our discussion, she discovered what had happened to her, learned the concept of abuse, and developed the idea of recovery during the interview. That interview also demonstrated for me that KIW are resilient and inspired me to pursue the issue of wife abuse and women’s adjustment after leaving abusive relationships.

**Issues of Reliability and Validity**

According to Merriam et al. (2002), the concepts of reliability and validity in quantitative research have to be reconceptualized and modified to fit the details of qualitative research data. Guba (1981) developed a model of trustworthiness that identifies four components: truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. These components are relevant to both quantitative and qualitative studies.

Truth value is about whether the researcher has confidence in the truth of the findings for the context she is studying
(Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Truth value is assessed by internal validity in quantitative research. In qualitative research, it is obtained from the informants’ lived experiences and it is increased when the study presents accurate and vivid descriptions of the informants (Krefting, 1991).

**Applicability** refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other contexts with other groups. Applicability is assessed by external validity in quantitative research. In qualitative research, it is obtained when the researcher provides sufficient descriptive data so that other researchers may compare the data with other findings (Krefting, 1991).

**Consistency** has to do with whether the findings remain consistent when the inquiry is repeated in a similar context. This is an analogue to reliability in quantitative research. While quantitative research is based on an assumption of one absolute reality that does not change, qualitative research is based on uniqueness of the human condition which varies depending on the experiences. This means that researchers must identify deviant data in qualitative studies to let other researchers know the boundary of the phenomenon (Krefting 1991).

**Neutrality** is the freedom from bias throughout research procedures and its products. Neutrality, in quantitative research, is obtained by objectivity; in qualitative research,
it is obtained by increasing the quality of the findings and by decreasing the distance between the researcher and participants (Krefing, 1991).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) operationalized four criteria of trustworthiness for constructivist qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability:

Credibility is the criterion used to examine if true value is evident in qualitative research. There are a number of strategies to increase credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested prolonged engagement as a way to enhance credibility. This involves spending an extended period of time with informants to increases rapport. Prolonged engagement may encourage participants to provide different and more sensitive information than they would at the beginning of research (Krefing, 1991). Triangulation, member checking, and peer examination are also powerful strategies to enhance credibility. Since these strategies are commonly used by other qualitative researchers (Geoetz & LeCompte, 1984; Merriam, 1998) to increase trustworthiness, they are addressed separately in the last part of this section.

Transferability is the criterion used to determine if the study is applicable to the findings of other studies. Because of situational uniqueness in qualitative studies, transferability is often a critical issue. For this reason, the
representativeness of the participants in the sample is the key factor in transferability of the data. It is important that researchers provide dense background information about the participants, setting, and context to allow others to see how transferable the findings are (Krefing, 1991).

*Dependability* is the criterion related to the consistency of findings. Since the qualitative researcher plays the role of a choreographer (Janesick, 2000), or a quilt maker (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), it is unlikely that different researchers will have the same findings. Thus, qualitative researchers must take care to determine that the findings are consistent with data collection (Few, 1999). Guba and Lincoln (1985) suggested a single audit to enhance dependability. The audit trail strategy is discussed with other strategies in a later part of this section.

*Confirmability* is the criterion that relates to the neutrality of data and the researcher’s interpretation. It focuses on objectivity and is linked to the issues of credibility and transferability. A major technique for establishing confirmability is the audit trail (Guba, 1981). Other strategies for enhancing confirmability are triangulation, peer examination, and reflexive analysis. Confirmability does not mean that the researcher’s subjectivity should be ignored.
Rather Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that subjectivity should be presented in the findings.

Several strategies commonly employed to enhance trustworthiness in qualitative research (Merriam, 2002) were used in this study. They included triangulation, member checks, peer examination, reflexivity, keeping journals, doing an audit trail, and providing rich descriptions.

**Triangulation** involved the examination of the multiple findings, data sources, or data collection of related studies to confirm emergent findings.

**Member checks** involved taking tentative interpretations of the data back to the informants to ask if the findings are plausible. In this study, member checking was done before the beginning of and during the second interview.

**Peer examination** involved discussing the methods and findings with colleagues and the major professor. Peer examination with a Korean graduate student, who reviewed the backtranslation enhanced the validity of the data.

**Reflexivity** is a process used by the researcher to reflect on her world view, biases, theoretical orientation, and relationship to the study. **Journaling** was the strategy I employed for tracking my thoughts, feelings, ideas, bias, and hypotheses (Krefting, 1991).
Doing an Audit trail involved providing a detail account of the methods, procedures, and decision points in carrying out the research so that other researchers may confirm or dispute the findings given the data and research context. My major professor, whose specialty is qualitative methodology and women’s development, and other faculty member traced the research process in detail.

Rich and thick descriptions were developed to contextualize the study and help others to determine the extent to which findings are transferable. This was accomplished by prolonged engagement and translating the interviews done in English.

Researcher as Instrument

Qualitative research designs are prompted by the researcher’s interest in the local contexts, insights, or explanatory schemes related to real world problems (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003). Therefore, it is impossible to devise a non-human instrument to encompass and adjust to the variety of realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Only the human instrument is “capable of grasping and evaluating the meaning of differential interaction” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 39). That means that the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research (Marriam et al., 2002). Trustworthiness of the instrument can be an issue because the researcher can not be free from her own subjectivity and biases.
For this reason, enhancing the trustworthiness of the qualitative research (e. g., reflexive analysis, member checks, peer examination, rich descriptions, journaling, memoing, etc.) must be a goal throughout the research.

**Design**

*Participants and Sample Selection*

This study examined KIW’s experiences of wife abuse and adjustment after leaving abusive relationships. I used purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) or criterion-based sampling (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) to recruit participants who were able to provide rich narratives for in-depth examination (Few, 1999).

Five KIW were recruited from Athens, Atlanta, and Los Angeles. They: (a) were between 35 and 50; (b) were born in Korea; (c) had married Korean men before coming to the U.S.; (d) had resided in the U.S. less than 10 years at the time of divorce; (e) had been divorced in the U.S. at least one year; and (f) were not in an abusive relationship at the time of the interview.

In qualitative research, homogeneous samples are a prerequisite for gathering trustworthy data. My selection criteria were designed to enhance the homogeneity of the sample, and the trustworthiness of the data. To assure that the participants had common cultural backgrounds, I selected women who were born in Korea, who married Korean men before coming to
the U. S., and who had resided in the U.S. for less than 10 years at the time of divorce.

The length of residence was included in the sample criteria because time in the U. S. may affect women’s attitudes about abusive marital relationships. Divorce rates for Asian American families were 2.8%, 4.9%, 6.7%, and 7.3% for 5-10 years, 10-15 years, 15-20 years, and 20-25 years of residency in the U.S., respectively (Mangiafico, 1988, p.93). The longer immigrant women reside in the U.S., the more likely they are to resolve marital problems by divorce. Korean women who have lived in the U.S. less than 10 years were assumed to have a more difficult time ending abusive relationships through divorce.

Time since divorce has been included as criteria for sample selection. Albrecht (1980) indicated that the time before the decision to divorce was the most difficult period for 55% of the respondents, followed by the time before the final decree (22%), and just after the divorce (21%) (as cited in Chang, 1998, p.19). According to Kincaid and Caldwell (1995), psychiatric symptomatology of separated persons decreased as time passed. I included only women who have been divorced for at least a year since they presumably have weathered some of the most difficult aspects of the divorce process.

Recruitment
Because of the difficulties in recruiting immigrant women who had been in abusive marital relationship, I used the snowball selection method. This involved asking participants to identify other potential participants who fit my criteria (Morse, 2003). Researchers have found this strategy to be useful in situations where populations are not naturally bound to common groups (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Korean Christian churches in Athens and in Atlanta, Korean small businesses, and the center for Pan Asian community services were contacted. The first contact was made with pastors in Korean Christian churches by telephone and e-mail. I explained the purpose of my research and asked them to give my phone number and e-mail address to potential participants. There are many Korean Christian churches in Atlanta (and two churches in Athens). I contacted those churches whose pastors are known to have an interest in family problems first. I contacted church members whom I have known and asked them to refer women who met my research criteria. I gave my phone number and e-mail address to potential participants. I contacted the president of Pan Asian Service Center, Korean lawyer groups, and beauty salons in Korean communities. I located a website, missyusa.com, where Korean women who live in the U.S. get together to share information and their experience in the U.S. There is a sub-club
for divorced women. I asked the club’s leadership for help in identifying participants.

When potential participants contacted me, I screened them to determine if they met the research criteria by telephone, using a Screening Tool Questionnaire (Appendix A) developed in consultation with my major professor. 12 women contacted me by telephone and e-mail. Each woman who made initial contact with me and who showed interest in the study, irrespective of their eligibility, was offered a list of counseling resources (Appendix B).

Five women were selected for this study and appointments for the first interview were scheduled. To ensure a comfortable place and time to talk about private matters, the place and date of the interview were set at the participants’ convenience. Four women invited me to their house, and one came to my house.

Data Collection

Before the first interview began, I reviewed the consent form (see Appendix C) with participants carefully, answered questions that they have, and signed the form. The consent form which outlined the purpose of the study, procedures, benefits, and risks, was prepared and distributed in English and Korean. The Korean version was provided if participants preferred it. The participants were advised that they could discontinue the interview at any point and that they could refuse to answer any
question. They were asked to sign the consent form. They and I kept copies. All participants preferred Korean documents, and they and I kept both—English and Korean—signed consent form for the record.

Each woman was interviewed twice. The shortest interview was 60 minutes and the longest interview was five hours. Though both the participants and I are Korean, I did not assume instant rapport. Since the quality of the women’s narrative is dependent on the relationship with the researcher (Morse, 2003), my goal was to break the ice during the first interview.

The first semi-structured interview (see Appendix D) was conducted in Korean and audio-taped. During the interview, the participants were encouraged to explore the marital experience focusing on abusive relationships. They were asked about demographic background, marital background, marital relationship history, and family/network influences. The check list of abusive behaviors (see Appendix F) developed by Smith, Earp, and Devellis (1995) was administered in English or Korean according to the participants’ preference. This check list contains ten questions focusing on women’s experiences of wife abuse. All participants preferred the Korean check list. At the end of the interview, the participants were invited to bring journals, poetry, or correspondence that they wanted to share. They were paid a $30.00 stipend.
After the first interview session, I transcribed the audiotape; and translated the transcription into English. Backtranslation into Korean was done for member checking and data validity. I began keeping a research journal with the recruitment process. I developed theoretical memos as the study developed.

After analyzing the first interview transcript and discussing it with my major professor, questions for the second semi-structured interview (see Appendix E) were developed. I contacted the participants and discussed my interpretations of the first interview. In other words, I did a member check before or during the second interview. During the second interview, the participants were asked about the processing of leaving, and adjustment after they left their husbands. At the end of the second interview, participants were paid $30.00.

To ensure the participants' confidentiality, the names of the participants, intimate partners, family members, residence and employment were replaced with pseudonyms. These pseudonyms were used in all identifying information in the transcripts, research journal, theoretical memo, and the final written work.

When a participant showed signs of emotional discomfort, the interview was stopped until she was ready to continue the interview. If participant did not want to discuss the subject, her wishes were fully respected.
After the second interview, the researcher provided contact information for personal counseling (see Appendix C).

**Data Analysis**

**Data Sources**

The principal data sources for this study were the transcripts of interviews, the researcher’s journal, and the participants’ written works. All interviews were recorded, translated, and transcribed. The researcher’s journal was comprised of short notes, personal reactions, and theoretical memos. One participant shared her journal.

Hurh and Kim (1984) have found translation between Western and non-Western languages to be an important issue in cross-cultural research. Kim (2001) has suggested two strategies for dealing with this challenge: (a) translate whole interviews conducted in Korean into English, and analyze with English transcript; (b) analyze the original Korean transcript, then translate only the significant or mentionable parts into English. Kim (2001) also argued that the best way to keep the meaning of what was said in the original data is to use the original Korean transcripts for data analysis. Although I agreed with Kim (2001), because my major professor (a non-Korean) had to review the interview transcription, interview transcripts were translated from Korean to English, and analyzed in English.

**Grounded Theory and Analysis Strategies**
Consistent with the constructive paradigm, I used grounded theory method in the data analysis. Grounded theory is “the study of experience from the standpoint of those who live it” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 522), and the goal of grounded theory study is to build middle-range theoretical frameworks, which emerge from or are grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2000; Merriam & associates, 2002). In other words, “theory is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to the phenomenon...” (Merriam et al., 2002, p. 142).

In grounded theory, the researcher simultaneously collects and analyzes data. There is at least a two-step data coding process that entails: (a) Initial coding or open coding, and (b) selective or focused coding. Line-by-line, initial or opening coding leads the investigator to refine and specify any borrowed extant concepts and it keeps the investigator thinking about what meanings she makes of the data, asking questions of it, and pinpointing gaps and leads in it to focus on during subsequent data collection (Charmaz, 2000). Selective or focused coding helps the researcher sort, synthesize, and conceptualize large amounts of data, using the most frequently appearing initial codes (Charmaz, 2002).

The constant comparative method of grounded theory was used to: (a) compare different people, such as their views,
situation, actions, accounts, and experiences, (b) compare data from the same individuals with themselves at different points in time, (c) compare data within categories, and (e) compare a category with other categories (Charmaz, 2000). After comparing and contrasting the coded categories, the researcher identified patterns and assembled structures.

Along with using grounded theory analysis, I used Alexander’s (1988) nine principles of salience for sorting data. These principles are primacy, frequency, uniqueness, negation, emphasis, omission, error or distortion, isolation, and incompletion. These principles can be helpful in identifying themes in the narrative (Few, 1999).

Primacy is the “foundation stone” or the “key” theme that initiates a topic sentence. Alexander asserted that the essential story of life is usually hidden in the first sentence of a teller, and the rest of the story is a working process to decipher the first hidden key theme.

Frequency has to do with the participants’ repetition of a story about themselves. If the frequency exceeds certain limits, however, it is likely to be disregarded or devalued.

Uniqueness has to do with the exceptionality of a theme. Statements like “Nothing like this ever happened to me before or since,” or “It was the most unusual thing that I ever went
through” (p. 271) reflect the narrator’s belief that a particular event is unique.

*Negation* refers to those statements that participants may enjoy telling by eliminating negative components which possibly are associated with meaningful nature.

*Emphasis* in the narrative calls deliberative attention to an issue, such as “I want you to know that____,” or “A critical event in my life was_____” (p. 272).

*Omission* has to do with the missing part of a story. When the gaps of omission are filled in, the consistency of the story is revealed.

Participant makes errors, slips and distortions, consciously or unconsciously. These errors may hide the meaning of dynamic experiences.

*Isolation* has to do with those statements that seem to be unconnected to the narratives and is recognized by asking questions, “Where did that come from?” (p. 276). The researcher’s goal is to interpret or make connectors between the isolated statements.

*Incompletion* occurs when an expositive sequence begins, follows a course, but ends before closure is reached.

**Limitation of the study**

There were several limitations of this study. The major limitation had to do with the cultural barriers that made
conversation about abuse difficult. Although I believed that divorced Korean women were better off than when they were in abusive marital relationships, feelings of shame possibly affected the relationships between participant and me.

A second limitation had to do with language barriers created by the process of translating the interviews from Korean to English and back to Korean for peer examination. It is possible that some of the nuances and feeling were lost when interviews were translated into English. It is almost impossible for U.S. natives to imagine the emotional context from which these women spoke.

A third limitation had to do with the instruments I used that were designed and based on English language subjects. The language of the Women’s Experiences with Battering Scale (WEB) and the Conflict Tactic Scale (CTS) is culturally unfamiliar to Korean women. The instruments also call for women to discuss personal matters that are traditionally not discussed.
Chapter 5

Participant Case Studies

In this section, the life stories of the participants in the study are described focusing on the premarital experience, marital dynamics and abuse, marital dissolution, and post-divorce adjustment.

All five women in this study were born in Korea and had lived in Korea until they married and immigrated to the U.S. Three women were raised in big cities, and two in mid-sized cities. They ranged in age from 34 to 51, and the average age was 42. Their educational backgrounds varied from a high school dropout to a Ph.D. All worked full-time, had been in an abusive marital relationship from four years to 11 years, and had resided in the U.S. at the time of divorce from four years to 11 years. Three women came to the U.S. immediately after they married, one eight months later and the other ten years after marrying. None of the women were in abusive relationships at the time of interview. All are presently single. They had been divorced from two to 17 years. Two women had one child; two women had two children; and one woman had no children.
Ms. H

Interview Setting

Ms. H was a 38-year-old mother whose daughter seemed as bright as she. Ms. H was married for six years. She divorced five years after coming to the U.S., and had been divorced for five years at the time of interview. She was not in an abusive relationship and had not remarried. Ms. H’s educational background was as high as her ex-husband who held the doctoral degree. Ms. H had long straight hair and wore no makeup. She was thin and about five feet and two.

Ms. H was the first participant. From the telephone introduction, I could tell that she seemed to be a pleasant person. On a hot late summer around noon on a Saturday, I met her in a shopping mall parking lot. She brought her daughter, her friend, and the friend’s two daughters. Ms. H’s daughter greeted me with a present made of colorful dough. Ms. H invited me to join her and her friend for lunch at a Chinese restaurant. After lunch, her friend went home and Ms. H and I went to her home. We settled at a table in the kitchen downstairs. She remarked that her house was not clean, but this was a reflection of how little stress she had in her life. She had no difficulty being open with me. For the second interview, we met on a Saturday afternoon at her house again. Her openness was similar as in the first interview.
Premarital Experience

Ms. H met her husband, Mr. H, in college and dated him for six years before they were married. Even before she married him, she knew he had lots of girlfriends.

She recounted two episodes. While Mr. H and Ms. H were going steady, Ms. H heard from a friend that Mr. H had a blind date with another woman. She ran to see him on this date with her own eyes. Although Mr. H noticed Ms. H watching them, he continued his date which lasted over three hours. Ms. H and Mr. H had a fight. He gave her this explanation:

I can not live by eating only one food. I need to taste several different foods [food was his metaphor for women]. I give you my loyalty, and everybody knows that you are my girlfriend. Don’t complain about those girls because you are at the top of my list. They envy your place...

Although Ms. H knew his behavior was wrong, she said she loved him too deeply to put her self-esteem first.

The second incident evoked a crisis involving three girls in Mr. H’s church. He was dating all three at the same time. Ms. H said that Mr. H never hid his relationships with other girls because he wanted them to compete with each other. One day, the girls got together and began to fight. They called him to the scene:
When he arrived... he said, “I didn’t want all of you. Let’s end our relationships.” Then some of girls began to beg him not to end the relationship... He kept saying that he had a woman he intended to marry, and all of them meant nothing to him, and he wanted to end this all at once. When they heard of this, they got really mad... He hit some of them in the cheek. One of them was the daughter of an elder in the church, and everyone in the church learned about this. Finally, the pastor and the elders...forced him to quit all positions he had in the church. He had such a bad reputation, and the only way for him to survive was to say that he hadn’t dated these girls, that they misunderstood his favors, and that he had a woman he planned to marry... After that, he had no choice but to marry me... I was rather sympathetic to him at that time, because he was hurting so much..., and praying...fasting for three days and nights...without drinking water. He sobbed a lot in front of me... He was in a tough situation. I thought to myself that God was training him by giving him a hard time, and he could have learned a lot from this. So I forgave him and got married...

After they sent wedding invitation cards, Mr. H suddenly cancelled the wedding without any notice. He called Ms. H’s parents and his parents, and announced that he would not marry
her. He accused her of being unfaithful. When she confronted him about lying, he hit her for the first time. She described this episode:

I asked my husband if he wanted me to tell what he had done for six years in every detail, like the relationships with lots of girls?... His parents were very embarrassed, and thanked me for marrying their son because they knew it already. My parents asked me if I really wanted to get married to a man like him... He felt very ashamed in front of my parents. So after our parents left, he slapped my cheek. And he apologized to me. Then we got married. After the wedding, Mr. H resumed his affairs with other women. Eight months after they were married, they came to the U.S.

Marital Dynamics and Abuse

Ms. H described Mr. H’s personality in positive and negative terms:

He is very sensitive, sentimental, idealistic, and what can I say...sweet, considerate... He had a lot of girlfriends around him, and he had his own unique pattern when he dates girls. For example, when a girl doesn’t seem interested in him, he did his best to win her mind. But once she opens her mind to him, then he wants to control her life. He
tries to persuade her to follow his direction in planning her life...He can control her like that...

Mr. H used to compare Ms. H to other women. He said she was too headstrong to feel sorry about his behavior:

...His ideal type of woman was...a woman of innocence and obedience. It hurt my feeling when I saw him with another woman, and I thought that I had a right to ask him to apologize to me, and to figure out what was wrong and right. He said he was annoyed when he saw me acting like that. He even said that “I would have been sorry for you more if I saw you with sadness or tears in your eyes.” You know I am not that kind of woman. (Laughs)

Mr. H told Ms. H regularly that she was number one on his list, but there was a number two whose personality he liked better. Ms. H described the big difference between herself and the number two woman:

His number two was the kind of woman who was O.K. to be number two. She didn’t care even if Mr. H had another woman...She said, “I will love you forever. I will put up with any kind of trouble.” Now I am thinking to myself that the number two would have been a better fit to my ex-husband considering his preference in women. The only problem was...with number two’s educational background. He chose me over her because I had a better educational
background. Anyway...he implicitly forced me to be number two for him.

She continued:

When we came to the U.S., he left number two behind. But he always mentioned number two when I behaved differently from the way he expected. He would say, “What you said in the party...was not right to say in front of people” or “I felt ashamed when you behaved like that way.”

Every time she was compared to other woman, Ms. H thought she was not good enough or she needed to be a better person to understand Mr. H. She thought that she had to change herself to fit what he thought a woman should be.

Sometimes, Mr. H would slam something down hard on the table to show that he was unhappy:

He did that a lot. He banged the desk when he didn’t like something. Then I knew that he was sending me a sign...He sometimes hit the wall too. So I did that too. (Laughs)

After three years in the U.S., she began to ask to herself why she loved and married this man. Two critical incidents signaled that matters were worsening. One incident involved Ms. H’s sister’s wedding, and the other involved Mr. H’s affair with a woman in their church.

Ms. H’s younger sister, who was in Korea, was going to get married in June. Her parents invited them to the wedding, and
sent them plane tickets. Ms. H’s elder brother couldn’t come to the wedding, because he and his wife just had a new baby:

I felt very bad about it. It would be great for my parents to have a son-in-law in the wedding instead of their eldest son. However, my ex-husband didn’t want to go to the wedding. He said, “I will never go back to Korea, unless I achieve my goal successfully.” He kept refusing to go to Korea, and told me not to go there either. He insisted, “We have to work more intensively during the break. Where on earth are you going? Are you out of your mind? You should not go either.” We had lots of quarrels over it. I began my fasting prayers. When he learned why I did this, we had more quarrels.

At last, they agreed that only Ms. H would visit Korea with her baby. Before leaving for Korea, she was busy trying to get work done. The busier she was, the more quarrels had they.

Meanwhile, Mr. H became very active in the Korean Christian church. He was teaching the youth group, conducting the church choir, and leading worship services. He never missed six a.m. morning prayers. His enthusiastic involvement reminded Ms. H of his behavior in Korea when he was enmeshed in the church and had several relationships with church women.
Ms. G, who was older than Ms. H, attended the same church. One day, she asked Mr. H. to give her a ride to the church for the morning prayers. They soon became close.

Before Ms. H went to Korea for her sister’s wedding, she and Mr. H quarreled over the wedding and her trip to Korea again. As usual, he left the house. That night, he came back home a little later than usual. He told Ms. H that he happened to meet Ms. G and they had gone to dinner together. He said he told Ms. G about his marital problems and she soothed him. They had gone to a park to talk more and sing some songs. It had been a romantic evening and he was completely free from anger. After that night, Ms. H realized that he met Ms. G often.

One night Ms. G’s fiancé called Ms. H. to say that the relationship between Mr. H and Ms. G was more than a friendship. He warned Ms. H. When Ms. H confronted Mr. H, he did not hide their relationship. Mr. H and Ms. G promised to end the relationship. When Ms. H returned from Korea, however, she knew the relationship was in full bloom:

By a woman’s intuition, I knew that he was sleeping with her...Just a feeling. I asked, and he answered that he did...Up to that time, he didn’t tell a lie to me. Anyway, he saw her without hiding it from me after that. Soon, he began to lie...After supper, he told me to go to work. Our offices were in the same building. I went to the office
with my daughter after a while. Then his car was not in the parking lot. I chased him to her apartment...That night, my daughter was sleeping in the car. Then I came to her apartment and saw the scene that I really didn’t want to see.

Although Ms. H had caught her husband and Ms. G in the bed together, she gave them another chance to end the relationship. His response was predictable:

He said, “Don’t tell me to quit this relationship right away. A relationship like this cannot be ended once and for all. She is staying here in the U.S. on a one-year temporary visa. She has to go back to Korea next year. Then, why are you worrying? ...You are my wife...”

Ms. H had concealed what was happening under her roof. Unable to take it anymore, she asked her pastor for help. When the pastor saw that Mr. H had beaten her (she was wearing long-sleeve shirts in the summer), he took a stand. The pastor removed Mr. H from all positions of responsibility in the church. He also told Ms. G to leave the church.

This situation was reminiscent of the situation in Korea, except that Ms. H had protected and supported him as his wife. This time, in Mr. H’s eyes, Ms. H was responsible for the trouble. Mr. H left a message on the machine that said, “I will kill myself somewhere else”: 
He was gone for one night. I was worried because I believed that he would really kill himself. I called the woman [Ms. G] and shouted, “This is all your fault.” She replied, “If I were you, I would give him a year to make a choice between you and me. Or I would rather give him up.” I said, “If you had a baby, you could not talk like that. I know you are older than I am, but...” He didn’t come back the next day either. I called her again around five in the afternoon, saying “You made all of this happen. I will come over there right now.” Suddenly, I heard my ex-husband’s cell phone ringing over the phone. He had been there all night...He was there with her listening to all the conversations between us. I hung up the phone as soon as I heard his cell phone ring, and rushed to her apartment. I knocked on the door of the room where he was hiding. He wouldn’t come out. I was sitting there waiting...

In front of Ms. G’s apartment door where her husband and his girlfriend were cheating, Ms. H had an epiphany:

While I was sitting there waiting for him, I saw things happening during my six years of dating and four years of marriage with him just like a movie playing in front of my eyes. Then I thought to myself that I really had to end this. That was it. I have really done enough. I had no feeling left for him. I got up and gave up everything.
After this incident, Mr. H did not come home for a month. He withdrew all the money in their savings from the bank. Ms. H decided to leave. She packed her stuff and moved out of his apartment. The next day, her husband and Ms. G moved into his apartment.

Rumor of the affair was rampant in the Korean community. People recognized her as the woman who had hidden her husband’s affair and abusive behavior and had attended Sunday service with a happy face. Mr. H and Ms. G were ostracized by the Korean student/faculty organization. They wanted Mr. H and Ms. G expelled from the school. They emailed their families and peers in Korea to tell what they had done.

Within two or three months of their separation, Mr. H’s and Ms. H’s parents visited them. Their parents urged them to reconcile. Ms. H thought of her daughter and agreed. Mr. H agreed as well. When Ms. H’s mother came to the U.S. and went to his apartment, however, Ms. G was still there. It took a week for Ms. G to move out. Mr. H said that he had repented for what he had done. Then came news of Ms. G’s pregnancy.

Ms. G made three proposals. First, she wanted Mr. H and Ms. H to divorce. Second, if that was not possible, she wanted to be “the second” wife. Third, if this was not agreeable, she wanted Ms. H to keep her baby:
We had gone through...things we had seen in a soap opera...Both parents kept talking to us to get together again. I had only one request: let her go to Korea, then I could take the baby...She said that she couldn’t go back to her home. She asked me to let her live in the same town with us. I said that I didn’t want to see another soap opera...My ex-husband told me that he couldn’t do anything to her...He told me to focus on the problem of reuniting with him. I said the only requirement for me was to see her leave...Finally I announced that I would not go back to our marriage with this unsolved. [Ms. G said that] she couldn’t stand seeing him suffer from the guilt of ruining his marriage. She said that she still loved him, and even told me to do my best to win his love back. (Scoffs) I said, “If you believe that love is a game to play, you do your best. I will be out of this. This is completely over.”

Then, Ms. H filed for divorce. Because she was in the U.S. on a work visa, she had to obtain a divorce in Korea. She asked their parents to be her proxy. Ms. H’s and Mr. H’s parents went through the whole procedure for them. Since he was accused of adultery, she was granted custody of her child.

Marital Dissolution
When she decided to leave her ex-husband, she said one of the biggest challenges were her traditional values about divorce:

Can I really make it? What do my parents think of this? How can I talk to them about this? Can I really make it?... At that time, people around me had already heard the ugly rumors about our divorce. (Laughs) Before it was opened to everyone, I was really worried about what other people said. Only three of us knew. I had thought that we could never get back to the place where we began, once this matter was opened publicly. It becomes a broken glass... I never thought of this [divorce] happening in my life.

When Ms. H hesitated, her pastor and his wife encouraged her. The pastor’s wife suggested that Ms. H separate right away. Even though Ms. H wanted to leave, she had hesitated because she had a hard time picturing herself alone.

After they separated, Ms. H had a little trouble at work; however, she found courage in her religion:

...My faith in God... I was not doing anything for a month... I was very nervous with these issues [separation, divorce], but I could get peace in my mind by talking to myself, “My God takes care of everything. God will protect me all the time.” You know we have a hymn, “Even my death helps me to get closer to God.” I had nothing to lose
because my ex-husband dumped me and I was right in the middle of all the dirty rumors in town. Without my faith in God, I couldn’t have overcome these difficulties... I became very confident living alone.

Post-Divorce Adjustment

Mr. H filed a counter suit charging that Ms. H had not genuinely carried her responsibility as a wife. He was unsuccessful. When Ms. H felt she was weakening, she got help from friends and family:

My friends helped me a lot by listening to my stories. I feel... that my bitter memories were diluted when I... cried over my stories in front of my friends.

When I came to this community, people asked, “Where is your husband?” And I said to their face, “I am divorced.” I even came to enjoy their embarrassment when they heard this. (Laughs) It is easy for me to keep everything open to people around me, because I don’t need to lie to them. I also tell my stories when I go to church and have small group meetings, if necessary. When I told this story to people for the first time, and they asked, “How could you be so calm to tell the story like that?” And I said, “Because I practiced a lot!” (Laughs) This will be about the 40th time I have told the same stories in front of others. I forget some details too. In fact, I live without thinking of it... I always believe
that it was the right decision to get divorced whenever I
recalled how hard it was...

Ms. H’s responsibilities gave her a reason to survive:
I had my goal to achieve and a daughter to care for. So I
could calm myself because I got lots of things to do by
myself. My memories fade away as time passes by, and my
work makes me forget it too.

After divorce, there were economic difficulties, the burden
of finding a permanent job, the community’s response to the
divorce, and her daughter’s hatred of her father. Taking care of
her car was a special challenge:

I... bought a cheap used car. Whenever the car gave me
trouble... I complained to myself...Car troubles are not
easy for me. I really don’t know anything about cars. When
I had to do some manual labor, [however] I thought to
myself that I could live without a husband because I did it
well. (laughs) I could do those things without any help
from a husband, so I could live well without husband.

(Laughs) On the other hand, I need a wife. (Laughs) I need
someone who does house chores, cares for my kid, and lets
me do my work outside. (laughs)

Ms. H faced other challenges:
The first one is my job. Without a stable job, I cannot
feed my daughter. I have to take a permanent job in Korea
or the U.S. soon. The second is that some Korean men tried to flirt with me just because [they knew] I was a divorcee. They just wanted to have fun with me without thinking seriously.

Ms. H’s daughter learned about her parents divorce a year ago. Ms. H had told her initially that mom and dad lived separately because of dad’s work. When the daughter found out they were divorced, she was upset that her mother had lied:

She cried a lot. A couple of days passed, she told me that she had a chance to talk in front of her class, and she told them her parents got divorced. I told her that she did a very good job. (Laughs)

My daughter couldn’t keep her feelings inside her. She expresses her feelings freely when she is feeling sorry or sad...She keeps missing her dad... I told her not to think of it...

She becomes very sad when she cannot remember her dad’s face... I had some pictures of him, and I let her watch the wedding video to tell her that he is in there. In the past, she liked watching that video a lot. But now she cries a little when she watches it. She doesn’t want to watch it anymore...

Someday in the future... When my daughter is listening to a different version of our divorce story from my
husband... I don’t know what she will think of me... I also worry that she will get confused when she hears the story from her dad... I think I need to tell her the whole story when she becomes a college student.

Ms. H has some feelings about her ex-husband:

... My daughter has often wondered why her dad hasn’t called her at all. He has not called her once. That makes me mad... He has to do something to know about his daughter. He was getting in touch with me up to three years ago with emails. He emailed me to ask how I was doing, and to say he was doing O.K. But he never asked how his daughter was doing then. I was very sorry about this.

When she was asked about the positive outcome of divorce, Ms. H instantly answered:

This feeling of freedom... Actually I realized that I had lived with a husband with lots of interventions and manipulations. My ex-husband inspected the refrigerator sometimes, and nagged me because he always wanted everything very clean and orderly. As you see, I am not one who has that kind of character. We had some conflicts with this, because my husband wouldn’t share house chores...

Then, he still wanted to have a perfect [working] wife without sharing house work... I really feel free from the burden...
She identified two things as central to her survival after the divorce:

Frankly speaking, religion helped me a lot. Secondly, I wanted to make my life end happy, because we all live our lives once and we need to make it very happy... I want to make my life a cartoon with a cheerful story, even though I love novels with sad endings... Although my daughter is most important in my life, I also give priority to myself, because my daughter can be happy when I am happy.

Ms. H continued about her sense of self:

One of the most satisfying experiences after I left him was that I finally got my self-respect back in 10 years. You know you cannot see the woods when you are in the woods. I realized that my self-respect was distorted when I lived with this eccentric man for 10 years because I loved him and valued his opinions of me. I wanted to act the way he wanted me to. I was thinking that I needed to be myself after I got through with him. In other words, I am very happy because I can have time to be with myself.

Besides the positive view of herself and happiness, Ms. H has a positive attitude toward the community where she lives:

This young generation has a different attitude on divorce...

Once I open myself and joined the community, they try to take me [or my issue] naturally, at least in front of me. I
don’t really know what they are saying behind my back. Anyway, this attitude helps me a lot, because I am not feeling lonely when I can live a positive life... Look at upstairs, there are always children coming and playing with my daughter...

Ms. Y

Interview Setting

Ms. Y was 51 years old. She looked very young for her age. She had very beautiful face and fair skin. She smiled when I complemented her on her youthfulness. She seemed about five feet four.

Ms. Y had been married twice and experienced physical and emotional abuse from both spouses. Both marriages are described here in chronological order. She immigrated to the U.S. with her first husband. After 11 years in that marriage, she divorced. After four and a half years in the second marriage, she divorced. Ms. Y had been divorced from her last marriage for ten years. She was not in an abusive relationship at the time of interview and has not remarried. Ms. Y had two children with her first husband, and they are in their 20’s now.

It took several days to reach Ms. Y by the phone because she had to work overtime. Despite fatigue, she answered my screening questions and invited me to meet at her home. It was raining the day of the first interview. Ms. Y’s father greeted
me and said she was out doing an errand. She lived with her father and mother. He was in his 80’s and the mother in her 70’s. The father was watching TV which was cabled in from Korea. I noticed that he had an accent, and asked where he was from. He said he was from North Korea, which is where my father was from.

When Ms. Y arrived home, she apologized for keeping me waiting and gave me a cup of coffee. Her mother ran the kitchen, so Ms. Y had to follow her mother’s direction, regarding which cups, teapots, and spoons to use. Ms. Y showed me her bedroom, where her children’s pictures hung. She took me to the basement where we talked alone. In the middle of interview, her mother called us for lunch. It was Korean traditional cold noodle. When I visited Ms. Y again for the second interview, it was sleetng and her mother made hot noodle soup. Ms. Y smiled and laughed during both interviews. There were moments of sadness and tears when she was reminded of difficult experiences. After the interviews, she packed snacks, coupons, stickers, and things that she thought I might need. I thanked and hugged her very tight.

Premarital Experience: First Marriage

Ms. Y was the first of five children. She was not raised with a silver spoon, but it wasn’t hard at all for her to recall how much her father loved the family:
Speaking of my dad, he is a man of ultimate dedication and sacrifice to his family. It was natural for him because he had no other family to share his love when he came to South Korea by himself. My mom was pretty much the same. We never had a meal with cooked rice mixed with barley. [In Korea, most people at that time had to eat a boiled mixture of rice and barley because rice was so expensive. Barley is less tasty and stickier than rice when it is boiled. It was a dream for every Korean kid at that time to have boiled rice without any barley in it.] We did not have a lot of money, but spent money for food and clothing. My dad was a very family-loving person. He used to buy a bottle of beer and have it with my mom. I loved to see them have good time. I had no male member in my family, and my ideal of a man naturally followed the characteristics of my dad.

After Ms. Y finished her sophomore year of college, her family had serious financial trouble. Her father began a business with a partner and invested all the family’s funds. His partner ran away with the money, and Ms. Y had to quit the college. She began to think about immigrating to the U.S. She decided to marry a man she barely knew. She saw this marriage as a way to save her family. Ms. Y’s aunt arranged the meeting between Ms. Y and Mr. Y in Korea. After a couple of dates, they got married and came to the U.S.
Marital Dynamics and Abuse: First Marriage

To Ms. Y’s surprise, her first husband, Mr. Y, did not resemble her father. She described his personality:

[My] first husband’s personality is like a baseball bat. He hit me with it, and I hurt. The first husband is not an evil personality. He is ignorant and single-minded. He just insists on his opinions... This is my favorite example... He has bread in his one hand, and water in the other hand. I want to drink water because I am thirsty, but he forces me to have bread because he wants to give it to me. I used this a lot whenever I had a fight with him.

Before the marriage, Mr. Y had some family trouble. Ms. T, who was the wife of Mr. Y’s older brother, was the center of the problem. Because of conflict with Ms. T, Mr. Y’s parents could not live with their first son so that they moved in with the second unmarried son, Mr. Y. Traditionally, parents are supposed to live with their eldest son in Korea. Thus, in the beginning of her marriage, Ms. Y lived with her parents-in-law in a very small mobile home. Ms. T hated Ms. Y for no reason. Ms. Y thought of divorcing right after the marriage:

This woman [Ms. T] hated me so much that I really wanted to go back to Korea. At that time, I did not care about getting a green card... After living like that for a while, I asked for a divorce. I said I couldn’t live like that any
more. They were the ones who had all the conflicts, but they tried to blame me because they felt ashamed of themselves in front of me. They needed to find someone else to blame. Even someone who is stupid can sensed that this arguing was all wrong. I said I couldn’t live here if I was treated like that... and then I found out that I was pregnant...

Mr. Y and Ms. Y decided to move far away from Ms. T. They asked Mr. Y’s parents to live with the first son and his wife, Ms. T. Mr. Y and Ms. Y settled down in a new place and began their own business.

Several years passed. During those years, Ms. Y’s parents came to the U.S. and lived near her. Her parents-in-law came to live with them. Ms. Y had two children. Their small business prospered. A bank officer in their bank said he had never had customers like them with so much cash.

Besides working hard in their business, Ms. Y had to deal with Mr. Y’s ignorance and nonsense. He mistreated her family members even though she took care of his sick parents:

...He spoke ill of my own family. He hated to see my family members coming to our house...He told them [Ms. Y’s parents and sisters] not to come to our house...

Two of my sisters were getting married in Korea. He kept me from sending some money [or some presents] to
celebrate their marriages... He told me that the money would be in my parents’ hands. I was not able to call them because he said not to.

He hurt my parents’ feeling a lot. It is O.K. to blame me, but I could not tolerate it when he spoke ill of my parents and my own family... My mom and dad had relied on me and respected my opinions on every decision, and they couldn’t live without me even if I married. I could understand that he might have been uncomfortable with this. But my mom and dad didn’t do anything like barging in on our marital life, or asking him for money. When he got mad at me, he called my mom and dad. He didn’t care if it was two or three o’clock in the morning. My parents are old, and they must have been very shocked and displeased with his midnight call. He told them to come to our house. Can you imagine how embarrassed my dad was when he had to drive to his son-in-law’s house early in the morning? My first husband complained about me in front of them. How can you understand him doing this to my parents?

I had to take care of my sick father-in-law, even changing his dirty diapers, while I was working. My sister-in-law saw me doing this. She worried that I would burn out, and suggested that we send him to an elderly nursing home... but I never did.
Ms. Y was an independent, parentified child who took care of other family members. This influenced her marital relationship:

My personality spoiled my husband. Let’s assume that my husband and I had a mud pit on the street in front of us. I saw it, and my husband didn’t. He insists on going there... I let him to do whatever he wanted to do. I already knew that he would fall in the mud pit. All I could do was to help him get out of it and to give him a new pair of pants. Then I talked to him that you should not have gone in the direction. Some people told me that I spoiled him by treating him like that.

Although she was forgiving about his unreasonable arguing, she set clear some limits on her spouse’s behavior. Violence and infidelity were unacceptable. She also believed that marriage should be built on mutual trust. Ms. Y warned Mr. Y after the first incidence of abuse:

One day I was waiting for him around midnight, and he came home after having some drinks with his friends. All of sudden, he slapped me across my face, and told me that he couldn’t do anything fun outside because I waited for him like that all the time... I said, “O. K... I forgive you because it is the first time you hit me.” Then I warned him that I would never let this happen any more. I told him that I had two things that I couldn’t stand, beating and
flirting. [I said] it would be over between you and me if you hit me one more time.

She told of another episode:

We had never traveled in the 11 years of our marriage. We spent all of our time earning money... My kids wore shoes and clothes from garage sales. [One day,] he suggested that we would have a 10th anniversary trip. I told him that I wanted to go to Hawaii, which was one of the most famous places for a honeymoon. I couldn’t have a honeymoon when I got married. The problem was that the air fare was very expensive. We found the way to save money. With the stopover packages from Korea, Hawaii, and to the mainland, we could save some money.

We went to Korea first. At that time, I gave my sister some money in front of my husband. I couldn’t have given her a wedding present. I couldn’t even make a phone call to her because my husband didn’t like it... That was the way I lived... I couldn’t change him... Fighting him was just like fighting a wall... I felt my heart stop beating when he got mad. I thought I would die. It was so frustrating because he was just like a wall.

She continued her honeymoon story:

I bought a good pack of Korean red pepper powder by paying $500 [the price of good quality red pepper powder is very
expensive in Korea, and Ms. Y needed lots of it because it is the main spice in most Korean food, especially Kimchi.]

We got into a quarrel over the red pepper powder because he thought that I paid too much for it. We quarreled from boarding the flight to Hawaii, while flying to Hawaii, and after arriving in Hawaii. We even caught the attention of a cop at a parking lot in Hawaii. We yelled at each other very loudly... Finally, I begged... Please, just think that I spent $500 to celebrate my 10\textsuperscript{th} anniversary, although it was not entirely for me...

He never let it go. I was so sick and tired of it. We hadn’t slept for a couple of days because of the nonstop quarrels. We fell asleep while we were at the beach.

(Laughs) How can I forget it?

For 11 years, Ms. Y did hard manual labor in the family business, and took care of her kids and sick parents-in-law. She believed that she could live a more comfortable life later if she saved money when she was young.

In addition to Mr. Y’s behavior toward her and her family, Ms. Y dealt with the stress of three burglaries and her husband’s hospitalizations. Mr. Y had a life-threatening nose bleed. Ms. Y nursed him back to health. Right after he recovered, he was shot by a burglar. It was the third burglary since they started the business. Luckily he had on a bullet-proof vest. The bullet hit
his vest right near heart, and bounced out of his left arm. Another bullet hit his right cheek and passed through the back of his head. It didn’t damage his brain. Ms. Y recalled that moment:

When I saw him for the first time at the hospital, he almost gave up because he had had two life threatening accidents recently. He told me that I would be O.K. because of the insurance. I told him that I would never let him go as long as I lived. (Sobbing) I don’t really know how we overcame this...

After these incidents, Mr. Y became very dependent on Ms. Y. He was nervous when she was out of his sight. She had to take care of her ill mother-in-law, raise her children, and most of all, run the business without Mr. Y. Although she understood why he acted like a baby, she needed a break from him. She suggested that he visit North Korea. His parents had left their eldest daughter in North Korea. His mother really missed this daughter. Ms. Y told him to go and see his sister with his mother.

Ms. Y and Mr. Y had a major dispute about Ms. Y’s mother’s 60th birthday:

We had serious trouble in 1990. It was about my mother’s 60th birthday [In Korea, the 60th birthday has special meaning. Koreans usually hold a very big party for their parent’s 60th birthday]. I wanted to have a big party for her, and my husband didn’t want me to. He wanted to save
money. He really saved a lot of money, but he didn’t know how to spend it in a good way... I have four sisters and a brother. If we collect some money from each of us, we could make quite enough money for my mom’s birthday. He didn’t like this idea, either... He was one of the richest customers of the bank. He said the money did not matter, it was the attitude of my family that bothered him. “Why do you have to throw a party for the 60th birthday. It is wasting money...” He said that the 60th birthday is just like another birthday.

The 60th birthday was very important to Ms. Y’s family. They did not have a 60th birthday party for her father because they couldn’t afford it at that time. Her father, brother and sisters agreed to have the birthday party, but only her husband opposed to it. He claimed they were out of their minds. Ms. Y was furious with him about this.

While Mr. Y was in Korea, Ms. Y’s family gathered for her mother’s 60th birthday at her house:

I didn’t mean to do it. But... to him, it was apparent that I planned my mom’s birthday while he was away. He was very mad after he found out... Before he left, he had warned me that if my family had the party, he would turn the party table upside down. You cannot even say that it was a party. My family just gathered for three days to spend some time
...My house was big enough to accommodate all of us.

He had a deadly nose bleed twice, and got shot three times... I tried to do my best to take care of him to save him. In return for all my efforts, he accused me of making him travel to Korea in order to have my mom’s 60th birthday at our house. Do you think it makes sense? How can I respond to this absurd claim? I told myself that it was time... to get a divorce.

He hit me one more time [because he was upset about my mother’s birthday]. I got a black eye, and I told him that it was over...

Ms. Y felt responsible for her husband’s inconsiderate behavior:

I made my ex-husband think that I was a woman who could not say “no” to him. I completely spoiled him. He never appreciated me...

Marital Dissolution: First Marriage/Premarital Relationship: Second Marriage

When Mr. Y was ill and had to have surgery, he and Ms. Y consulted a Korean doctor for a second opinion. Ms. Y and the doctor became acquainted. When Mr. Y was in Korea, she got very sick and needed medical attention:
It was about time to get sick because I worked every day with only two to three hours of sleep for 11 years... The doctor asked me why [I got so sick], and I told him a little bit of my family issues. Since his marriage was not successful either, he had been thinking that I could be a perfect wife for him. He helped me. I was unaware that I became dependent on him. He was my doctor. It just looked like flirting...

Meanwhile, Ms. Y ended her first marriage. She worried that the divorce would hurt her kids:

I thought that I could live without him, and I got out of the house without a penny and left my kids to him. I decided to sacrifice myself for my kids. Now I regret it because my kids were hurt more by the relationship with their father.

Rumors spread through the Korean community that Ms. Y had an affair with a doctor, Mr. J., who was divorcing his second wife. His second wife sent letters to Korean communities all over the U.S. Ms. Y married Mr. J, because she thought she had nothing to lose:

With all of these dirty rumors? Why not? I believed that it could be better than my first marriage, because he [Mr. J] was a more learned man. However, a few friends of mine didn’t like my idea... Despite all this, we finally got
together. We had separated from our spouses and we had nothing to do but live together...

*Marital Dynamics and Abuse: Second Marriage*

Counting the period of co-habitation, Ms. Y’s second marriage lasted about seven years. She tried to leave him twice before she left for good. Ms. Y described Mr. J’s personality:

The second husband had the personality of a very sharp Sashimi knife [Sashimi knife is used to cut raw fish, and is known to be the sharpest knife in Asian countries]. [It is like] he poked me with the knife. The second husband was worse than the first... He knew a lot because he was a learned and bright man. For example... Let’s say that he killed someone. When I sit next him talking about this, I became the one who killed the man.

Ms. Y explained Mr. J’s behavior:

He thought that he was always right and ignored everyone around him. I couldn’t even meet my family when I lived with him. He completely ignored my family. I decided not to live with him any more. He cried and threatened to kill himself if I didn’t live with him. So...I married him, and then he hit me. I prepared the paperwork to divorce right after he hit me. Then he begged me to forgive him. Now I realize that you should not marry someone just because you feel sorry for him.
He was very cruel and violent. He always spoke ill of other people. He ignored people because they were less learned than he was... He always slammed the door, but got very annoyed with the sound when I closed the door. I always waited till he got out of the car, and I shut the car door with care not to make any noise... His elder sister told me that he might have 500 women. Every woman wanted to be with him because he had a good background and a decent job. He hid his personality in front of others. At home, he controlled me... He kept ignoring me. When he thought he needed me, however, he made a big bow to me. He was very mentally unbalanced...

He had kids, and I had to take care of them, including his daughter’s husband. When my kids wanted to see me, however, he didn’t let me. I had to sneak out to a parking lot to see my kids. Once a month I met them, and he did something else while I was out with my kids.

He flirted with other women. He became very nice and humble to other women by begging and flattering them in front of me. I asked why, and he said, “I did it just because I tried to hurt your feelings.” At the same time he needed a wife to rely on. He was just like a kid.

Mr. J had no idea of how to manage finances. Mr. J had huge credit card debts and a lot of trouble with IRS. He did not even
notice that his nurse was cheating him. When Ms. Y took over the office finances, the nurse quit her job. Ms. Y took over the nurse’s job and care of the financial paper work. In addition, she cleared up the financial problems.

The first time Mr. J hit Ms. Y, she filed for the divorce. As he had done before, he cried and begged her not to divorce and to see a marriage counselor. She went to the counselor for four years alone. She said, “I had to live with him, but I didn’t want to see his eyes because I felt threatened whenever I looked at his eyes...”

Ms. Y was his chauffeur to business meetings. Since the meeting usually lasted one or two hours, she had to wait him in the car until he finished. After one meeting, when she was with her brother, she was little late:

He got crazy because he had to wait in front of people who knew him as a doctor. I had a serious quarrel with him at that time. I was not good at quarrelling. But at that time I got really mad. I told him to watch his tongue, or it would ruin our marriage. I said, “I worked to pay off all your debts, and bought you an [expensive car]. Then I got nothing from you but cursing and complaints.” I said again, “What did you do for me? Did you make me happy with your money, respect, knowledge, or what? You just control me
with your tongue. That’s all you can do.” Then he got really crazy and pulled a steel pipe off the wall...

It was an explosive episode:

He really hit me in the head. I fell down. Then he kept hitting me from head to hip. The next door neighbor heard all of this, and called the police. I called the police too, because I thought I would die.

When the police arrived, they wanted her to go to the nearest hospital. Because Ms. Y worried that the Korean community would find out and that it hurt her husband’s reputation, she called her younger brother and had him move her to a hospital outside of the Korean community:

All the doctors at the ER were surprised to see me because my head was swollen. A brain surgeon took care of me and took X-rays. Luckily my brain wasn’t damaged.

Mr. J ran away but was arrested in his office. He was jailed on a felony charge. Even though Ms. Y was hospitalized with a serious injury, she had the presence of mind to cancel all of her credit cards. Because of his bad credit, they used her credit cards. She said, “As I expected, he tried to pay off the bail with my credit card the next day. All of credit cards were declined. He got furious at me.”

After Ms. Y was released from the hospital, she changed the apartment door lock. Mr. J came back to the apartment when he
was released from the jail and found that the apartment was locked. He had locked her out once before so that she knew how this worked:

When he hit me for the first time, I got out, and stayed somewhere else for the time being. When I got home to open the door, I couldn’t open it. He had changed all the keys. The apartment manager said that he couldn’t help me because it was our private family matter. I was so embarrassed. I had to stay at my parents’ for a while.

Ms. Y knew she was lucky to survive this abuse:

The apartment manager told me that I needed to come with the police to get my belongings back. I found one of the boxes full of my documents, a passport and a citizen card etc. He cried over the box and begged the police to keep the box for him, claiming the box was his. I can say that he was a man of thousand faces. So I gave up the box. You know what happened later? He sent me the box including all the papers torn up. He shredded my citizen card, the passport, and clothes... He threw all my belongings [out of window]. I was crazy to live with him again, after seeing all this happen...

Ms. Y wanted to get a divorce right after the steel pipe incident. However, if she filed immediately, Mr. J would be in jail for about 10 years because he had already been sentenced on
a felony charge. Depending on her testimony at the court, he could have spent a part of his life in prison. His doctor’s license would have been terminated. She agonized, “What can I get by doing this...by ruining a man’s whole life?” So she decided to postpone the divorce for a year to save him from losing everything.

*Marital Dissolution: Second Marriage*

After the hospitalization, Ms. Y got a small apartment with the help of her sisters and a brother. She was scared to death:

I took a rest for about six months... Every night, I blocked the door with the chairs. I had hard time sleeping because I felt scared and got nervous. I took lots of sleeping pills and sedatives. I took pills again when I woke up. I was afraid to be sober. I lived on the third floor because I wasn’t feeling secure on the first or the second floors.

One day, Ms. Y began to see things differently and her life suddenly changed:

There was a small balcony in the apartment and I saw a big tree in front of it. I thought to myself, “Hew... I can see the blue sky and green trees because I am alive now. If I had gone out of mind or become disabled, I could have been a real burden to my family. I have to be thankful for all the things I have.” Then I stopped taking medicine. The
withdrawal symptoms gave me lot of pain. I was sick over two weeks.

To overcome this emotional disturbance, Ms. Y attended a Dan Hak center, a place to train her mind. Then she began to search for a job. It took her a year to divorce the second husband.

Meanwhile, Ms. Y’s first husband and Mr. J’s second wife sued Mr. J. They accused him of raping Ms. Y while she visited him as a patient. Ms. Y testified that Mr. J never had been abusive against her. It was unbearable situation because she, a victim of Mr. J, felt she had to advocate for him to protect him from the plaintiffs. Compounding the pain of having to lie about the violence she suffered was having it revealed in front of her daughter. Her first husband brought their daughter the day she testified that she had not been abused and the attorney handed the judge a document indicating that she was hospitalized as a result of a battering incidence:

I tried to do my best to keep it from my kids. But it was revealed in front of my daughter...I would never forget the way he [Mr. Y] hurt my daughter at the court. I cried a lot...The judge stopped the lawyer of my first husband. My daughter was crying out loud, too.

The cost of this distress was great. Ms. Y finally left Mr. J.
Post-Divorce Adjustment

Ms. Y faced several challenges after the second divorce. Most were financial. Both her ex-husbands had considerable economic resources. Mr. Y was a successful businessman with the largest deposit in the bank in a Korean immigrant community. Mr. J had a professional occupation that guaranteed secure income source. Neither supported her. “Anyway... I got nothing from them [Mr. Y and Mr. J] when I got divorced. I decided not to ask anything of them.”

Ms. Y wanted to work at the stores whose owners had been her friends for years. These friends wanted to hire her as a manager because they believed her and wanted to help her out. Their wives, however, did not like the idea of their husbands hiring her:

Their wives became suspicious of their husbands’ being too nice to me. I felt very sorry about being single at that moment and realized that this is the cost of being alone. I had to quit the jobs.

Ms. Y had passed the test to work at a postal office several years before and had six months of working experience as a postal worker. She decided to work there again. She started delivering mail. It was hard work, especially with the injuries she sustained from the beating. She worked for five years as a part-time worker before she finally got a regular position.
Ms. Y hopes her relation with her children will improve:
My kids misunderstood me a lot because they live with their dad. He always spoke ill of me, and I met them once in a while. I had a new husband, so I couldn’t be there whenever they needed me. I hope that they will understand me when they grow up and get married... I made up my mind not to be a burden to my kids. I always talked to my kids to be nice to other people, because they would pay you back. They are still sympathetic to their dad, and I don’t really understand this...

Ms. Y’s genuine belief in God has made her grateful:
I thought that God prepared this house for me... Working over time is very hard. But I am happy when I get home from overtime work. I own this house and I have my place to live.

   My house is a blessed place because I can live with my mom and dad. I feel happy when my mom thinks that this house is also hers.

   Another thing, I want to thank God that He gives me a chance to earn money even if it is just enough to make both ends. Also I am a very fast learner, so I can work better than others, and have a better chance to earn more. I thank God for giving me the sense to learn fast and making me diligent.
Ms. Y still has some sadness but she has put her life in perspective:

Now I talk to the singles... some are divorced, and some are separated because their spouses have passed away. They all have cherished memories of honeymoons... For me, I have nothing like that. I am really sad whenever I think back to my life with my husbands. Marriage was... for me... like a dungeon. It was dark... Now, I just have financial difficulties. Other than that, everything is just good... good enough to breathe freely.

Ms. C

Interview Setting

Ms. C was 47 years old and mother of a 20-years-old daughter. She was tiny and short. The absence of make-up exposed the fatigue in her face. Her marriage lasted seven years after immigration and the interviews took place 17 years after her divorce.

It was easy to arrange this interview, but it was not easy to find her house. Ms. C had just moved and she could not remember the street names exactly. She was renting one room in this house, which she shared with other Koreans and Korean Americans. When I first knocked at the door, a man who barely understood Korean did not recognize her name. He went upstairs to wake her up. She was asleep. When she came downstairs, she
kept saying that she was sorry about oversleeping. She was embarrassed about her appearance.

Ms. C was a manager of a restaurant. Since she took off only Mondays, we met on a Monday around noon. We sat in the dining room with a cup of coffee under chandelier lights. The second interview went more smoothly than the first one.

Ms. C waited silently for my questions. She did not seem talkative. She described what had happened to her without emotion, using simple and short sentences. But her story was not simple or short.

**Premarital Experience**

Ms. C was 22 when she met her husband. They got married when she was 23. When she met Mr. C, she was running her own restaurant. She had dropped out of a high school and started her business at an early age. Mr. C was a regular at her restaurant and they began to date. He immigrated to the U.S when he was a teen, and went back to Korea to work. He was teaching English in a private school. After a year of dating, Mr. C proposed and asked her to come to the U.S. with him:

At that time, I was fascinated by the U.S. We didn’t know much about the U.S. and we, Koreans, didn’t have a good quality of life at that time. The U.S. seemed rich and free. Everything in the U.S. looked good to me. Also I was young
when I met him. I didn’t know what was right and wrong. We were so innocent and naïve...

She left Korea without letting her family know. Her family situation was complicated. Her father married several times and had children from different wives. She had to stop and breathe to count how many siblings she had. Her stepmother did not care for her and her father sided with his new wife. Ms. C had no one to rely on. She dropped out of school and started life without her family:

I was separated from my mother when I was four years old. My sister followed my mom, and I was with my dad. That was the beginning of all my troubles. I was emotionally hurt by my dad and my stepmother. He loved her and would not listen to me. When I began my own business after quitting the high school, I thought... that I would never get any kind of financial support from my parents. My dad had money to have a decent life. His kid by the stepmother went to graduate school in Seoul [the largest city in Korea]. That meant my dad had the financial capability to support his family. My stepsisters and stepbrothers were helped by my dad too. They are all doing fine. I was the one who chose to get out of this. I couldn’t study well either... How could you concentrate if you were in this situation? So I didn’t let them know what happened to me in the U.S.
No one knew of her wedding or her whereabouts after she came to the U.S.

_Marital Dynamics and Abuse_

Upon coming to the U.S. after their honeymoon, Mr. C started graduate school. He had not mentioned his plans for school in Korea. He did not get a job. Ms. C spent the money that she brought from Korea, buying a car and settling down. She started working at a restaurant. She felt cheated. This was not the way it was supposed to be:

He didn’t mention that he was going to study when we got married. He told me that he could earn money to make me live happily. He said that I only needed to have a baby and to be a devoted housewife. But when we came to the U.S., things went totally wrong.

Ms. C asked her husband to get a part-time job because it was so hard to make ends meet, working everyday with the baby. But Mr. C couldn’t keep a job long. He repeatedly quit the jobs he got. Ms. C realized that he was a lazy man. When she came home after 12 hours of work, nothing had been done. Even dirty dishes were piled up in the sink.

Mr. C did not teach her how to drive. He took her to her work in the morning and picked her up at night. Mr. C explained why he did not want her to drive:
He told me that there were too many dangerous people in the U.S. and I should not get along with other people. He had to know where I was and what I was doing. I was fully controlled by him. He didn’t like me to see my friends. Things like that... He really hated me to meet somebody else.

At first, Ms. C thought he really loved her. Later, she felt ashamed when he treated her like a kid:

I was an adult. At that age, I could do whatever I wanted to do. But he kept saying that I didn’t know anything, and couldn’t do anything without him. He treated me just like an idiot. I was so ashamed to reveal this to someone else. He was doing almost nothing. When people asked me what he was doing, I really didn’t answer them. I avoided meeting people.

When Ms. C felt frustrated, Mr. C knew what she was thinking:

I couldn’t live without him because I could neither drive a car nor speak English. He told me that I couldn’t do anything because I couldn’t speak a word of English. You know that it doesn’t make sense. You can’t be totally ignorant of speaking English when you are working for a restaurant in the U.S. I learned English while I was working. But I thought to myself that I couldn’t do
anything for the time being because he told me that... I really felt that I was an idiot. He brainwashed me like that. I was brainwashed for a few years. He had me under his full control, without making me learn how to drive.

Ms. C felt that Mr. C took her granted. He deposited her paycheck in the bank and spent it on himself. She had no chance to even shop for groceries. She recalled an incident one morning he was driving her to work:

It was raining. The problem was that the windshield wipers were out of order. He was mad about heavy rain, and he kept saying four-letter words in front of me. I had to go to work and he made me feel bad about giving me a ride. I couldn’t express my feelings at that time. I was so frustrated. Why should I go to work?... Whenever he got mad, he spoke dirty words. We had our kid in the backseat. She began to cry. I really didn’t feel like going to work. I said to him that I couldn’t go to work with this feeling. He yelled, “Then, you’re saying that we are going to starve and die?”... I cannot forgive him for saying this at that time... even now.

Ms. C felt like a servant. She did not know how much her husband’s tuition was or how to pay it. Mr. C said he had to buy food stamps with grant money from graduate school. She wondered if Mr. C was lying about graduate school.
Occasionally Mr. C threw things to scare her. Although he did not throw things directly at her, she was frightened. She didn’t want to have sex with him. She gave lots of excuses to avoid him. After two years of marriage, they used separate rooms. I really regretted marrying him, so I couldn’t do it [sex] with him. Sometimes, however, I had to have sex with him involuntarily... not by physical force... but he made me very annoyed. He made me very uncomfortable. He kept complaining and throwing things. He was an expert at brainwashing and controlling people. Then I gave it up, and had sex with him in the end.

Ms. C revealed an episode when Mr. C threatened her with a pistol. He said he would kill anyone who tried to brainwash her not to think the way he wanted her to think. He pulled the pistol out and polished it in front of her. He did it without anger: He was smiling at me, and telling me that he would kill all useless losers who broke up our family by one shot without letting anyone know... Who could say a word in that situation?

Ms. C never exposed his abusive behavior to other people. At her workplace, her co-worker and patrons liked her because she had such a pleasant personality. People did not recognize that she had serious problems in her marital life. They said Mr. C was a lucky man to have a wife like her. She intentionally hid
her problems because it hurt her self-respect. She could not even tell her own family. She found another way to cope:

I love pets, and I raised dogs and cats. I talked to them about my story. Now I am thinking that I was a little insane at that time. Pets do not betray their owners. When I came home, they greeted me and I told them... like... they were my friends. They kept watching me while I was talking to them. I was insane then.

Although she had thought about divorce, she stayed with him for seven years:

I thought to myself that I was really an idiot for the first three years. I couldn’t drive. He gave me a ride everyday. I really needed him like he said to me... After we had a baby, it made me stay a few more years before I divorced. When I looked at my baby, my reservations about the divorce disappeared.

Ms. C clearly distinguished laziness from incapacity. She was sure that Mr. C was lazy. She gave him one last chance. She warned him several times to get a job. She asked him to work at a gas station and bring her just $10 as a token of his effort for the family. But he argued that he could not do that kind of job with his educational background. Ms. C said that he was just a daydreamer and that she would leave him if he did not change.
Mr. C just did not believe her because he thought that she could not do anything without him. His reaction frustrated her:

I lost all hope. I even thought of committing a suicide...

It was a remote and small town, and there was a horse ranch. If you follow the small pathways... there was a river with a small pond. It was an isolated place and made you feel scared. [She stopped talking for a while]

One day I felt really hopeless. I was really disappointed in my husband. He was a complete loser. I was all alone. I thought to myself that I should not have come to the U.S... The thought of committing a suicide was totally unintentional. At that moment, I just didn’t want to live any more. I tucked a pistol in my arm like this, and walked through the path for about ten minutes...

That day, he was asleep and my baby was sleeping too. Looking at my baby, the thought of killing myself gave me agony. I was like... standing on the edge of a cliff, when I came to think of a suicide. So I went there with the pistol. We had a bulldog, Charlie. He followed me. I cried and cried... in front of the pond and put the pistol on my head... I was about to pull the trigger... Charlie rushed at me to drop the pistol. Then I came to my senses. I was thinking of my daughter. I couldn’t die. I could not leave my baby to such an incompetent man like him. Charlie tried
to lick my face and show his fondness for me. I thought he was an angel at that time. Without him, I could have committed a suicide.

This incidence convinced her to prepare for a divorce. Leaving her spouse was more than a drama.

*Marital Dissolution*

Ms. C did two things to leave Mr. C: She learned to drive; and to accept other people’s help.

To learn how to drive, she used the car that her mother-in-law left Mr. C when she passed away. Because Mr. C left the car key in the house, she had access to the car. She drove it to a vacant road in the back of her house where she practiced. Mr. C did not notice that she was preparing to leave him.

There was also a couple, the Grahams, who recognized that she was in a miserable marriage. The Grahams said, “We don’t know why... But you look so sad, even though you pretended to very happy.” The Grahams regularly came to the restaurant where she worked. They got to know her, and called Ms. C their daughter after some time had passed. The Grahams were local celebrities and Mr. Graham had been a judge in the county. They kept asking about Ms. C’s husband and her daughter. They invited her family to their house and planned to visit her house. She tried to resist their kindness because she did not want her husband to know about their friendship. Like water leaking out
of a broken basket, her unhappiness was unconsciously leaking from her broken heart in front of them, she said.

One day, the Grahams came to her house without notice. They were shocked to see how she lived: Rats were running across the house; and she was washing dishes outside near the porch because the faucet in the kitchen was out of order. Mr. C, too lazy to fix the faucet, was watching TV and drinking beer.

After their visit, Mr. C tried to control Ms. C more than ever. He searched for her every thirty minutes. Meanwhile, the Grahams encouraged Ms. C to leave her husband. They told her that money or a nice house did not guarantee happiness and that she and her daughter deserved to live better. They urged her not to waste time.

She realized that she had been abused emotionally and mentally by her husband. The Grahams showed her how to prepare for the divorce process. They helped her get a driver’s license. Everything seemed ready. Ms. C had made up her mind to leave. She left her house and went to the Grahams with her daughter while Mr. C was out. She had only $18 in her pocket.

When Mr. C learned that she had run away, he came to the restaurant where she worked and looked pathetic. He cried. He said that he had learned what he had done wrong and he had changed. She remembered that moment:
He was humiliating himself... But I had already made up my mind... I could understand him if he did this [begging and crying] because he loved me. But he did this because he was afraid that he was going to lose his servant. He had no one to feed him anymore.

After Mr. C realized that begging was not working, he threatened to kill her. He even threatened to kill people around her with a booby trap. Anyone who stepped on it would be blown up.

The Grahams protected Ms. C from these threats. Mr. Graham filed a restraining order against Mr. C. He could not come around the Graham’s house and Ms. C’s workplace. While Ms. C was working, the Grahams were babysitting her daughter. She stayed with the Grahams for six months because she needed time to save money.

When Ms. C was asked if she feared facing the world without Mr. C’s protection, she said she did at first. But she overcame this fear because she thought that things would not be worse. She had fed a family of three, now one guy was gone. “Then, I got only two to feed. Why couldn’t I do it?” Religion also gave Ms. C courage:

God always gave me hope from deep inside of my heart whenever I was in absolute frustration. I always believed
that God would take care of me all the time. It is hard to express...

Post-Divorce Adjustment

When Ms. C physically left Mr. C, she felt a little sorry for him for a while:

I thought that it was my fault that he was lazy... I thought that I was too optimistic. I just trusted him because he told me that he would finish graduate school and get a nice job. I just waited on him without asking anything of him for years. I had pity more than hate for him when I left him. I was able to make my own living, but he was just a helpless man at that time.

Ms. C eventually left town and moved to a big city. She described the differences between living in a small town with Mr. C and living in a big city without him:

When I lived in the small town, I was very discouraged. I didn’t know how the world would be like. I didn’t know anything about the U.S. at that time... When I came to a big city here, I opened my eyes to a whole new world. I began my second life here. I saw lots of opportunities, and I believed that I could live by myself.

I was discouraged because I was brainwashed by him, making me believe that I couldn’t do anything. Seven years of marriage really made me a fool. I was a complete servant
to him. Now I drive myself, pay my bills, and so on. I feel I can do everything by myself. Freedom! I enjoy it very much. I really feel free and happy. I go anywhere I want to go. I got my wings with me. I feel like I can fly. What else did I have? Financially? My financial situation becomes way better. I take care of what I earn by myself. In the city, Ms. C started her own business. It was 10 times better than with Mr. C. She never had any financial difficulties after divorce.

Ms. C’s only daughter is now a college student. When she divorced, her daughter was seven years old. This daughter became her close friend after divorce:

She matured early. I cried a lot in front of her. After the divorce, we became friends... when she was in her early teens... She watched me go through all the troubles with her daddy since she was a baby... She always encourages me to do what I want to do.

A woman with strong spirit, Ms. C did not want to rely on her daughter too much:

I meet my daughter quite often. I psychologically rely on her because she understands me a lot. But I don’t do that too much, because I don’t want to be a big burden on her.

Ms. C has made up her mind not to remarry until her daughter graduates from college. If she had to take care of a
new husband’s kids, she could not fully support her own daughter. She is committed to supporting her daughter emotionally and financially. Surviving adversity, she has developed her “one plan and doing her best to keep it on track.”

She has also pledged to help women faced the same situation she faced:

My ex-husband was doing very nasty things to me... binding me as his servant... I was lucky to know the Grahams before it was too late. I didn’t waste my life any more. I knew that I could get away from him eventually, but needed more time and effort. They saved my life. I will do the same thing that the Grahams did to me. I’ll help women learn how to drive, and support them financially, and help them to get out of miserable situations.

Ms. K

Interview Setting

Ms. K was a healthy 41-year-old woman with fair skin. She seemed about five feet four. Since Ms. K worked in the cosmetic and beauty business, her hair style and fashions were up-to-date. She had two children, who were 14 and 15. Her daughter lived with her in the U.S, and her son lived with his father in Korea.

Ms. K divorced 13 years after marriage and four years after immigrating. The interviews were conducted two years after her divorce.
Ms. K had an accent from the southern area of Korea. She seemed open-minded and quickly set the date and place for meeting.

Ms. K and I met at a mall near her house on November evening. She brought her daughter, Loren who was in her mid-teens.

Upon arriving at Ms. K’s house, she guided me to her master bedroom, and told Loren to go study in her room and not interrupt us.

Premarital Experience

Ms. K met her husband, Mr. K through a colleague in her company. Her colleague and Mr. K’s mother knew each other and they liked to match up young couples. Mr. K was Ms. K’s first date in life. They married after only two months of dating. They had a blind date on November and married in January the next year. She was 26 years old. Her friends were all getting married at that time and she wanted to get married too.

Ms. K’s parents passed away when she was very young, and she grew up in her grandfather’s house with a large family. Because there were a lot of nice, respectable men around her home and at her job, she believed that her to-be-husband would not be different. She was wrong.

In the two months she dated Mr. K, she had an uncomfortable feeling. While Ms. K was optimistic and pleasant by nature, Mr.
K was always pessimistic. He liked to find faults in others. He had a negative personality:

I didn’t take it seriously at first. I just felt uncomfortable with him. I thought to myself that it [uncomfortable feeling] was because I didn’t know a man well. I had lots of people with good personalities in my life. So I didn’t take it seriously. I was a fool... I thought that every man was nice to a woman. I feel shameful to say this now, but I was naïve then. (laughs)

Although Ms. K heard that Mr. K liked drinking alcohol, she also did not take it seriously because she had never been around a man with an alcohol problem. Also, Mr. K did not drink in front of her, so it was hard for her to know Mr. K had a serious problem before they married.

*Marital Dynamics and Abuse*

It took a week for Ms. K to find out about her husband’s addiction to alcohol. He came home drunk every day after their honeymoon:

He drank every single day. It sounds like I am lying. I was little bit confused... From the very beginning of the marriage, I began to wonder if I should live with him or not. It was just a week after we married. When he was sober, he was angry all the time, rarely smiled. He was a man with a temper.
Mr. K’s family, especially his mother, tried to rationalize his drinking binge. His family avoided the issue because they knew that he was uncontrollable when he was drunk. When Mr. K was drunk, his family agreed with whatever he said. When anyone disagreed with what he said, they had to deal with his outrageous reactions.

Ms. K felt ashamed when Mr. K drank and talked dirty to her. He called her names and used four-letter words in front of their children. Ms. K asserted that “the problem was in his personality. A man with a good personality won’t speak dirty words even if he sees something wrong.”

The day Ms. K gave birth to their first son, Mr. K was completely drunk. He laid down next to her bed in the hospital recovery room. There were other patients present. He frequently passed out and his work colleagues often brought him home. This damaged Ms. K’s self-respect. Thus, she did not want to go to any social gathering with him for fear that he would lie down or pass out in public. When he did not pass out, he argued about everything. Ms. K recalled one incident:

He didn’t understand how much he hurt other people’s feelings... One day he was totally drunk and argued that his family had to have a memorial ceremony for his father at 7:00 in the evening [In Korea, people traditionally have this ceremony at midnight]. His mother cried and cried, but
she followed his opinion reluctantly. She knew that she couldn’t win.

Mr. K also banged doors and threw things at his wife: Sometimes I escaped from him because I thought he would do something terrible to me. I never wore sleepwear at my house because I had to be ready to run away from him quickly when he came home drunk. I had a friend and I took her house as my shelter.

Ms. K believed that Mr. K felt inferior because she was smarter than he was. He tried to control her with his physical strength. “A man cannot be respected by his physical strength alone,” she said. “Intelligence is a requirement for a man to be respected by a woman.”

Mr. K treated his wife as if she were his possession. He ordered her to do this or not to do that yet, he never protected her. She recalled “not a single feeling of protection... I would rather thank him only if he didn’t hurt me.”

Mr. K beat her several times. She tried to minimize the violence:

After we had our first baby... He slapped me across the face after he got drunk. It was the first time he hit me. He said he did it because I nagged him. He beat me, he said, because I deserved it. That was the way it worked all the time. I just cried. I couldn’t tell anyone.
Mr. K controlled Ms. K financially:

Well... I was the one who spent the money he earned. He thought that I wasted his money. I tried to save money all the time... but it was hard to live with the money he gave me. When I asked him for more money, he always told me that I should be more frugal. He thought about money all the time. How could I waste his money in this situation? I hardly bought clothes for myself. I worried that he thought that I was wasting his money.

Mr. K tried to have sex with her whenever he was drunk. After a couple of years of marriage, Ms. K slept in her kids’ room to avoid sexual attack. She hated being touched by a drunken man:

I had such a hard time when he wanted to do it [sex] while he was drunk. I almost wanted to kill myself...I cried and cried...

He was completely naked when he was drunk and wandering around the house. It was so terrible to see him do this... He didn’t even mind if the kids saw him. My kids were sleeping. They might have not seen him. They didn’t talk about it. He became a dog when he got drunk. One day, he actually barked like a dog... I really don’t want to think of it.
Matters got worse when Ms. K’s relationship with her mother-in-law deteriorated:

I lost my parents early in life. My mother-in-law knew this, and told me that... she would have her second son [Mr. K’s younger brother] marry a woman with both parents. It was painful to me... I was born and raised in a family with good lineage. Even though my parents passed away earlier, I inherited a good family tradition. I was so proud of it. I was embarrassed to have my mother-in-law talk to me this way.

From the beginning, Ms. K believed that she had made a mistake. She did not register their marriage for about six months after they married. In the end, she made up her mind, “I had no parents, and it was not easy to get divorced in my situation... I changed my mind and officially registered my marriage, and I had kids.”

Ms. K’s faith in God was unshakable. She kept going to church despite her husband’s opposition:

I wasn’t even scared of him... I prayed God to help me to overcome the trouble... Anyway, I lived day by day, praying to God and reading the Bible for encouragement to live. My belief in God kept me standing alone...

Her older sister was the only person Ms. K talked to about her situation. Her sister comforted her but Ms. K realized that
only she could get herself out of trouble. When asked why she stayed, she answered:

I didn’t have the courage to break out of it. I didn’t want to maintain my marriage. I just did not have the courage to divorce. I couldn’t get out of it, and so I had to live with him. I got scared... how I could live without his money? If I were financially independent, I would not have lived with him for such a long time. What could I do right away [after divorce] as a full-time housewife?

Despite Mr. K’s complaint that she was wasting his money, Ms. K managed to take classes to become a hair stylist. She received her license, which helped her make an independent life for herself later.

Marital Dissolution

Mr. K’s alcohol addiction worsened. He developed tremors and swollen veins. He could not go, even for a few days, without drinking. His family urged him to go into a rehabilitation program, but he refused. He would not admit that he was an alcoholic. The responsibility of caring for her alcoholic husband and her kids with no support was overwhelming.

Ms. K flew to be with her older sister in the U.S. She took her two kids with her, leaving her husband. At the time, she did not think of divorce; she just wanted to escape. A month later, Mr. K followed them. Although Ms. K understood that he
wanted to be with them, she had turned against him. Ms. K felt she could live independently without him. She did not mention divorce for fear that he would do something terrible.

Mr. K was arrested on a DUI. After several sessions with Rev. Chang, who taught DUI classes for Koreans, the Rev. told her that Mr. K wanted her to earn money and to respect him more.

Mr. K threatened to kill her with a knife, and she hid every knife in the house before she went to bed many nights. This was not the first time. When they were in Korea, Mr. K had threatened her:

He was very mean to me... With a knife, he made me feel that he would stab me with it. He stared at me holding a knife. I got scared from the way he looked at me... You could never understand the fear I had suffered. It wasn’t the life you could live as an ordinary human being.

When Mr. K threatened her with a knife in the U.S., she called the police. He went to jail. When he got out, he wanted to return to Korea. In the U.S., Mr. K felt lonely. He could not adjust; he had no drinking buddies, and the community was not generous to drunkards. Furthermore, Ms. K was not the same woman he had known in Korea. Mr. K decided to go back to Korea. Ms. K agreed with his decision and she wanted him to take their son with him. She thought she could take care of only one child by
herself. The day Mr. K flew to Korea, she and her daughter, Loren, celebrated. They danced and rejoiced about their freedom.

Ms. K filed for divorce. She sent him the documents and said that they needed to end the relationship. She wanted no money from him. For a year, Mr. K tried to persuade her to come back to Korea. Sometimes he begged her. Sometimes he said he needed someone to take care of their son when he was at work. He did not return to the U. S. to reconcile with Ms. K. He signed the documents and sent them a year later:

I had lived with him for 14 years. I have had no memory of laughing together. I had a hard time when I had to make a decision because of my son. I decided not to go back to him by thinking of the freedom that I won from him.

*Post-Divorce Adjustment*

The major challenge for Ms. K was leaving her son. She could not give up her freedom for her son, although she felt a thorn in her throat whenever she thought of him. He still lives with his father and grandmother:

You know that my mother-in-law is not normal. She kept telling me that she couldn’t stand my son. Peter is her grandson. He was O.K. when I talked to him over the phone. They made him a trouble maker. She wanted to say that I was the one who made my son like that. I know she didn’t like me. But she cursed my son... My son told me that he had
never known such a bad grandma like her. I knew what he was saying... (Cries)

She called her son as often as she could, however, there was no contact between her ex-husband and his daughter. Mr. K had not called Loren in two years. He did not even acknowledge her birthday. Whenever Ms. K asks her children if they wanted their parents to reunite, they say “No.” Loren is mature for her age:

Loren told me to meet another man, not her dad. Now she is grown up, and advises me, “You can’t live alone. You should marry a good man.” I asked her, “Can you understand me?” She answered, “Yes, I fully understand you.” I am not sure that my 15-year-old girl really understands me, but I want to believe it.

Ms. K’s daughter and her belief in God helped her survive: I have to live very diligently because I have to support my daughter financially by myself, and a belief in God gives me a reason to live. God would not want to see us live in sorrow because God created us...

Ms. K realized that she had experienced emotional abuse and that sometimes this is worse than physical abuse. When she was asked what the biggest change after divorce was, she said:

I never expected to have a husband like him... keeping me discouraged and frustrated. I didn’t do anything to get
blamed. I lost my belief in human beings. After my divorce, I regained confidence in myself and my belief in the good nature of people. Now I have my self-respect. Now I got most of my bright personality back. Now I am almost who I was before marriage. (Laughs) God made me change. God let me stand up by myself, and let me begin my life change. Faith in God was her reward after 14 years of sacrifice.

Ms. B

Interview Setting

Ms. B was 34 years old, working as a reporter for a Korean local television station in the U.S. She had left her ex-husband five years ago but finalized the divorce process a year ago. She was very skinny with a beautiful face. She looked like a fashion model.

Ms. B was excited about joining the study because she could meet her best friend who happened to live in the same town where I lived. Ms. B and her friend had known each other since high school and they wanted to see each other very much. Ms. B flew to the city where her best friend and I lived. During her three-day stay, I invited her to my house for the first interview. We went to her friend’s house for the second interview.

During the first interview, she had an upset stomach. When I wanted to stop the interview, she insisted we continue. She got a good rest and was fine for the second interview.
Premarital Experience

Ms. B met her ex-husband, Mr. B, on vacation in Hong Kong. They were in the same tourist group. After the vacation, they went back to Korea and began dating. They had dated for less than a year.

Mr. B came to the U.S. in his late teens and he had both Korean and American citizenship. Accordingly, he had homes in both countries. His parents had lived in Korea all their life, so Mr. B was raised in the Korean tradition. He traveled back and forth between Korea and the U.S.

Both parents agreed to their marriage. One of the reasons that her parents agreed was that Mr. B was a rich family. His father was a renowned doctor in Korea, and the president of a big university hospital. His mother, Ms. D, was the daughter of a Korean tycoon. Ms. D’s father died early, and she inherited wealth.

Before the marriage, Ms. B was working as a freelance TV reporter. Mr. B said that he was working at a law firm. But after the marriage, she learned that what he had said was not true.

Mr. B and Ms. B were engaged when they moved in together and came to the U.S. Their wedding date was determined by his mother:
My mother-in-law [Ms. D] seemed to be a very sincere Christian, but at the same time, she believed in fortune-telling. Her fortune teller said that her son [Mr. B] could have affair [with another woman] if he married in 199x. (Laughs)... So she [Ms. D] wanted us to get married on such and such month next year... When she figured that I had regrets about getting married to Mr. B [after cohabitating] and was thinking of leaving him, she hurried to hold our wedding ceremony. She changed her plan unexpectedly... I lost my chance to leave him, then...

They had a wedding ceremony in Korea and came back to U.S. together.

Marital Dynamics and Abuse

When they were dating, Mr. B told Ms. B that he was working at a law firm and that he had taken the bar and passed. Yet he did not want to be a lawyer. He just wanted to work at a law firm. Ms. B found out what he was actually doing when she came to the U.S.:

To be more precise, he was an illegal PI [private investigator] or something without a license. He was working for a law firm to investigate insurance frauds or something like that. I knew it after I married him.

She also found out that he did not have the educational background he said he had:
He said that he was a college graduate. It seems to me... he hadn’t graduated from any college. Maybe he didn’t graduate even high school. I realized that I was cheated. He couldn’t show me a picture taken at a commencement. He couldn’t speak English well. I kept asking him if he graduated from college, then, he said he didn’t. I guess he hadn’t graduated high school either.

Ms. B described Mr. B’s personality:

He was lazy. He had a weak mind, and didn’t have a plan for his life. He was spoiled. He was financially supported by his parents. He always bluffed that he could scare anyone.

When Mr. B was a high school student, he attacked his classmate with a knife in a public place and went to jail. He was violent toward Ms. B. He threw objects and hit a closet door right next to her face.

There were times when his anger erupted. Ms. B recalled one incident one day he was driving:

He was driving on a highway and we had an argument. He began to drive the car really recklessly. I felt that I could have been killed in a car accident. I told him that I would get out the car. He took me off in the middle of a highway and left. I walked to find an exit. After a while he drove back to me, drinking a Sprite. He left me in the middle of a highway and went to a gas station to buy a
Sprite. I don’t understand how a man could buy a Sprite while he left his wife in the middle of a highway. I didn’t say anything in the car because I was afraid that he would do the same thing again. After we got home, I kicked the Sprite off and he asked why.

Mr. B and Ms. B started had an argument because he would not allow her to eat:

We quarreled in the car... because he didn’t let me eat. He didn’t feel hungry. That day he asked me to do some chores, I got really hungry. But he wasn’t hungry. He argued that he was too busy to stop and eat. I didn’t think his business was such an emergency. We could grab something to eat and have it in the car. But he said he hated for people to eat in the car... (She paused for several seconds.)

Ms. B felt insecure even if she was at home, since she did not know when her husband would become violent. When he got really mad, he used four-letter words with everyone. When Ms. B was sick, Mr. B would not care for her. She still had to work. Since she had no medical insurance, she could not see a doctor.

Ms. B was frustrated by Mr. B’s laziness. After she found out what he did for living was illegal, she suggested they start their own business. They opened a kiosk at a mall. Mr. B sold car accessories imported from Korea. He made some money and he opened a car tune-up shop that was not successful. He was not
successful because he would not open the shop at nine in the morning:

He went to bed at one or two, or even four o’clock in the morning. Naturally he couldn’t get up early in the morning. He was very lazy and didn’t do anything that he was supposed to do.

Mr. B also regularly went to the PC game rooms leaving his wife at home alone all night. Men gathered in these rooms for online games. He did not drink and smoke, but he was addicted to online games and watching TV. He watched TV up to four or five in the morning. He rented Korean videos of comedy shows. His life style did not make his business successful.

Ms. B took responsibility for the business. His mother, Ms. D, wanted Ms. B to help her son, although Ms. B worked harder than he did. Ms. B wanted to learn English in her spare time. Her mother-in-law did not approve.

Ms. D had a huge influence on Ms. B’s marriage. She called frequently. She visited from Korea every three months. Ms. B was hurt by her mother-in-law’s intrusiveness:

I enrolled in an American language class to learn English. At that time, I was helping my husband at the shop. Whenever it rained, however, we couldn’t work. He was watching TV at home, and I went to school as usual. She [Ms. D] was staying with us at that time. She did not say
anything when I went to school. When I came home, she got mad. She said, “Why do you go to school?” I replied, “I need to learn English, and it doesn’t cost a lot of money.” Then she asked, “Do you think you can learn English when you go to school?” Her point was that I started school without asking her permission, and she was mad because her son was not being taken care of while I was at school... for about two hours. (Laughs) She kept asking why I needed to learn English. I said that I needed to learn English to prepare for anything unexpected and I wanted to have a stable job in the U.S. because my husband’s job was unstable. Then she said, “Do you know how stable that job is?”

Ms. D’s criticism of Ms. B’s parents was also hurtful. Ms. D forbade Ms. B to send money to her parents. Ms. D called and yelled at Ms. B. Even though Ms. D did not physically attack Ms. B, she was afraid of her. Ms. B talked about one painful incident with Ms. D before her wedding:

The night before our marriage in Korea, there was a dispute about a wedding ring. Long before we married in Korea, she [Ms. D] asked me how large a diamond I would buy her son as a wedding ring. She asked for half a carat. I agreed with her because I had no idea about jewelry sizes. When I went to a jewelry shop with my mom, the salesperson said that
half a carat was too big for a man’s wedding ring and recommended smaller one. My mom and I agreed with him, and chose a .35 carat diamond for him. His mother didn’t see the ring before the wedding. About 11 o’clock p.m. before the wedding ceremony, she called. She was furious. She yelled that I was cheating her by promising her to buy half a carat ring and then actually buying .35 carat without letting her know. She yelled that I kept cheating her... She insulted me by saying that she could pay the difference if I had confessed that my family did not have enough money to buy half a carat. I thought that she was crazy at that time... I was so shocked. I passed out talking to her on the phone. I don’t remember what happened exactly after that... My father said that everything was his fault... I had been so proud of myself because I tried to take care of myself without making trouble for my parents. My father really loved me and was proud of me. I felt very sad (Sobbing)... It hurt my feelings so much... I cried out all night and reconsidered whether to marry him. My mom stayed up all night too.

I cried a lot during the wedding ceremony, and so did my mom. During the honeymoon, I should have been happy... but I felt very miserable. She [Ms. D] just ruined my life right from the beginning of my marriage.
There was another episode:

Around Christmas, I had to buy some gifts for my in-laws. I wasn’t financially affluent at that time because my husband had no income. I never dreamed of buying clothes at that time. But I had to buy gifts for his family members. I spent over $70 on two cardigans at a mall... I gave them to my mother-in-law and she seemed not to like them a lot ... I took a nap in my room, and suddenly she came in without knocking. She said that she couldn’t sleep because she was so frustrated with my present. She told me that she couldn’t understand what I was thinking when I bought these stupid cardigans for her. The bottom line was that the cardigans were not the brand name she loved. She said that even the maid of her house wouldn’t wear them because they looked too old-fashioned and cheap. So she could not give them to anybody. (Laughs)

I was so embarrassed. I said that no one wanted to make someone unhappy with a gift. Then she said, “O.K. I will rewrap and mail them to your mother.” She might have thought that my mom was less than nobody. So I returned the cardigans and gave her $100 cash. Then she went shopping for something she liked to wear.

When asked how she coped in the marriage, Ms. B said:
Um... I don’t think I got it over. I was just stressed out by them. I didn’t do anything to get rid of the stresses... I cried, cried... and went to church [to pray]. Just before she decided to get a divorce, she talked about her marriage to her best friend and her sister in Korea.

One critical incident occurred after Ms. B returned from a business trip to Korea. She was gone for three months. When she came back to the U.S., she realized that her husband had affair with a woman:

He didn’t make a single call to me when I was in Korea for three months. I always called him. I felt very unhappy about this. When I came back home, a woman called and asked for Mr. B. I asked him who the woman was. He began to lie to me. He said the woman was a friend of his friend. But when I saw the phone bill, almost every night... he talked to her over the phone more than seven to ten hours... Think of this. He never called me for three months when I was in Korea, and talked to a woman over the phone more than seven hours every night. I was so embarrassed and frustrated. I asked him how he could talk to the woman over the phone 10 hours a night. He tried to find another excuses.

He said that his friend met the woman before he married. She was pregnant. His friend wanted her to give up the baby... abortion. So my husband tried to help him and
persuaded her to give up the baby. I said, “That doesn’t make sense to me at all. Call her in front of me and prove it.” He said that he couldn’t because it would be very embarrassing. Then I asked him to call his friend. He said he couldn’t call him either.

I kept saying that I couldn’t trust him... Then suddenly he went to the kitchen, grabbed a knife, and tried to cut his wrist. He wanted to kill himself because I did not trust him... He said that he would kill both of us...

The blade was not sharp enough to make a serious cut on his wrist. Nevertheless, Ms. B was shocked and she believed that Mr. B was capable of violence. She calmed him down and told him that she believed him. She never mentioned the woman afterwards. She did, however, make up her mind to end the relationship. Since she could not deal with Mr. B’s violent temper by herself in the U.S, she decided to go back to Korea where she could get unconditional support from her family.

**Marital Dissolution**

Once Ms. B decided to end the relationship with Mr. B, she had to prepare for the divorce by collecting evidence:

I wanted a divorce, but [I knew that] it couldn’t be easy...

I talked to my sister in Korea, and she suggested that I make recordings of what we talked about. I bought a voice recorder and had dinner with him. I enticed him to talk
about everything that happened between us from the beginning. I tape-recorded it all secretly. He said he was sorry about the lies he told before marriage, sorry about his mom’s behavior, and sorry about threatening me with a knife.

Then I went back to Korea... I lied and said that I have found some business opportunities in Korea. I had to lie to them [Ms. D and Mr. B], because they wouldn’t let me go to Korea without business purpose... If I went to visit my family, my mother-in-law would not approve. She really loved money.

Ms. B packed her wedding photos, her journals, etc., and sent them to her friend in the U.S. She left the jewelry that Ms. D gave her as wedding presents in her room to avoid any suspicion.

Ms. B did not mention divorce to her husband. She said goodbye to him with smile. While in Korea, she met a friend who had been through divorce:

My friend’s husband cheated. She married in Korea and went to the U.S. Her husband beat her badly. She divorced after a year of the marriage. [I said to her that] I wanted to talk about divorcing my husband and my mother-in-law, but I didn’t know how to start. My friend listened to my story, and said that the sooner the better. After talking with her,
I decided to announce that I wanted a divorce. When nobody was home [in the parent-in-law’s house], I left the keys on the house and went to my parents’. My husband called me and asked why I left the keys in her house. For the first time, I said to him that I did it because I was thinking of divorce seriously. He replied... “How I could betray him in such a manner.” I told him that I couldn’t trust him any more... I didn’t believe his excuses about that woman. I said... I didn’t want to live with him any more.

He was furious, and he hung up the phone. A couple of days passed, he called her and said:

He got a letter from the immigration office. The immigration office wanted to check if our marriage was a fake. He told me that they wanted to know if I married him to get my green card. According to his argument, they [the immigration office] wanted to come to our house in a week to check if we lived together. Otherwise, they would take my green card back.

I knew he was lying to me again. I was hoping that he would say that he wanted to live with me or loved me... and so on. It was his last chance... But he tried to threaten me again with another lie. I told him to fax me the letter. He said the letter was in his car and he gave me absurd
excuses. So I asked him to give me their phone number. I called the numbers but no one answered the phone.

Ms. B delayed the divorce until she obtained a green card. She knew she would be disadvantaged without it:

My friend was in the similar situation as I was in. She married a Korean-American citizen and applied for a green card. She couldn’t stand the marriage because of her husband’s violence and physical abuse. She returned to Korea before getting a green card. After that, her tourist visa was denied. I realized that I could have the same problem.

Without a green card, she was not able to apply for any job either in Korea or the U.S. She had to wait until she got a green card. That was why Mr. B said she used him to get a green card.

Despite her husband’s lies and threats, Ms. B insisted on a divorce. Eventually, Mr. B apologized to her. He admitted that his mother was wrong and he asked her forgiveness on his knees. He wanted to come to Korea to do it, but he was too busy with his business to find time to do that:

I could have forgiven him if he had come to Korea to ask my forgiveness. I thought I could forgive him if he came to me with a true heart because I had loved him once... But I
knew that he was lying again... I knew that he wasn’t busy at all with his business.

After six months of separation, Ms. B came to the U.S. to see Mr. B. She needed to deal with him face-to-face. In the conversation with him, she said that all she wanted was a divorce, not any money from him. The problem was that he had debts. He said he would pay off his debt and he did not want to pay any alimony. He let her keep her green card, instead. She accepted his offer and returned to Korea.

When the divorce documents arrived, Mr. B asked for an annulment, that she pay half his debts, and that the marriage be annulled which would strip her of her green card. This was totally different from what he had promised. Ms. B could not accept this offer. Mr. B gave up his Korean citizenship to avoid Korean law that would require his parents to pay alimony.

Ms. B returned to the U.S. to move the divorce process forward. The judge set the date and Mr. B was ordered to appear in court. In the end, he did not come and he lost. She kept her green card and she did not have to pay off his debts. Finally her four-year marriage and four-year divorce process was over.

When she left Mr. B, she felt guilty. Her guilt was associated with her religious belief, which taught that one should not hate anyone. She felt guilty about preparing for
divorce secretly. She also regretted that she did not marry for love, but financial security.

Post-Divorce Adjustment

It took time for Ms. B to overcome these feelings of guilt. For a couple of years, the thought of Mr. B and his mother provoked anger. A co-worker and a pastor offered help:

I tried to heal my wounds by myself... My roommate was the only one who knew about my divorce. My colleagues at work didn’t know it. My roommate wanted to major in consulting psychology and she read lots of books. She told me that I should soothe myself, stop hiding my wounds from myself. I believed she was right.

After I met a pastor in the church, I found that God saved me from the pains and difficulties of my life... to make me live joyful and happy life again.

The pastor Ms. B met in the U.S. changed her thoughts about religion and divorce. In Korea, she was taught that she sinned whenever she did something undesirable, like divorce or hated someone. In the U.S., however, she learned a new way to have faith in God. Her pastor told her that it was natural for her to hate Ms. D and Mr. B, because they had hurt her so much. She slowly let go of this feeling:
For four years of marriage, however, I had to live my husband’s life although I hated to do it. After divorce, I was so happy to get my life back.

The change was positive. Even in a situation where she could not be financially independent and where nobody believed that she could get a job, she trusted herself that she could do it. And she got a job where she earned recognition from other colleagues. Her self-confidence was restored: “I love myself a lot. I believe that I am still worth everything.”

At the end of interview, she offered some advice to women:
I feel sorry for women in the same situation as mine. They are not financially independent or lack of self-confidence. Nobody can blame them for staying where they are now. It is not easy to live independently without any help. If your parents can help you, it could be much easier, but otherwise it would be very tough to deal with. Not only for the women in my situation, but for all women, I want to say that... they have to have some interest in social issues and be prepared to take care of themselves. Even without divorce, some bad things can happen to their husbands. So do not rely on them [husbands] too much.
Chapter 6
Findings and Discussion

Grounded in a constructive paradigm, this study explored the experience and adjustment of Korean immigrant women who left abusive marital relationships. Several themes emerged from in-depth interviews and grounded theory analysis with the five participants. The relevance of these themes to the research questions that guided this study are discussed in this section. Tables 1-5 summarize the women’s narratives.

Research Question One

How do Korean immigrant women describe their experience in abusive marital relationships?

Research question one explored KIW’s experience of marital abuse. In this regard, their narratives focused on the recognition of their husbands’ abusive behavior, the nature of the physical and emotional abuse, their conflict with in-laws, and their coping strategies.

Recognition of Husbands’ Abuse

KIW’s narratives revealed that their husband’s abusive behavior began before marriage and continued up to their decision
Table 1: Narrative summary of Ms. H’s marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ms. H</th>
<th>was a 38-year-old with one child, who was married for six years and has been divorced for five years.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Premarital Experience</td>
<td>While Ms. H was dating her husband-to-be, he dated other women. Ms. H coped by trying to be more feminine and by telling his parents about his behavior. Ms. H agreed to marry her husband to restore his reputation in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Dynamics and Abuse</td>
<td>Mr. H behaved liked a single man after he and Ms. H. immigrated to the U.S. He had an affair with a woman that resulted in a pregnancy. Mr. H compared Ms. H to other women, controlled her behavior, and insisted that she do all the housework, despite that she had a full-time job. Mr. H hit Ms. H, threw objects in her direction, and banged on the wall and his desk when he was angry. Mr. H threatened to kill himself when she confronted him. Ms. H coped with her husband’s behavior by praying, concealing the problem from others, and fighting him back occasionally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Dissolution</td>
<td>Ms. H reached a turning point while waiting in front of the door to the apartment where her husband was hiding with his lover. Ms. H considered what she had endured and concluded that she had done enough. It took Ms. H three months to separate from her husband and change jobs. She filed for divorce and refused to negotiate with him. He withdrew all the funds from their joint bank account, accused her of adultery, and countersued for divorce. Ms. H got support from her pastor. Her parents hoped for reconciliation, but they eventually accepted her decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Divorce Adjustment</td>
<td>Ms. H experienced a sense of freedom after the divorce. Her faith and friends boosted her optimism. Ms. H found joy in setting goals and making her own life a priority. Her ex-husband’s lack of interest in their daughter troubles her and she has had difficulty dealing with men who flirt with her because she is divorced.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2-1: Narrative summary of Ms. Y’s first marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ms. Y</th>
<th>was a 51-year-old with two children, who was married to Mr. Y for eleven years. She married for the second time shortly after divorcing Mr. Y.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Premarital Experience</td>
<td>Ms. Y dated her husband two or three times before they married. She married him so that she could immigrate to the U.S. and help her family financially.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Marital Dynamics and Abuse | In the first years of their marriage, Ms. Y and her husband lived with his parents in a small mobile home. She took care of her parents-in-law when they were ill. She also took care of her husband, who was hospitalized after a burglary-shooting incident.  

Ms. Y’s husband was rude to her family and he prevented her from seeing her them.  

Ms. Y’s husband slapped her and restricted her access to family funds.  

Ms. Y considered leaving her husband early in the marriage, but her parents did not approve of divorce so she remained in the relationship.  

Ms. Y’s coping strategies involved tolerating her husband’s temper tantrums and pleading with him to change his ways. She concealed the abuse. |
| Marital Dissolution | Ms. Y reached a turning point when her husband attacked her for hosting a 60\textsuperscript{th} birthday party for her mother while he was away in Korea.  

It took nearly ten years for Ms. Y to leave. When she left, she had no money. Her children remained with their father.  

Ms. Y’s husband accused her of having an affair. He also told her children that she had abandoned them for another man. |
| Post-Divorce Adjustment | Ms. Y sought refuge in a new relationship that resulted in a hasty second marriage. |
Table 2-2: Narrative summary of Ms. Y’s second marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ms. Y</th>
<th>was married to Mr. J for four and a half years. Their relationship lasted seven years, counting a period of cohabitation. She has been divorce 10 years. She had no children in this marriage.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Premarital Experience</td>
<td>Ms. Y’s second husband was a physician and she had hoped that life with a professional husband would be better. There were early signs in the relationship that Mr. J was abusive. When Ms. Y tried to break-up with him, he begged her to stay and marry him. Desperate for stability and having recently left an abusive marriage, Ms. Y married Mr. J.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Marital Dynamics and Abuse | Mr. J belittled his wife, kept her from seeing her family and her children, controlled her daily life, and flirted with other women in her presence. 

The first time her husband hit her, Ms. Y filed for divorce. She reconciled with him because he begged her to and because he suggested marriage counseling.

Ms. Y coped by avoiding eye contact with her husband, by complying with his wishes, and praying that his professional background would inspire him to become a better person.

Ms. Y concealed her marital problems from others. |
| Marital Dissolution | The turning point for Ms. Y came the day she talked back to her husband and he beat her with a steel pipe. In her hospital bed, she faced the fact that he would kill her unless she left.

Ms. Y filed for divorce immediately after she was released from the hospital.

Mr. J was jailed on a felony charge. He begged her to reconcile so that he would not lose his professional license.

It took seven years for the divorce to be finalized. |
| Post-Divorce Adjustment | Ms. Y experienced a sense of freedom after the divorce. She has faced economic hardship and the challenge of reconnecting with her children (from the first marriage). She has maintained an attitude of gratitude.

Ms. Y got support from parents and siblings.

Ms. Y has been reluctant to open herself to others, but she has joined a Single Mom’s group. |
Table 3: Narrative summary of Ms. C’s marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Premarital Experience</th>
<th>Ms. C lost her mother as a young girl and had difficulties adjusting to her stepmother and stepsiblings. She dropped out of a high school and started her own business. When she met Mr. C, he offered her a good life in the U.S. They eloped.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital Dynamics and Abuse</td>
<td>When Ms. C arrived in the U.S., her husband started graduate school. Because he would not work, she took a full-time job at a restaurant. Mr. C isolated his wife by refusing to teach her to drive, by controlling her life, and telling her that she was incapable of living without him. He was quick to anger, forced her to have sex against her will, and threatened Ms. C with a gun. After two years of marriage, Ms. C considered divorce; however, a lack of self-confidence and a concern for her child led her to stay. Ms. C concealed her problems from others. She asked her husband repeatedly to get a job. She became depressed and eventually attempted suicide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Dissolution</td>
<td>Ms. C reached a turning point the day she put a pistol to her head. Her dog rushed her and she dropped the pistol. She realized that her child would be left with her abusive husband if she died. Secretly, Ms. C learned how to drive. She opened herself to the friendship of a couple who gave her legal advice and shelter. She also found comfort and courage in her faith. It took Ms. C five years to leave. When Mr. C found out that she had left, he begged her to come back. He also threatened to kill her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Divorce Adjustment</td>
<td>Ms. C regained her self-confidence and sense of freedom after the divorce. She set concrete plans for her life. Ms. C’s has focused on supporting her child emotionally and financially. She has not considered remarrying. Ms. C has assisted other abused women and she wants to help others in similar situations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: Narrative summary of Ms. K’s marriage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ms. K</th>
<th>was a 41-year-old with two children, who was married for 13 years. She has been divorced two years.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Premarital Experience</td>
<td>Ms. K had little dating experience and she grew up in a family where men were respectful of women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>During the two months she dated Mr. K, his pessimism and tendency to find fault in others made her uncomfortable. Though she had heard that he liked to drink, he never drank around her.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Dynamics and Abuse</td>
<td>After they were married, Mr. K drank openly in her presence. When he drank, he was uncontrollable. He passed out on the street, used vulgar language, and made his family nervous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mr. K threatened to kill Ms. K with a knife, forced her to have sex against her will, and limited her access to family funds.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Ms. K had a contentious relationship with Mr. K’s mother, who ridiculed Ms. K’s family background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To cope with her husband alcoholism and abusive behavior, Ms. K cried, relied on religion, hid the knives in the house, and slept dressed so that she could run out of the house. She concealed her problems from others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Although Ms. K’s first thought of divorce came two weeks after the wedding, she stayed in the marriage because she saw no alternative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ms. K sought refuge in the U.S. with her children. Mr. K followed them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Dissolution</td>
<td>Ms. K reached a turning point when Mr. K threatened her with a knife. She called the police. He returned to Korea after he was released from jail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After Ms. K filed for divorce, her husband persuaded her to return to Korea. He accepted the divorce in the end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Ms. K’s major concern was that her ex-husband and his mother were mistreating her son, who lives with them in Korea. Ms K’s was also troubled by her ex-husband’s disconnection from their daughter, who lives in the U.S.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-Divorce Adjustment</td>
<td>Finally released from fear, Ms. K has regained her self-confidence, self-respect and belief in the others.</td>
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<td>She has had some financial difficulties.</td>
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<td>Ms. K has felt more support from the Korean immigrant community than in Korean society as a divorced woman. She has chosen not to become involved in any social group. Her children have also been supportive.</td>
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Table 5: Narrative summary of Ms. B’s marriage

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Ms. B</th>
<th>was a 34-year-old, who was married for four years. She has been separated for five years and divorced for a year. She had no children in her marriage</th>
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</table>
| Premarital Experience | With the approval and encouragement of her parents, Ms. B married Mr. B, primarily because of his family’s status.  
Mr. B’s mother was overly involved in his life. She determined when he and Ms. B married and the conditions under which they came and first lived in the U.S. (They cohabitated before they married.). Upon arriving in the U.S., Ms. B learned that Mr. B had lied about his employment and educational background. He was not a college graduate or a legal professional.  
Ms. B wanted to leave Mr. B before their wedding ceremony, but she did not have the courage. |
| Marital Dynamics and Abuse | Mr. B intimidated his wife by throwing objects and hitting doors next her head. He also boasted about his past juvenile criminal record.  
Mr. B threatened to kill himself and his wife with a knife. He had an affair with another woman.  
Mr. B’s mother periodically insulted Ms. B and her parents and accused Ms. B of being infertile and stealing money.  
To cope, Ms. B cried and prayed for things to get better. She also concealed her problem from others. |
| Marital Dissolution | Ms. B reached a turning point the day she confronted Mr. B about an affair and he threatened to kill her. Fearing for her life, Ms. B made the decision to leave.  
Before she could leave, Ms. B had to get a green card. She secretly made voice-recordings of her husband’s threats and packed away personal materials that she wanted to take with her. She filed for divorce in Korea. She told her family and friends.  
Mr. B tried to convince Ms. B that she was being investigated by the Immigration Service. He also sued her for matrimonial fraud and gave up his Korean citizenship to avoid paying alimony. |
| Post-Divorce Adjustment | After the divorce, Ms. B regained her self-confidence and self-respect.  
Ms. B developed a plan for herself, launched a successful career, and developed ties in the community. |
to leave. While Ms. H and her husband were dating, he was involved in relationships with other women, flirted with other women in her presence, and insisted that she tolerate his adultery. Ms. Y’s second husband hit her. Ms. C’s and Ms. B’s husbands lied about their plans for life in the U.S. Ms K’s husband blamed others for his shortcomings.

None of the women initially recognized how serious their husbands’ problems were because they got married without getting to know their husbands well. Ms. Y married her first husband so that she could immigrate to the U.S. and help her family financially. She married her second husband, shortly after divorcing her first husband. Ms. C eloped and came to the U.S. to escape family problems. Ms. K. married her husband without knowing that he was an alcoholic. By the time women recognized their husbands’ as abusers, they felt too trapped by cultural, economic, and social circumstances to leave (Chang, 1997).

**Experience of Marital Abuse**

All of the women experienced physical abuse that became more severe over time. Ms. H’s husband threw objects near her and banged on the wall and his desk. Although it was hard for Ms. C and Ms. K to discuss, they were forced to have sex against their will.

Ms. Y was beaten by her first and second husbands and the day she was late picking her second husband up from a meeting
nearly cost her life. They quarreled and he attacked her with steel pipe:

I was shocked and fell down. Then he kept hitting me. Then the next-door neighbors heard all of this and called the police. I called the police too, because I thought I could die... My younger brother took me to the hospital... They were surprised to see me because my head was swollen... A brain surgeon took care of me, and took X-rays. Luckily my brain wasn’t damaged...

Ms. K’s husband threatened her with a knife. Ms. C’s husband threatened her with a gun:

He pulled a pistol out and polished it in front of me. He played with it... He did it impassively. Rather he was smiling at me, and telling me that he would kill all useless losers who broke our family with one shot without anyone knowing...

No less terrifying than the physical attacks was the emotional abuse the women suffered. They were belittled, yelled at, called names, ignored, ridiculed, threatened by husbands’ reckless driving, and required to account for their whereabouts every moment.

Some of the women were shamed by their husbands’ extramarital relations. Ms. H’s husband behaved as if he were a single man, openly comparing her to other women. He demanded
that she take full responsibility for housework despite her full-time job. He controlled every detail of her life and he threatened to kill himself if she revealed his adultery to others. Matters reached the boiling point when one of his lovers became pregnant.

Ms. C’s husband forced her to have sex with him and isolated her by not teaching her to drive. Ms. K’s husband forced her to have sex against her will, used offensive language in front of their children, and came home intoxicated every night. When he was sober, he would not talk about his behavior:

He tried to have sex with me whenever he was drunk... [When I tried to talk about it,] he treated me like a prostitute. He despised taking about sex... I cried and cried all by myself.

Ms. B’s husband had an affair, bragged about his criminal record as a juvenile, and threatened to kill her and himself when she confront his infidelity. Also, he neglected her by playing computer games or watching TV all night.

Most of the women in this study had little, if any, access to family funds, though they often worked outside the home. Their economic dependence made it difficult for them to leave (Abraham, 2000; Strube & Barbour, 1983). This is consistent with the findings of a study of marital violence among South Asian immigrants in the U.S. (Abraham, 2000):
Many women talked about financial deprivation as a major source of isolation and powerlessness. One important way an abusive husband isolates his immigrant wife and literally makes her “nonexistent” to the outside world is by controlling all the finances, giving her no money and thereby restricting her freedom of movement, holding her accountable for every penny she spent, and excluding her from any bank accounts and any movable or immovable assets (p.77).

Ms. Y had limited access to family funds in both of her marriages. Her first husband kept close reins on their bank account money and prevented her from spending money on herself or her family. When he learned that Ms. Y had hosted a 60th birthday party for her mother in their home during his absence, he became violent. In her second marriage, she made a significant contribution to the family through the work she did as her second husband’s office manager. Still, her access to money was restricted.

Ms. C, the only breadwinner in her family, worked 12 hours a day outside the home. Although her husband refused to work, her check was directly deposited into his account to which she had no access. When she finally left him, she had only $18 in her pocket.
Ms. K did not work outside the home. Her husband was a miser and regularly accused her of wasting his money:
I tried to save money all the time, but with rising prices, it was hard to live with the money he gave me...I hardly bought any clothes for myself because I was worried that he would accuse me of wasting his money...He was very money-oriented person, and knew how to hide and keep all the money he got.

Being away from one’s native culture and learning how to function in a different environment is a tremendous challenge for immigrants. Feelings of social isolation in a new country compound the sense of personal loss (Abraham, 2000). Gelles (1997) found that social isolation was positively associated with the risk of wife abuse.

KIW’s in this study experienced social isolation. They were isolated by distance and their husbands’ or in-laws’ efforts to control them. Husbands restricted wives freedom of movement by monitoring their contact with friends and family, by limiting their ability to drive, by discouraging them from learning English, by restricting their access to family funds, and by forcing wives to feel psychologically dependent on the marriage.

Ms. C’s husband told her repeatedly that she “couldn’t live without him” because she could not drive or speak English. Both of Ms. Y’s husbands tried to keep her away from her family,
including her own children. Most husbands expected wives to take care of the husband’s parents. These in-laws usually reinforced wives’ isolation from their own families.

**In-law Conflict**

Coupled with KIW’s experience of marital abuse were problematic relationships with their husbands’ parents. All of the women in this study experienced in-law conflict, specifically with their husbands’ mother. Perhaps, an old Korean proverb reflects the root of this conflict for wives:

- Obey your father before the marriage
- Obey your husband after the marriage
- Obey your son after your husband dies.

According to this proverb, a woman’s position in life is dependent upon her connection to three men--her father, her husband, and her son. Since KIW were married to men whose mothers had a strong, cultural attachment to them, conflict between mothers and daughters-in-law was inevitable.

The husbands’ mothers (and fathers) were usually aware of their sons’ problems, including their abusive tendencies. While mothers minimized or rationalized their sons’ behavior, they demanded loyalty from their daughters-in-law. Mothers-in-law often belittled their daughters-in-law, as was the case for Ms. C, Ms. K, and Ms. B. Ms. B’s mother-in-law accused her of being
“infertile” and “cheating.” Ms. K’s mother-in-law cursed her adolescent son.

A cultural tradition of paying deference to their husbands’ family isolated KIW from their family-of-origin and potential support networks. In several instances, the relationship with their mothers-in-law reinforced the abuse wives suffered in their marriage.

_Coping Strategies_

Stress is ever-present in the lives of abused women and they use a number of coping strategies to address this problem (Endler & Parker, 1990; Moos & Schafer, 1993). Lee (2003a) identified three types of coping strategies: problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance-focused. Problem-focused coping strategies attempt to solve or minimize the source of problem. (Endler & Parker, 1990; Folkman, 1997). Emotion-focused coping attempts to reduce and regulate feelings of fear, anger, and sadness triggered by the event (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Winkel & Vrij, 1995). Avoidance-focused coping is characterized by efforts to shift one’s attention away from the problem (Hartman, 1997).

Early in their marriages, KIW relied primarily on emotion- and avoidance-focused coping strategies. Once they reached a turning point, they adopted problem-focused strategies.
Two emotion-focused strategies the women in this study used were crying and praying alone at home and in church. They cried when frightened, angry, and frustrated. They prayed for a better life and to relieve stress.

Ms. K was dependent on her husband financially and the only way she survived was through prayer:

I live day by day praying to God and reading the Bible to get encouragement to live. It kept me standing, not maintained our married life. I only prayed to God to make some change in my life.

Praying, which may seem like a passive response to abuse, was often the first step towards active resistance (Abraham, 2000; Mehrotra, 1999). All of the women used prayer and all eventually became more assertive. Ms. H hit her husband back, even though she had to wear long-sleeved shirts to hide her bruises. Ms. Y warned her first ex-husband that if he hit her again, she would leave him. When he hit her the second time, she left. Ms. C warned her husband that she would leave him if he did not get a job and she silently ignored his assertion that she could make it without him. These tactics were the beginning of a process that empowered women (Lempert, 1996).

Many of the women used avoidance-focused strategies. They tried not to call attention to themselves and they complied with their husband’s wishes. Ms. Y described her behavior:
I had to live with him, but I didn’t want to see his eyes because I felt threatened whenever I looked at his eyes...

When I saw myself in a mirror, I found terror in my eyes.

Some women took drastic measures. To protect herself from sexual and physical assault, Ms. K slept in the room with her children fully dressed so that she could run out of the house if her husband tried to attack her. She also hid every knife in the house before he came home.

Korean immigrants rarely use formal social services (Lee, 2005). However, four of the women, voluntarily and involuntarily, in this study did seek counseling for their martial problems. Ms. H. went to a counselor after a fight with her husband:

The police came and handed us over to some student affairs committee. They saw me crying all the way, and made me see a counselor. The counselor listened to my stories, and said, “You need a therapist.” Then I got to see a therapist for 3 months...I cannot say it helped me a lot, but I could talk a lot during the session. I didn’t expect the counselor to understand my culture very much. But I got a lot of support from her. She tried to listen to me and be on my side, even if she didn’t understand my Korean way of thinking on divorce and marriage.

Ms. Y and her husband saw a marriage counselor together at first. Later Ms. Y saw the counselor alone for four years.
Counseling did not save the marriage, but Ms. Y said that counseling helped her save herself. Ms. B talked to a social worker, who was the older sister of a friend. Their conversation affirmed Ms. B’s desire to get a divorce.

Ms. K met with a minister, who counseled her husband after his arrest on a driving-under-the-influence charge. She did not find her session with him helpful. In spite of the her husband’s abusive behavior, Rev. Chang said everything seemed fine to him. It is common for Korean religious leaders to insist that couples keep the family intact. In cases of domestic violence, ministers in Korean immigrant communities may intervene in ways that make husbands less accountability for their actions (Abraham, 2000). Ms. H’s pastor, who insisted that her unfaithful husband resign his leadership positions in the church and that his lover the leave the church, was a radical departure from the norm.

At great emotional and physical cost to themselves and their children, KIW’s initially hid the abuse they suffered. They told no one and sought no outside help. The reason for their silence was a cultural tradition of saving face (Lee, 2003b). Women of color and women from immigrant communities have historically avoided involving the police and representatives from social service agencies in marital matters for fear this would bring shame or dishonor to the family (Wolf, Ly, Hobart, & Kernic, 2003). Women’s desire to keep the family intact and
their self-respect also contributed to their secrecy about the abuse.

All five women concealed their abuse until they reached a turning point. Women differed in the degree to which they talked to others about their experience. The longer they had been married and exposed to traditional Korean cultural values, the longer they kept the abuse to themselves.

In short, the abuse KIW’s experienced in this study was terrifying. There were signs before and early in the marriage that their husbands had psychological and relational problems. However, because women were anxious to leave troubled homes, to immigrate to the U.S., to marry men they thought had promise, women married too soon. Women’s commitment to Korean cultural traditions linking women’s social position to the men in their life led them to choose marriage as a means of achieving status, to minimize or disregard early evidence of their husband’s problems, and to hid the abuse from others as long as possible.

After the marriage, the marital abuse worsened. At first women used emotion- and avoidance-focused coping strategies to cope. After they reached a turning point, they shifted to problem-focused strategies. Saving face, a concern for their children, worry over their immigration status, and a fear of being unable to make it alone influenced KIW’s decision to stay married. All of the women experienced conflict with their in-
laws, specifically with mothers-in-law. The shortest marriage lasted four years, the longest for eleven years.

KIW minimized the danger of their experiences during the first interview. Several said, “What I went through was not a big deal,” “it was not that hard to get through,” and “I’m not sure my story is appropriate for your study.” By the end of the interview, the tone of their remarks had turned negative. Several said, “What he did to me was wrong.”

Research Question Two

What factors are associated with Korean immigrant women’s decision to leave abusive marital relationships?

Research question two aimed to explore the factors associated with women’s decision to leave abusive marital relationships. The themes in their narratives included the experience of a turning point, conscious preparation to leave, husbands’ reaction to their decision, women’s changing sense of self, the pressure of cultural traditions and family, and community influences.

Turning points

All of the women identified turning points that were associated with an escalation of physical or emotional abuse. The turning point came for Ms. Y when her husband beat her with a steel pipe and she was hospitalized. As she lay in her
hospital bed, she reasoned that he would kill her if she stayed with him.

After her husband’s efforts to control her intensified, Ms. C put a gun to head. When her dog jumped at her, causing her to drop the gun, she realized if she died, her child would be in the care of her abusive husband.

Ms. H reached a turning point while waiting outside of the apartment where her husband was hiding with his pregnant lover. After offering to raise the child and reconcile with her husband as well as dealing with his lover who wanted to stay near them, Ms. H concluded that she had done enough.

The decisive moments for Ms. K and Ms. B came when their husbands threatened to kill them. Ms. B’s husband threatened to kill her and himself after she confronted him about his affair with another woman. Ms. K’s drunken husband threatened her with a knife and she called the police.

Few (1999) identified the importance of turning points in African American women’s decision to leave abusive relationships. Turning points marked the moment in a relationship when women reevaluated the meaning of the abuse and the relationship. Consistent with Few’s findings, KIW’s said that specific acts of physical and emotional abuse caused them to re-assess their marriage and their own lives.

*Preparation to leave*
Several scholars have found that after women experience a turning point, they consciously began preparation to leave (Few & Bell-Scott, 2002; Taylor, 2002). Turning points involved psychological and, where possible, physical disengagement, finding a job or acquiring the skills necessary for employment (e.g., fluency in English, a driver’s license), and finding for a place to live. Women have various ways of disengaging. They may spend longer periods away from home, emotionally withdraw, and disclose husbands’ abusive behavior to family, friends, and neighbors. They may also report the abuse to the police or other community agencies (Landenburger, 1998).

The women in this study used several strategies as part of their preparation to leave. Ms. H and Ms. Y moved out of the residence they shared with their husbands. Ms. H changed her job, since she worked in the same building with her husband.

Ms. C, Ms. B, and Ms. K had nowhere to go and few resources, so they surreptitiously prepared to leave while they remained with their abusive husbands. Ms. C taught herself to drive without her husband’s knowledge. Ms. K waited until her immigration status was no longer in limbo. Ms. B. secretly packed her belongings. She also recorded her husband’s admission of his violent behavior during a casual telephone conversation.

As the women in this study moved into active preparation for divorce, they physically separated as soon as they could.
When it was not possible for women to leave immediately, they worked to psychologically distance themselves, to acquire job skills and legal knowledge about divorce, and to connect with friends and others who could help them.

**Husbands’ Reaction**

Husbands’ reaction to women’s decision to leave was a theme in their narratives. Husbands, as a group, begged their wives to stay. Once it became clear that the women were committed to leaving, husbands retaliated with anger, threats, and the seizure of family funds.

Ms. C’s ex-husband used to tell her, “I will kill all useless losers who broke my family by one shot without anyone knowing.” Ms. C’s husband threatened to kill her and the Grahams, the couple who offered her shelter and legal advice. Ms. B’s husband threatened to endanger her immigration status by telling officials that their marriage was a fraud. Ms. H’s husband withdrew all of the funds from their joint bank account and countersued for divorce on the grounds that she did not fulfill her duties as a wife. Ms. Y’s first husband accused her of having an affair, and her second ex-husband cried, begged her to return to him and swore that he would never do the same thing again.

In short, husbands’ reaction to women’s decision to divorce was first to beg wives to stay, and then retaliate when the
women refused to reconcile. Despite husbands’ attempts to convince them to stay and the economic and cultural pressures to reconcile, all the women eventually chose divorce.

**Changing Sense of Self**

Divorce, especially for women, is associated with negative emotions, such as anxiety, anger, guilt, and sadness (Bogolub, 2001). Simon and Marcussen (1999) found that people who strongly believed that marriage is a lifelong commitment reported high levels of distress following divorce. The contradiction between their moral convictions and seeing their own marriage end in divorce caused self-doubt (Amato, 2000a).

This contradiction caused Ms. H to question her ability to manage her life:

I thought to myself...“Now I am one step closer to divorce...Can I really make it? What do my parents think of this? How can I talk to them about this?...How can I really make it?” I had never been through this. I had never thought of this happening in my life.

On the other hand, Ms. H, Ms. Y, Ms. C, and Ms. B developed a stronger sense of control over their lives. Ms. Y walked out of her first marriage with no money:

I was confident in myself at that time. I believed that I could live without him...I got out without a penny... Maybe [I thought] it was the way to get revenge on my first ex-
husband. I wanted to show him that I could live without him...

Ms. C learned to drive and speak English without her husband’s knowledge.

I had the courage to overcome fear. I thought that things could not get worse if I left. I was working to feed three in my family, including myself. By leaving, I would have only two to feed.

Ms. B was equally determined to survive:

I had faith in myself. I believed that I could get a job even if all the people said it was impossible... Without faith, I would have stayed there and been financially dependent on him. I didn’t want to ask help from my parents either.

While divorce was a stressful experience, the women in this study found that divorce brought personal growth and positive feelings about themselves. This is consistent with previous studies of women who left abusive relationships (Amato, 2000; Brodie, 1999; Few, 1999; Few & Bell-Scott, 2002; Riessmann, 1990).

**Cultural Traditions and Family Concerns**

Because the women in this study were born and reared in Korea, Confucian cultural traditions played an important role in their socialization. According to this tradition, harmony and
unity must be maintained at all costs; and divorce is the ultimate disgrace for a wife, her parents, and her children (Shim & Hwang, 2005; Yu, 1993). Since maintenance of the family is seen as the wife’s responsibility, divorce is inevitably seen as the wife’s fault. Given this tradition, which teaches that divorce is morally wrong and that family dissolution is caused by the wife’s failure, it was not surprising that many women worried about the impact of their decision on the family-of-origin and their children.

In the face of strong cultural traditions against divorce, KIW’s parents advised them to reconcile at first. However, parents embraced their daughters and grandchildren once they understood how unhappy their daughters were.

Initially, Ms. H’s parents urged her to reconcile with her husband and to accept (and raise) the child he had with his lover. Eventually, Ms. H’s mother supported the divorce:

My mom didn’t want me to get divorced. But once she understood what I had been through with my husband and his lover, she said, “I have had such a hard time living with your dad. I believe that you would do better if you divorced from him.” She supported me after that. My mom said that it would be better to live alone than to live unhappy with a husband I don’t like.
Korean cultural traditions also view the children of divorced parents as undesirable partners (Kim, 1996; Song, 1996). For this reason, KIW worried about the impact of their divorce on their children’s marriage options. Bauer et al., (2000) found that women who were concerned about children’s marriage options delayed leaving husbands until the children are married. Ms. C delayed her plans to divorce after she had a child. She did not want her child to be hurt by the stigma of divorce and that she did not know if she could provide economically:

We had a baby, and it made me spend a few more years with him. When I looked at my baby, my resolution about the divorce disappeared.

I was doubtful about the result of reunion because I knew that he would not change and I wasn’t sure if it was good for my daughter...

KIW’s weighed the impact of divorce on their children against the consequences of remaining in an abusive marriage. In the end, they decided that the cost of staying in the marriage had a negative impact. Ms. H worried that her daughter’s exposure to marital violence would cause her to see violence as acceptable and to become a likely victim.

The women’s children, most of whom daughters, were generally supportive of their mothers’ decision to leave abusive
relationships. This supportiveness helped to reduce the intrapersonal conflict women had about divorce.

**Community Influences**

Korean Christian churches in U.S. function as extended families and reinforce Korean cultural traditions. The Korean American immigrant community is close-knit and 75% of all Korean immigrants are affiliated with Korean Christian churches (Kim, 1997). The ministers and the congregations in these churches are the backbone of Korean American cultural life. They play a major role in defining Korean American identity (Abraham, 2000).

The women in this study turned to the church for emotional support for their decision to divorce. While a few ministers supported women’s decision to divorce, as did Ms. H’s minister and his wife, most ministers encouraged the women to reconcile.

When KIW found that they could not get support from the church, they turned to other people. Ms. C accepted help from the Grahams, a retired judge and his wife. Others sought formal or informal counseling from friends, family, and professionals.

Getting a green card was a critical to immigrant women’s economic survival. They cannot earn a living without it. Although there is a U.S. law that protects abused immigrant women who do not have a green card (Abraham, 2002), most have no knowledge of it and few connections to legal and social services outside of immigrant communities.
Research Question Three

What factors are associated with Korean immigrant women’s adjustment after leaving abusive marital relationships?

Research question three explored women’s post-divorce adjustment. Their narratives of life after they left abusive marriages centered on a new sense of self, the role of faith in their recovery, a drive to establish personal goals, changes in the family relations, and developing new social networks.

A New Sense of Self

In a qualitative study of Anglo and African American women who left relationships where they had been battered, Moss et al. (1997) found that women experienced several phases in rebuilding their lives. One phase involved developing a new sense of freedom and positive self-esteem after fear and self-doubt.

Ms. Y suffered symptoms of post-traumatic stress for months after she was brutally attacked and no longer lived with her husband:

Every night, I shut the door with chairs, and had difficulty in sleeping because I felt nervous. I took lots of sleeping pills and sedatives... I lived on the third floor, because I didn’t feel secure on the first or second floors.

Slowly, she overcame depression, fear, and a reliance on drugs:
There was a small balcony in my apartment. One day, I sit there and saw a big tree in front of it... I thought to myself, “Hey, I can see these blue sky and green trees because I am alive now. If I had gone mad, I could have been a real burden to my family members. I have to be thankful for all these things I have.” Then I stopped taking medicine. Quitting medicine gave me lots of pain because of the withdrawal. I got sick for more than two weeks. After realizing that my eyes were full of horror, I attended a Dan Hak center, a place to train my mind.

I rarely cry now. I made lots of friends who were in the same situation like mine. I think all the crying to my friends through the years has diluted my bitter memories. Despite the wounds of the abuse and divorce, all of the women reached a point where they felt good about themselves again. Many of them spoke of “getting themselves back” and having self-confidence.

Ms. H was excited about having time for herself and freedom to do as she pleased:

People say that a divorced woman finds herself freer. I feel the same way too... One of the most satisfying experiences after I left him was that I finally got my self-respect back. You know you cannot see the woods when
you are in it...I am very happy because I can have time to be myself. My marriage was a kind of bondage...

Ms. Y had similar feelings about her marriage and being divorced:

Marriage was... like a dungeon. It was dark... Now, I do have some financial difficulties. Other than that, everything is just good...good enough to breathe freely.

Ms C’s perspective on life improved dramatically after divorce:

When I moved to a bigger city, I opened my eyes to a whole new world. I began my second life. I saw lots of opportunities, and I believed that I could live by myself... Freedom! I enjoy it so much. I really feel free and happy. I go anywhere I want to go. I have wings now. I feel like I can fly. Those seven years of marriage made me a fool. I was a complete servant to him. I take care of what I earn by myself. I don’t have to give my income to someone else.

When Ms. K’s husband went back to Korea, her view of herself changed:

Since my divorce, I have regained confidence in myself and my belief in the good nature of people. Now I found my self-respect again. I was the youngest daughter in my family, so I was very easy-going when I was young. I lost most of my positive personality. Now, I have most of my
bright personality. I am almost who I was before marriage.

(Laughs)

Ms. B. positive self-esteem carried over into her work life:

For four years of marriage, I had to live my husband’s life... After the divorce, I was so happy to get my life back...to work for myself again... I love myself a lot. I believe that I am still worthy. Now I earn the recognition of my colleagues.

Faith and Recovery

Given the importance of the church in Korean immigrant communities, it is not surprising that women’s personal faith played an important role in their post-divorce adjustment. Kwon (2004) found that women who had experienced severe violence faced a spiritual crisis characterized by feelings of confusion, anger, shame, and alienation from God, themselves, and others. This crisis was provoked by the patriarchal teachings of their Christian faith and Confucian culture, which required women to sacrifice their well-being for family unity.

All of the women in this study were Christians, who believed that God loved them and wanted them to live happy lives. Four women were churchgoers who relied upon prayer for personal consolation.
Church teachings about the sanctity of marriage and family caused Ms. B to feel guilty about her divorce. She had broken her vow to God by not staying married. She also felt hatred towards her mother-in-law, which she also believed to be against God’s will. She resolved her feelings of guilt with the support of an African American pastor and a friend who was a counselor:

I found that I had been hurt badly and that God had saved me from the pain and difficulties of my life so that I could live a joyful and happy life again.

The other women pushed church teachings against divorce to the back of their minds and held their belief in a loving God close. Ms. H’s perspective was typical:

[I was] talking to myself, “My God takes care of everything. God will protect me all the time.” You know we have a hymn that says, “Even my death helps me to get closer to God.” I had nothing to lose, because my ex-husband had dumped me, and I was right in the middle of all the dirty rumors in town. Without my faith in God, I could not have overcome these difficulties without losing my peace of mind.

Ms. C chose a similar approach:

God always gave me hope... when I was in absolute frustration. I always believed that God would take care of me all the time.
Ms. K credited her belief in God’s acceptance with her ability to move forward:

God made me change. God let me stand up by myself, and begin to change my life. God is alive and present within us. I believe He would lead me to the right path. I believe that He will provide me with good things in the future.

Religious faith was, perhaps, the most important emotional anchor for women in this study. Church and cultural teachings against divorce gave them pause as they moved towards divorce. In the end, their belief that God would accept their decision and protect them from harm helped them persevere. This finding is consistent with the work of McKelvey and McKenry (2000), who found that spirituality boosted African American women’s personal mastery after divorce.

**Personal Goals**

Scholars have shown in prior studies that family income for women dropped significantly, sometimes as much as 34%, after divorce (Emily, 1999). Carlin (1999) found that five years after divorce, women and their children were, on average, better off than they had been before the divorce, but their economic status was not as high as it would have been had the women remained married.

Gender inequality in pay and treatment in the workplace is a reality that affects all women, especially those women who are
single and raising children alone (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2004). The women in this study faced great hardship, as immigrant women living alone and with children. Ms. H, Ms. Y and Ms. K knew that times would be hard without their husbands’ resources. Yet, they willingly gave up the economic benefit of marriage to take control of their own lives. Taking responsibility for themselves and their children involved establishing financial goals.

For Ms. H, this meant getting a stable job so that she could support herself and her daughter. For Ms. K who also had a daughter, this meant finding a job after not having worked during the thirteen years she was married.

Ms. C’s goals were to get a good job and develop a long-term plan. Her list of daily reminders included:

First, I need to take good care of my daughter. Second, I need to be better financially. Third, I must be very strong. In a big city like this, there are lots of weird people around me.

There were times when people tried to cheat Ms. C because she was divorced and alone:

I never listen to any one near me. I have my own plan and do my best to keep on track. I think that is the most important thing.

By the time KIW’s divorced, they were emotionally prepared for the financial challenges they would face as single women.
They set their eyes on stable jobs and developing plans to secure their financial future.

Changes in the Family Relations

Divorce, which is the legal and emotional separation of husband and wife, inevitably affects parent-child relations and relations with former in-laws. Arditti (1999) found that the relationship between custodial parents and same-sex children were characterized by greater equality and closeness after divorce. Mothers, in particular, relied on daughters for emotional support and advice.

The relationship between KIW’s mothers in this study and their daughters became closer after divorce. Ms. H left her husband when her daughter was very young and her daughter’s had little memory of her father. Ms. C’s daughter, who was old enough to observe her father’s behavior, was supportive of her mother:

My daughter matured early. I cried a lot in front of her, too. After the divorce, we became friends to each other when she was in early teens. She was young, but she understood a lot. She had been watching me have trouble with him since she was a baby. Now she is 23 years old. Now I feel that she is just like my friend. She always encourages me to do what I want to do. I rely on her
because she understands me a lot. But I don’t do that too much, because I don’t want to be a big burden on her.

Ms. K’s daughter was a teenager when her parents divorced and she urged her mother not to reconcile with her father:

She said, “You should marry a good man.” I [Ms. K] asked her, “Can you understand me?” She answered, “Yes, I fully understand you.” I am not sure that my 15-year-old daughter really understands me, but I try to believe it. She is very nice, and tries to help me all the time.

Ms. K’s relationship with her son, whom she sent to live with her ex-husband in Korea, was distant and fractured. Ms. K sent her son away because she did not believe that she could provide for two children. She worried that she could not raise an adolescent son alone.

The emotional and economic security of children was a major reason women postponed leaving abusive relationships. In the end, women concluded that it was more harmful to their children, especially daughters, to witness domestic violence than to live in a single-parent home. The decision of KIW is consistent with the findings of several scholars. Emery (1999) found that divorce or separation may be better for children’s well-being than staying in an unhappy marriage for the sake of the children. Jekielek (1998) found that children living in families where there was high parental conflict showed lower levels of well-
being than children did whose parents were divorced. Hines (1997) found that a loving relationship with at least one custodial parent was the ideal.

Women who had custody of their children were concerned about their children’s relationship with their fathers and in-laws. Ms. H’s ex-husband and his family showed no interest in having a relationship with his daughter. Ms. Y was the only woman in this study whose children lived with their father. The relationship between Ms. Y and her children was strained. Her first husband restricted her access to the children and her second husband forbade her to see them in their home. Though her children are grown, Ms. Y has little contact with them. Her children also hid their interactions (e.g., letters and phone calls) with her from their dad. Ms. Y hoped that her children will understand why she left and forgive her someday.

**Challenge of Social Networks**

Getting divorced in Korean culture is akin to being sent away by one’s husband. For this reason, the women in this study were ostracized after they divorced, even by former friends. Ms. Y had to quit a job that she desperately needed at a Korean store:

I wanted to work at the store whose owners had been my friends [male friends] for years. They wanted to hire me as a manager, because they believed me and wanted to help me
out of trouble. Their wives, however, did not like the idea of their husbands hiring me. The wives became suspicious of their husbands’ being too nice to me. I felt very sorry for myself at that moment, then realized that this is the cost of being alone.

Although Ms. K was a devout Christian, she did not attend church regularly because she did not want to be asked where her husband was. She found it hard to bare the rumors and ridicule. Ms. H, on the other hand, had no qualms about sharing her story when people asked where her husband was. Openly confronting the issue was empowering for her:

When I came to this community, people asked me, “Where is your husband?” And I said to their face, “I got divorced.” I even came to enjoy their embarrassment when they heard this. (Laughs) It is easy for me to keep everything open to people around me, because I don’t need to lie to them. I do not hide my divorce to other people, and I don’t feel sorry about that.

The importance of social networks and community support in her own life has encouraged Ms. C to help other women:

I was lucky to know the Grahams early. They saved my wasted life. I will do the same thing the Grahams did for me...

Once I met a woman in the similar situation, I helped her
to learn how to drive, supported her financially, and helped her to get a divorce.

Ms. B urged women to become self-reliant:

Not only for the women in my situation, but for all women I want to say that they have to have some interest in social issues and be prepared. Even without divorce, some bad things can happen to their husbands, so they should not rely on them too much.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience and adjustment of five KIW who left abusive marriages, using a constructive paradigm and qualitative methodology. The sample consisted of divorced KIW between 35 and 50, who have resided in the U.S. less than 10 years at the time of divorce, and who left abusive marital relationships at least one year prior to the interview. The research questions that guided this study were:

- How do KIW describe their experience in abusive relationships?
- What factors are associated with KIW’s decision to leave abusive marital relationships?
- What factors are associated with KIW’s adjustment after leaving abusive marital relationships?

Consistent with the findings of previous scholars (Few & Bell-Scott, 2002; Landenberger, 1998; Moss et al., 1997; Taylor,
2002), KIW’s narratives revealed that they went through several stages in their journey from abused wives to self-reliant divorced women.

Stage I was characterized by a premature marriage fueled often by social pressures, early evidence of relational problems and abusive behavior by the husbands, and women’s lack of knowledge about their husbands.

In stage II, a frightening pattern of emotional and physical abuse that included name-calling, cursing, manipulation, deprivation of sleep and food, endless monitoring, threats with weapons and reckless driving, control of family funds, isolation from family and friends, physical battering, and marital rape by husbands, emerged. Wives also experienced difficulty with their in-laws, in particular their husbands’ mother.

Wives resorted to a number of coping strategies. These were praying alone and in church, concealing the problem, and, in some cases, fighting back verbally and physically. While some wives recognized their husband’s behavior as abusive and wrong, religious and cultural values discouraged them from considering divorce. If they had children, divorce was even more difficult to consider.

During stage III, KIW’s experienced a turning point that was often associated with a specific violent event. This event caused women to re-examine their commitment to the marriage and
to reexamine their fears of being ostracized, living alone, and taking care of themselves. This turning point led women to adopt problem-focused strategies. They broke their silence and reached out to pastors, family, friends, and counselors about the abuse. They also began consciously preparing for divorce and life alone by acquiring jobs and the tools for better jobs that would help them care for themselves and their children. They kept their plans for divorce secret from husbands and mothers-in-law.

KIW’s learned English. They learned to drive. They got green cards. They gathered evidence for the divorce and knowledge about their legal rights. They packed away materials they wanted to keep. As soon as they were no longer within husband’s physical reach, they filed for divorce.

The post-divorce period, stage IV, was characterized initially by emotional and economic hardship, difficult relations with ex-husbands and former in-laws, and mixed reactions in the community. Nevertheless, women developed a new sense of self, a renewed connection to God, close relations with the children they raised, and a positive outlook on life. Many said that their willingness to participate in this study came from a desire to help other women who may have faced abuse.
Chapter 7
Recommendations for Research and Practice

This qualitative study, which explored Korean immigrant wives experience of marital abuse and post-divorce adjustment, offers several recommendations for further research and practice. These recommendations are discussed in this section.

Directions for Research

There is a need for studies of abuse in Korean and other immigrant communities that examine women’s lives before and after divorce. Because immigrant women are often isolated within their community, they are often invisible to the larger society. For this reason, most scholars have focused on the outcomes of abuse and divorce. Longitudinal and qualitative studies that explore those factors associated with abuse, such as premature marriage, lack of dating experience, social isolation, language difficulties, problems in the family-of-origin, which were identified in this study, would be helpful. We see the outcomes of marital abuse, but we need a better understanding of its dynamics within immigrant communities.

There is a need for research that considers the role of Korean culture, particularly Confucian and religious teachings,
in KIW’s attitudes toward marriage and divorce. For five-thousand years, Korea has been dominated by one ethnic group, despite numerous invasions from neighboring countries (Park, 2000). The strength of Korean culture with its focus on unity has been the key to its survival. All of the women in this study faced the dilemma of whether to remain true to their culture or make the decision to divorce. Greater attention to how women resolve the conflict between this background and their situation as abused wives in the U.S. would broaden our knowledge of women’s resilience. There is also a need to study those women who resolve this dilemma by staying with their abusive husbands.

There is also a need for studies that compare the experiences of Korean immigrant women to other Asian immigrant women, to non-Asian immigrant women, and to other women in the U.S. Comparative studies might clarify the importance of ethnicity, class, and citizen status for abused women.

Implications for Practice

There is a great need in Korean immigrant communities for services that help abused women and their children. The problem is one of both quality and quantity. There is a lack of awareness about family violence, despite its prevalence, in Korean immigrant communities. For this reason, prevention education programs that explain what abuse is are a necessity. In order to be effective, these programs must be bilingual and
the professionals who run them must be sensitive to Korean culture and include people of Korean ancestry, wherever possible. This and other studies of abused immigrant women suggest that an understanding of women’s cultural background would enhance the effectiveness of programs to help them. Because of the role Korean churches play in women’s lives, it is essential that some prevention education programs be housed in these institutions. It is also important that church leaders and social workers work together to address the concerns of marital abuse.

Given that Korea is second among nations in the use of the high-speed internet (The Wall Street Journal, 2006), it is important that prevention education and support services develop websites in English and Korean to reach abused women. Most are unaware of services in the community and those who are aware are often reluctant, initially, to contact them. Those who are unable to visit an agency or who wish to remain anonymous would get information and referrals via the internet. Abused women could also share their stories on websites anonymously.

An internet community for Korean women in the U.S. already exists and includes websites for Korean married women and divorced women (e.g., missyusa.com, mizville.com and gomissy.com). Social service agencies could build on this foundation.
In addition to prevention education, there is a need for emergency services, such as shelters for abused women and their children. Several of the women in this study remained in abusive relationships when they desperately wanted to leave because they were economically dependent and had nowhere else to go.

Finally, it would be empowering and helpful to involve women, like those in this study, in prevention and treatment programs. Some of the women expressed a desire to help others and their stories would give hope to those women facing the problem of marital abuse.
References


In L. Comas-Diaz, & B. Greene (Eds.), Women of color: Integrating ethnic and gender identities in psychotherapy (pp. 72-113). New York: Guilford Press.


Appendix A

Verbal Consent Script for Telephone Screening

I, Youn Mi Lee, am a doctoral candidate from the Department of Child and Family Development at the University of Georgia, am conducting research on, “Korean immigrant women’s adjustment after leaving abusive marital relationships.” I am interested in understanding the lives of Korean immigrant women who survived abusive marital relationships, and this is my research area and dissertation topic. The purpose of the telephone interview is to see if you are an appropriate subject for my study. This telephone interview only takes about three minutes.

Let me assure you that any information you provide will be kept strictly confidential from this moment to the final written project. I understand your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw your participation if you don’t want to be a part of the study.

If you are ready, I will ask a few questions:

1. How old are you?
2. Were you born in Korea?
3. Did you get marry a Korean man before coming to the U. S.?
4. Did you get divorced after coming to the U.S.?
5. How long have you lived in the U.S.?

6. Have you ever experienced any of the following in your marital relationship?

   * Physical abuse such as pushing, slapping, grabbing, shoving, hitting with a hand or an object, kicking, biting, beating up, burning, using a weapon, threatening with a weapon, or any other kind of physical action

   * Emotional abuse such as a put-down of your physical appearance, insults or shaming comments, discounting your ideas or feelings, criticizing you, ridiculing, belittling, humiliation in front of others, isolation from family & friends, ordering around, ignoring (yourself, your family, or friends), yelling, the silent treatment, name-calling, slamming doors, threats of abandonment, monitoring your time or activities, unrealistic expectations, attempts to control your access to money, or withholding or affection

7. Are you in an abusive relationship now?

Do you agree to participate in my research study?

<If Yes>
Thank you. I will give you a call soon for the interview schedule.

<If, No>
Thank you very much for your interest.
You can always contact me at 205-345-5834, koreanwomenus@hotmail.com. If you provide me with address, I will send information that may interest you.

Thank you very much.

* adopted from Morse (2003).
Appendix B

Consent Form

I, ____________________, agree to participate in the research study titled, “Korean immigrant women’s adjustment after leaving abusive marital relationships” conducted by Youn Mi Lee from the Department of Child and Family Development at the University of Georgia. I understand that I can withdraw my participation if I do not want to be a part of the study. I can withdraw without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have all my information returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following has been explained to me:

A. That the purpose of this study is to explore Korean immigrant women’s experience of wife abuse, and to examine how Korean immigrant women interpret their lives and their survival.

B. That the interview will take place in a private setting. I will complete approximately two interviews lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. I also understand that the researcher may ask for a third interview, if necessary. I can choose not to answer any question.

C. That all interviews will be audio-taped, analyzed, and transcribed in English and Korean. Audio tapes and any written material will be stored in a secure area.

D. That the focus of the interview will be my past marital experience and the experience of marital abuse, as well as my adjustment after leaving that relationship.
E. That in discussing my past marital experience, I will have the opportunity to share my story with other women who is in a similar situation.

F. That I will be invited to share personal notes, correspondences, pictures, or poetry that are relevant to the research. This will be used or quoted only by my permission. I understand that the researcher will not use or quote any statement from documents written by anyone other than me.

G. That I will receive a summary of the final written project. Also as a token of thanks from the researcher, I will also receive $30.00 stipend after each interview, total $60.00 stipend after completing two interviews. If the third interview is needed, an additional $30.00 will be paid.

Given that my participation in this study is voluntary, I do not expect any risk. However, if I feel uncomfortable at any point during interviews, I can stop the interview and terminate my participation. I will also be provided contact information for personal counseling.

My participation in this study will be confidential. I understand that the researcher will use pseudonyms for all identifying information in the transcripts, research journal, personal memo, and final written project. I also understand that the researcher will keep audiotapes in a locked cabinet. The researcher will discard all data five years after she made the initial contact with me by telephone.
I understand that by signing on this form I am agreeing to participate in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

I can ask any further questions about the research, now or during the course of project. I can always contact Youn Mi Lee at 205-345-5834, koreanwomenus@hotmail.com. I can also contact the professor supervising the research, Dr. Patricia Bell-Scott at the University of Georgia at 706-542-4899, if I have any question.

________________________________________
Signature of Participant   Date

________________________________________
Signature of Investigator   Date

Telephone: 205-345-5834
e-mail: koreanwomenus@hotmail.com

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu
부록 B

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전화번호 : 205-345-5834   이메일: koreanwomenus@hotmail.com

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주소: 606A Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, GA 30602-7411 전화: (706) 542-6514   이메일: IRB@uga.edu.
Appendix C
Contact List

University of Georgia Marriage and Family Program McPhaul Clinic
706-542-4486 / McPhaul Center 2nd floor

University of Georgia Psychology Clinic
706-542-1173 / Psychology building

University of Georgia Mental Health Clinic
706-542-2273 / Health Center

Pan Asian Community Service Center
770-936-0969 / 3760 Park Ave, Doraville, GA 30340

Good Korea Times Service center
770-717-9958

Atlanta Women’s Counseling Center
404-524-1427 / 280 Elizabeth St NE, Atlanta, GA 30307

Counseling for Women
770-619-9095 / 110 Westchester Way, Alpharetta, GA 3005

Dunwoody Counseling Center
770-393-0044 / 1742 Mount Vernon Rd. Atlanta, GA 30338

Missyusa.com (website for Korean women in U.S.A)
부록 C
컨택트 리스트

조지아 대학교 매리지 앤 패밀리 프로그램 맥폴 클리닉
706-542-4486 / 맥폴센터 2층

조지아 대학교 심리 클리닉 센터
706-542-1173 / 심리학과 빌딩

조지아 대학교 정신건강 클리닉
706-542-2273 / 헬스 센터

팬 아시안 커뮤니티 서비스 센터
770-936-0969 / 3760 Park Ave, Doravill, GA 30340

굿 코리아 타임즈 서비스 센터
770-717-9958 /

아틀란타 우먼스 카운셀링 센터
404-524-1427 / 280 Elizabeth St NE, Atlanta, GA 30307

여성을 위한 카운셀링
770-619-9095 / 110 Westchester Way, Alpharetta, GA 3005

던우디 카운셀링 센터
770-393-0044 / 1742 Mount Vernon Rd. Atlanta, GA 30338

Missyusa.com (미국거주 한인 여성을 위한 웹사이트)
Appendix D

Interview Guide Questions I

Demographic background

• How old are you?
• In which Korean city were you born?
• How long have you been in the U.S.?
• Can you describe your and your husband’s educational background?
• What is your religious affiliation?
• Do you have children? How many do you have? How old are they?
• Do you have a job? What kind of job do you have? (If you don’t, how do you make your living?)
• What kind of job did you husband have? Did you have a job when you were in the marriage? If so, what kind of job did you have?

Marital background

• How long were you married?
• How did you meet your husband? How long had you dated your husband before you got married?
• How would you describe your husband’s personality?
Marital relationship history

- Do you remember the first time that your husband abused you?
- What kinds of things has your husband done to you?
- Can you remember when you became aware of the abuse (any kind of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse)?
- Can you tell me about the most serious abusive incident?
- How did you cope with the abuse during this relationship? Were there any particular coping strategies that you used?
- Why did you stay in the marriage?

Family and network Influences

- Did you tell anyone that you were being abused in your marital relationship? What was her (his) response? What did she (he) say about your husband’s behavior?
- Have you talked about father’s behavior with your children? How did they respond?
- Did your mother or siblings know about your situation? How did they respond?
- Did you tell any friends? Or co-workers?
- Did you ever seek help outside home?
Appendix E

Interview Guide Questions II

(This second interview guide is subject to change after analysis of the first interview. If the questions diverge from the theme of the first interview, I will revise the second interview questions and submit it for review with a request for changes to the approved research study.)

Processing of leaving

- Was there any particular incident that made you decide to leave your husband?
- When your husband knew that you had decided to leave, what happened in your relationship?
- How did your friends affect your decision to leave the relationship?
- Did your religious belief affect your decision to leave?
- What was the biggest challenge when you decide to leave?
- How long did it take before you actually left your husband? What kind of procedure did you go through?

Adjustment after leaving husband

- After you left your marital relationship, what changes did you faced?
• What are the positive things you experienced since you left your husband?

• What factors has been most important to your survival since leaving your husband?
Appendix F

Checklist of Abusive Behavior

1. He made me feel unsafe even in my own home.
2. I felt ashamed of the things he did to me.
3. I tried not to rock the boat because I was afraid of what he might do.
4. I felt like I was programmed to react a certain way to him.
5. I felt like he kept me prisoner.
6. He made me feel like I had no control over my life, no power, no protection.
7. I hid the truth from others because I was afraid not to.
8. I felt owned and controlled by him
9. He could scare me without laying a hand on me.
10. He had a look that goes straight through me and terrifies me.

부록 F
과거 결혼생활에서 남편의 부당한 대우를 측정하는 체크리스트

1. 집에서도 남편 때문에 나는 불안했었다.
2. 남편이 나한테 하는 행동에 수치심을 느꼈다.
3. 남편이 언제, 무슨 일에 화를 냈는지 물라해서 남편이 하는 대로 하려고 하였다.
4. 남편한테 나는 늘 정해진 식으로 상대하도록 강요된 느낌을 받았다.
5. 남편이 나를 감옥에 가둔 느낌이었다.
6. 남편은 내가 내 인생을 스스로 결정할 수 없고, 아무런 능력도 없고, 보호 받을 수도 없는 것처럼 느끼게 하였다.
7. 남편의 행동이 외부에 알려지는 게 두려워 다른 사람들한테 사실을 감춘 적이 있다.
8. 남편이 나를 소유하고 통제하는 느낌이 들었다.
9. 남편은 나한테 손 대지 않고도 나를 감출 수 있었다.
10. 나를 괴롭히는 남편의 시선에 나는 두려움을 느꼈다.

Appendix G

Application for Approval of Research with Human Research Participants

1. Problem Abstract

Most investigators have examined the pervasiveness of physical abuse and identified those traditional cultural factors (e.g., patriarchy, emphasis on family harmony, etc.) and particular institutional characteristics (e.g., social discrimination, economic hardships, lack of information about American culture, etc.) that have been associated with physical abuse (Koss et al, 1994; Song, 1996; Rhee, 1997; Kim & Sung, 2000). Little attention has been given to the adjustment and resilience of Korean immigrant women who leave abusive marriages. The purpose of this study is to explore the experience and adjustment of Korean immigrant women who leave abusive marriages.

A qualitative methodology, employing semi-structured interviews and grounded theory analysis will be used for this study. The sample will be comprised of at least five divorced Korean immigrant women between 35 to 50 years of age, who have been U.S. residents for less than 10 years, and who left an abusive marriage at least a year ago.

It is important to study wife abuse among Korean immigrant families for several reasons. First, Koreans are one of the
fastest growing minority groups in the United States and their experience deserves academic attention. Second, there are few studies of Korean immigrant families that focus on women’s lives. Third, given that Korean immigrant history is relatively brief, compared to other Asian immigrant groups in the U.S., it is likely that cultural and institutional factors play a key role in Korean immigrant women’s decision to leave or remain in abusive marriages. Fourth, by examining the adjustment of women who have left abusive partners, this study moves beyond the general question of “why do they stay?” to “how do they survive?”

This study is guided by three research questions:

a. How do Korean immigrant women describe their experiences in abusive marital relationships?

b. What factors are associated with Korean immigrant women’s decision to leave abusive marital relationships?

c. What factors are associated with Korean immigrant women’s adjustment after leaving abusive marital relationships?

2. Research Design

A constructivist paradigm and qualitative methodology with semi-structured interviews and grounded theory analysis will be used to examine how Korean immigrant women interpret their lives and the meaning of their survival. Grounded theory methods consist of “systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and
analyzing data to build middle-range theoretical framework (Chamaz, 2002, p. 509)." A constructivist paradigm and grounded theory approach assumes that the research process will begin with the researcher posing preliminary questions that will be explored with the subject via a semi-structured interview guide. Follow-up and in-depth questions will be developed around the data gathered in the initial interview (Charmaz, 2002). Sample semi-structured interview questions appear in Appendices D and E.

The researcher purposes to do in-depth interviews with at least five divorced Korean immigrant women who reside in Athens or Atlanta, Georgia. The participants must currently not be in abusive marital relationships at the time of interview, must be between 35 and 50 years of age, must have been in the U.S. for less than 10 years, and must have been divorced at least one year ago. Two interviews will be audiotaped and conducted in Korean with the possibility of a third interview. They will be transcribed and analyzed in English.

With the grounded theory method, the researcher simultaneously collects and analyzes data. Data analysis is a two-step coding process which entails: (a) Initial coding or open coding, and (b) selective or focused coding (Charmaz, 2000; Charmaz, 2002). In the coding process, categories and themes will emerge. It is the researcher’s task to explain the relationship of these categories to each other. One technique
involves comparing and contrasting themes and concepts (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Another technique involves interpreting the patterns and structure of themes and concepts. For example, one might identify the frequency of occurrence, omission, and declaration as well as the similarity/analogy, co-occurrence, sequence, hypothesized reasonableness (LeCompte, 2000) in narrative data.

The researcher will consult with the major professor throughout the data-gathering and analysis processes. The major professor will be one of the sources of feedback regarding the substantive, ethical, and methodological soundness of the research process. The participants and a research peer (who is Korean) will also be a key source of feedback about the meaning of the findings. The researcher will ask the peer to back translate the findings. The researcher will also discuss the meaning of her findings with the participants. By relying upon the professor, the participants, and a research peer, the researcher hopes to enhance the trustworthiness of the data and her interpretation of the findings.

The researcher will also keep a journal and write theoretical memos as a way of recording the research process. I will also invite participants to share, if they like, personal notes, letters, pictures, poetry that are related to this study. Only with the consent of participants will the researcher use or
quote from materials shared for the dissertation. Also, I will be careful not to use or quote any statement from the letter written by someone else other than the participants.

To increase data reliability and validity (the term “trustworthiness” is usually used in qualitative research), the researcher will use several strategies: triangulation, member checking, audit trails, peer examination, personal records (e.g., from the researcher and participants), rich descriptions. Triangulation is the most well known technique, and it involves the use of multiple investigators, data sources, or data collection methods to confirm emerging findings. Member checking is a procedure where the researcher takes tentative interpretations of the data back to the informants to ask if the findings are plausible. Peer examination involves discussing and consulting with colleagues about methods and findings. Reflexivity is a process that requires researchers to reflect on their world view, biases, theoretical orientation, and relationship to the study. Keeping journals is a useful strategy for tracking the researcher’s thoughts, feelings, ideas, bias and hypotheses induced by interaction with informants. Audit trail is a detail account of the methods, procedures, and decision points in carrying out the research so that other researchers may confirm and dispute the findings given the data and research context. Rich and thick descriptions contextualize
the study and help others to determine the extent to which findings are transferable.

3. Research Participants

   a. List number of subjects, age, and gender

   Purposive sampling (Patton, 1990) or criterion-based sampling (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) will be used to recruit participants who can provide rich narratives for in-depth examination. At least five Korean immigrant women will be recruited from Athens and Atlanta. They will meet the following criteria: They must: (a) be between 35 and 50; (b) be born in Korea; (c) have married to Korean men before coming to the U.S. (d) have resided in the U.S. less than 10 years; (e) have been divorced in the U.S. for at least one year; and (f) not be in an abusive marital relationship at the time of the interview. The researcher will select women who were born in Korea, who married Korean men before coming to the U.S. and who have been in the U.S. for less than 10 years to assure a common cultural background.

   The length of residence was included in the sample criteria because time in the U.S. may affect women’s attitudes about marital abuse. Divorce rates for Asian American families were 2.8%, 4.9%, 6.7%, and 7.3% for 5-10 years, 10-15 years, 15-20 years, and 20-25 years of residency in the U.S. respectively (Mangiafico, 1988, p. 93). The longer immigrant women reside in
the U.S., the more likely they are to resolve marital problems by divorce. Korean women in the U.S. less than 10 years area assumed to have a more difficult time ending abusive relationships through divorce.

Time since divorce has been included as criteria for sample selection. Albrecht (1980) indicated that the time before the decision to divorce was the most difficult period for 55% of the respondents, followed by the time before the final decree (22%), and just after the divorce (21%) (as cited in Chang, 1998, p.19). According to the research of Kincaid and Caldwell (1995), psychiatric symptomatology of separated persons decreased as time passed. The researcher will include only women who have been divorced for at least a year because they will presumably have been weathered the most difficult aspects of the divorce process.

b. Method of selection and recruitment

Since there are many difficulties in recruiting immigrant women who had been in abusive marital relationships, the researcher will use the snowball selection method. This involves asking participants to identify other potential participants who fit the criteria (Morse, 2003). Qualitative researchers have found this strategy to be useful in situations where populations are difficult to access and not naturally bounded together in groups (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).
The researcher will contact Korean Christian churches in Athens and in Atlanta, Korean small businesses, the center for Pan Asian community services, and the Good Korea Times Service Center. The first contact will be made with pastors in Korean Christian churches by telephone. The researcher will explain research and ask that women who meet the criteria be referred for participation. The researcher will give the pastors a telephone number and email address to be contacted. The phone number is 205-345-5834 and e-mail address will be koreanwomenus@hotmail.com. Pastors who are known to have an interest in family problems will be contacted first. Similar strategies will be employed in making contact through small business people and other service centers. The researcher will approach community members she has known and ask them to refer participants. Because of the shame and sensitivity associated with wife abuse in Korean communities, the researcher will take care to keep the names of potential participants private.

Potential participants will be screened to determine if they meet the research criteria by telephone. To get participants’ consent for the telephone screening, I am requesting a waiver of consent form (Appendix A). With the aid of a Screening Tool Questionnaire (which is a part of Appendix A) and after consultation with the major professor, participants will be selected or excluded from the study. All women who make
initial contact and show interest in the study, irrespective of their eligibility, will be offered a list of counseling resources by mail or e-mail (Appendix C). Once the participants are selected, an appointment for the first interview will be scheduled. Because a comfortable place and time to talk about private matters is important, the place and date for the interview will be set by the participants.

4. Procedure

Before the interview begins, the researcher will review the consent form with participants carefully, answer any questions that they have, and sign the form. The consent form (Appendix B) outlines the purpose of the study, procedures, benefits, and risks. This form will be prepared and distributed in two languages – Korean (front side) and English (back side). The participants will be advised that they may discontinue the interview at any point and that they may refuse to answer any question. They will be asked to sign the consent form. The participants and the researcher will keep copies of the consent forms.

Two interviews will be conducted per participant. A third interview may be necessary. It is estimated that each interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes. Though both the participants and the researcher are Korean women, one cannot assume that they will have instant rapport. Since the quality of
the women’s narrative is dependent on the relationship or rapport with the researcher (Morse, 2003), the goal will be to develop rapport and break the ice during the first interview.

The first semi-structured interview (Appendix D: Interview guide I) will be conducted in Korean and audio-taped. The check list of abusive behaviors (Appendix F) will be administered during the first interview. The check list will be provided in English or Korean according to the participants’ preference. During the interview, the participants will be encouraged to explore the marital experience focusing on abusive relationships. At the end of the interview, the participants will be invited to bring personal journals, poetry, or correspondence that they might want to share. Participants will be paid a $30.00 stipend.

After the first interview session, the researcher will transcribe the audiotape; and translate the transcription into English. The transcript will be analyzed and back translated into Korean. A peer review will be done for member checking and data validity.

After analyzing the first interview transcript and discussing it with the major professor, the second semi-structured interview questions will be developed. Participants will be contacted for the second interview. The researcher will discuss her interpretations of the first interview—in other words, do a member check—before or during the second semi-
structured interview (Appendix E) The questions of the second interview are subject to change, depending on the findings of the first interview. If the questions diverge from the theme of the first interview, I will revise the second interview questions and submit it for review with a request for changes to the approved research study. The second interview will be transcribed in English and back translated into Korean for member checking. At the end of the second interview, participants will be paid a $30.00 stipend (the total will be $60.00 after completing two interviews). After analyzing the second interview, the researcher will consult with the major professor to determine if a third interview is necessary. The participants will be paid $30.00 stipend for the third interview.

5. Materials

The materials for this study will be (a) verbal consent script for telephone screening (Appendix A); (b) consent form in Korean and English (Appendix B); (c) contact list in Korean and English (Appendix C); (d) two semi-structured interview questions (Appendix D and Appendix E); and (e) checklist of abusive behavior in Korean and English (Appendix F).

6. Risk

a. Current Risk

Psychological discomfort could possibly occur during the interview as the participants will be asked to reflect on
difficult experiences. If the participant shows signs of emotional discomfort, the interview will be stopped until she is ready to continue the interview. If the participant does not want to continue the interview, she can leave the interview at any point. The researcher will provide all participants with a list of resources (Appendix C), and a monetary compensation of $20.00, as a token of gratitude for participation.

b. Future Risk

To ensure the participants’ confidentiality, a pseudonym will be used in all identifying information in the transcripts, research journal, theoretical memo, and the final written work. The names of the participants, intimate partners, family members, residence and employment will be replaced by pseudonyms they choose.

The researcher will keep audiotapes in a locked cabinet where no one else has access them. I will discard all data five years after I make initial telephone contact with the participants.

7. Benefit

a. Potential Benefit on the Participants

During the interview, participants will have an opportunity to explore their past experience in a safe place. It may provide catharsis. Participants will be informed of the value of their
narratives for research and prevention programs that would aid Korean immigrant women.

b. Potential Benefits in Humankind

By examining the life story of Korean immigrant women who have successfully negotiated the conflict between the culture of the old country and the U.S., this research will enhance our understanding of Korean immigrant women’s resiliency and ability to cope with crisis. It will provide also another point of view to analyze immigrant women’s lives. With the rich descriptions of coping and help-seeking behaviors, this study will also contribute to the development and expansion of intervention and prevention programs for Korean families.

8. Consent Process

Two different consent forms will be used in this study:

(a) I request a waiver of signed consent for telephone screening of potential participants. I am requesting verbal consent to conduct only telephone screening. The justificantion for the waiver is as follows.

(b) All participants will receive a consent form before the face-to-face interview. This study requires the voluntary participation of Korean immigrant women. During the interview, participants can stop the interview without giving any reason, and without any penalty. Participants will be informed that even if they are not able to complete the interview (either first or
second interview), they will receive $20.00 monetary compensation.

Since it is not possible to get participants’ signed consent by telephone, I request a waver of signed consent. Thus, participants who are not selected in the screening interview will only give verbal consent for the telephone screening. Participants who are selected will give verbal consent for the screening as well as signed consent for participation in the rest of the research study. Since potential participants are given detailed information about the study before making a call, and they call voluntarily, I do not expect any harm to them. Irrespective of their eligibility, all women who make telephone contact with me will receive a list of counseling resources by mail or e-mail (Appendix C). The consent script is submitted (Appendix A).

9. Vulnerable Participants

All discussion and materials about the consent process will be conducted in either English or Korean according to the participants’ preference. Since it is expected that most will prefer Korean, all materials will be printed in both languages. The selection criteria require that participants be divorced and out of the abusive relationship for a year. For this reason, participants should be able to reflect upon their experiences with minimal psychological discomfort. Nevertheless, if any
participant feels emotional discomfort and wants to leave the research, the interview will be terminated.