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Heejung Kwon

Toward a Theological Anthropology of Resistance:
Korean American Women's Ambivalent Subjectivity,
"Third Space" and Religious Education

By

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An Abstract of a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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Abstract

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This study focuses on women's ambivalent subjectivity and challenges religious educators to complicate and expand their understanding of resistance as a goal and method of liberative religious education. Elaborating on the concept of Third Space, the dissertation conceptualizes resistance as a creative holding of tensions in the space between persons' subjective worlds and objective realities, and between historicity and transcendence. The goal of this project is to build conceptual grounds for a theological anthropology of third space based on eleven Korean American women's narratives of subordination and resistance, in dialogue with sources in pedagogy, theology, and psychology. Toward that end, the dissertation explores and evaluates concepts and images of third space in poststructuralist and postcolonial critical pedagogies; feminist and womanist theologies; the psychological theories of Donald W. Winnicott, Jessica Benjamin, and Robert Kegan; and the theological anthropology of Karl Rahner. Employing the method of critical appropriation and mutually critical conversation, the study makes room for the paradoxical, lived experience of women who navigate oppressive systems and transcend the false binary of freedom/autonomy and complicity/subordination in their relationships with other people and with God.

Chapter 1 analyzes the narratives and reveals the women's ambivalent subjectivity. The dissertation continues with an introduction to and evaluation of poststructuralist and postcolonial pedagogies. Special attention is given to the concept of third space that is described and implied in these theories. With the women's narratives and pedagogical theories in the background, the dissertation excavates what I call "Feminist Valorization of Women's Resistance" and feminist and womanist theologies of sin. Psychological theories follow, drawing especially on the theories of Winnicott, Benjamin, and Kegan. The last two chapters take a turn to the theological, first locating a connection between the idea of third space and Rahner's theological anthropology, and then pointing toward a theological anthropology of third space. This anthropology includes expanded concepts and images of resistance, and proposals for reshaping liberative religious education. As a whole, the project contributes to the studies on Korean American women, feminist theology, Rahnerian theology, and religious education.

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To my parents

Young Ha Kwon and Mihye Yang

Contents

Preface

My theological training began at Ewha Womans University in Korea. Looking back, my exposure during my master's program there to feminist, womanist, third-world, *minjung*, and liberation theologies significantly influenced the direction of my intellectual journey. I developed a passion for doing theology for Korean women and third-world women. My theological vocation was to develop a theology for ordinary women like my grandmother and mother. The following excerpt of a paper I wrote for Dr. James Fowler's class for M.Div students some years later well delineates the passion and methodological orientation I had as a young theologian:

> My theology is to help my grandmother, my mother, and my sisters look at each of themselves as a subject and creator of human history. This is the milepost of my theology . . . I believe many Korean women need enlightenment. But enlightenment for them does not mean to follow a Western style. It means to begin to find their own identity as subjects of history. Korean women have been expected to be silent. But their theology should be written in their own voices . . . This does not mean that third-world theologies can ignore the heritage of Western theology. For we cannot construct our own theology without having dialogues with the heritage of Western Christianity. Thus we have to reflect on the tradition critically and reinterpret its meaning.

As this excerpt shows, the central theological question I have struggled with has been how to pursue women's liberation while rigorously dealing with differences in women's experience and the invisibility and silence of many women, especially Korean women. I have searched for a theological language with which I can discuss the necessity of women's liberation while celebrating their wisdom, wit, and persistence.

My vocational identity also has been, from the beginning, as a liberative religious education scholar and practitioner. My interest in education for critical consciousness or liberation began with my encounter with Paulo Freire's work in my college years. His

Pedagogy of the Oppressed was one of the bibles for many college students in Korea back then, especially those who were in the student movement. My central question, in a way, can be stated as follows: How can I pursue a Freirian pedagogy with a realistic and nuanced perspective of women's struggles with power relations? My interest in liberative religious education was well confirmed by encountering the discussions of the political nature of knowing and of religious education by religious education scholars including Charles Foster, Thomas Groome, and Theodore Brelsford. The works of religious education scholars such as Letty Russell, Mary Elizabeth Moore, Mary Boys, and Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng greatly influenced my search for a holistic educational model for, specifically, women's liberation.

During my study at Ewha, the Department of Christian Studies hosted numerous conferences for theologians and ministers, including international gatherings of women theologians. Through my encounters with Korean ministers, Christian activists, and Asian theologians from diverse Asian countries, I learned a lot about the historical and social responsibility of theologians and the many questions handed to Asian theologians. It was particularly striking to hear some activists' and ministers' critique that the theological discourses in the academy were failing to truly speak to the reality of many Koreans, especially the poor. Their serious challenge to Korean theologians opened my eyes to the possible gap between academic discourses and people's everyday experience, a gap that was quite painful to both academic theologians and ministers. From this realization emerged my vocation as a practical theologian.

Since then, I have pursued developing a theological anthropology as the basis of liberative religious education for Korean American women. After I came to study at

Candler School of Theology and started attending a Korean immigrant church, I began paying attention to the complex dynamics of Korean American women' subordination and resistance. What caught my attention during the years of relating to and teaching Korean American women were the frequent inconsistencies, contradictions, and indistinguishable mixture of submission and resistance in the women's behavior and attitudes. A woman might, for example, offer a systemic critique to patriarchy one moment, then actively participate in the system the next. Here were complex dynamics of submission and resistance. In other cases, I often had a hard time identifying a certain act or comment either as a sign of resistance or submission. As a religious educator who was seeking to empower women through education, my observations motivated me to explore an appropriate way to conceptualize women's ambivalent subjectivity, with a focus on their experience of submission and resistance, within the context of liberative religious education.

As the reader might already have guessed, my motivation for this project was not just my passion to engage with Korean American women's ambivalent subjectivity. It was also the need to critically reflect on my own ambivalent subjectivity. After all, I have become interested in Korean American women's subjectivity partly because their experience has illumined my own struggle with agency and cultural and ethnic identity. I have become deeply attracted to the notion of "third space" because many different moments of my personal experience have embodied such in-between space.

When I was at Ewha, I sensed myself in the space between the academy and Korean *minjung*'s everyday struggle. When I met several Korean American women in Atlanta, Georgia, I realized I had been thrown into very different kinds of third space. I

was struggling between two national and ethnic identities and languages.[1] I was also constantly trying to choose how much Korean ethos and "Korean ways of behaving as a woman" I would retain and how much "American ways of behaving" I would adopt. When I heard from my husband at the beginning of our marriage, "You are too Americanized!" I felt powerful irony and pain simultaneously. Although the experience certainly gave me some renewed sense of vocation as a mediator, it did not guard against subsequent and frequent uncomfortable moments. I have been constantly challenged to define my vocation and identity. I have also realized I can now better understand those who experience the pain of encountering others who attempt to define them by seeking to box them in to one of two simplistic categories. For example, when I was in discussions or graduate seminars on transnational feminist politics, I felt quite uneasy by the explicit and implicit request to choose my position between advocating third-world women's political and material conditions for liberation and asserting their cultural identity because I was one of few Asian women in the room.

My sense of living in the third space was intensified during my time writing this dissertation. I asked myself, To what extent would other Korean Americans, especially 1.5- and 2nd-generation people, affirm my commitment to empowering Korean American women through my work? By seriously engaging with women's ambivalent subjectivity, was I trying to go against my passion for women's emancipation and liberative pedagogy? To what extent was I promoting women's empowerment by interviewing

[1] Regarding this experience, I deeply appreciate my friend and colleague Min-Ah Cho's beautiful description of her struggle between two languages in her PhD dissertation, "Corpus Christi, To Be Eaten and To Be Written: Questioning the Act of Writing in Hadewijch of Antwerp and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha" (Emory University, 2011).

them about and discussing their everyday struggles? What did it mean for me, a Prostestant Christian, to engage with Rahner?

One day, I found out that the young theology student with robust passion and assertive voice was gone, and a despairing woman, who was colonized by different theories and theologies, was staring at the computer screen for hours and days. This dissertation is, in a way, my memoir of struggle in my own third space. It is a product of my persistent struggle to find and raise my voice. It is an outcome of my struggle to claim my transcendentality and to embrace divine grace. I believe the ongoing liminal experience of inhabiting third spaces by virtue of my relationships and acts of writing has yielded profound theological languages for describing women's subjectivity and my own identity and vocation as a religious educator.

Introduction

One of the primary goals of liberative religious education is resistance. A liberative religious educational practice aims to help learners to develop an ability to reflect critically on themselves and their social, political, and natural environment; to challenge and transform unjust and sinful social relations and forces; and thus to find their true humanity, freedom, and liberation in Christian faith. For both Paulo Freire and Thomas Groome, education through critical knowing is a praxis of resistance against dehumanization and oppression.[2]

In addition, some religious education scholars have worked to build a theoretical framework of education specifically to advance women's emancipation.[3] These scholars have explored how religious education may help women resist sexism and find their true selves and values. They have examined the reality of marginalization and dehumanization of women caused by sociopolitical and sociocultural forces and the teachings, doctrines, and practices of faith communities. For these scholars, teaching and learning are "an act

[2] The following works offer good discussions on religious education for resistance: Michael Warren, *At This Time in This Place: The Spirit Embodied in the Local Assembly* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999); Brian J. Mahan, Michael Warren, and David F. White, *Awakening Youth Discipleship: Christian Resistance in a Consumer Culture* (Eugene, OR*:* Wipf and Stock, 2007); Katherine Turpin, *Branded: Adolescents Converting from Consumer Faith* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2006); Jane Rogers Vann, "Worship and Resistance in the Community of Faith," *Religious Education* 92, no. 2 (1997): 363–378.

[3] See the following examples: Yolanda Y. Smith, "Womanist Theology: Empowering Black Women through Christian Education," *Black Theology* 6, no. 2 (May 2008): 200–220; Carol Lakey Hess, *Caretakers of Our Common House: Women's Development in Communities of Faith* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997); Nancy Lynne Westfield, "Researching a Womanist Pedagogy to Heal," *Religious Education* 101, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 170–174; Dori Grinenko Baker, *Doing Girlfriend Theology: God-Talk with Young Women* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2005); Maisha Handy, "Fighting the Matrix: Toward a Womanist Pedagogy for the Black Church," *Journal of Interdenominational Theological Center* 32, nos. 1–2 (Fall–Spring 2004–2005): 51–81; Claire Bischoff, "Narrative Identity and Pedagogy: Introduction to the Stories of Gender Project" [paper presented at the annual meeting of Religious Education Association, Atlanta, GA, November 2006]; Joyce Ann Mercer, *Girl Talk, God Talk: Why Faith Matters to Teenage Girls and Their Parents* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008); Evelyn L. Parker, *Trouble Don't Last Always: Emancipatory Hope Among African American Adolescents* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2003).

of resistance."[4] From a womanist perspective, for example, Maisha Handy states that religious education as "the practice of freedom" explores how education can help learners resist oppressive systems and "navigate and negotiate their daily experiences."[5]

This dissertation provides a critical reflection on resistance as a goal and method of religious education by engaging with Korean American women's experience of subordination and resistance.[6] Based on an ethnographic study of eleven Korean American women's struggle with power relations, I observe how they develop ambivalent subjectivity capable of constantly negotiating their identity and agency in their everyday lives. The study further explores the concepts and images of "third space" revealed in poststructuralist and postcolonial critical pedagogies, feminist and womanist theologies, the psychological theories of Donald W. Winnicott, Jessica Benjamin, and Robert Kegan, and the theological anthropology of Karl Rahner. Critically appropriating aspects of each version of third space and engaging in mutually critical conversations with relevant theologians, I argue that women's ambivalent subjectivity demands a revised notion of resistance as a creative holding of tensions in the space between objective and subjective realms of life and between historicity and desire for transcendence. My goal is to build conceptual grounds for a theological anthropology of third space, one which captures women's paradoxical struggles with power relations and transcends a binary conception of subordination and resistance. The key argument of this

[4] Handy, "Fighting the Matrix," 53.
[5] Ibid.
[6] I am aware of the danger associated with this term "Korean American women," which is a category employed to stereotype, essentialize, and colonize a group of women by suppressing their heterogeneous experiences and fluid identities. I am using it "not to further categorize these women but rather to establish some common ground for the discussion." See Leona M. English, "Feminist Identities: Negotiations in The Third Space," *Feminist Theology* 13, no. 1 (September 2004):104. Following Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's famous term "strategic essentialism," my use of this term is intentionally political. In other words, one of my purposes of engaging with the women in the case study is to highlight the unpredictability and paradox of the women's experience and therefore to destabilize oppressive discourses on their subjectivity.

dissertation is that a theological anthropology of third space based on women's ambivalent subjectivity helps religious educators to expand their ideas of resistance as a goal and method of liberative religious education.

Education has a primary goal of constructing subjectivity. My use of the word education in this dissertation embraces the meaning of the German term *Bildung*, which means "becoming" or "growth," to highlight the construction of subjectivity as a function of education.[7] As E. Byron Anderson states, a task of religious education is "the formation or construction of persons as selves within particular faith traditions."[8] Christian religious education is a work for constructing specifically Christian subjectivity. In other words, through Christian religious educational efforts, a learner is expected to develop and construct her Christian self by accumulating experiences in a Christian tradition as well as in other settings and by growing in the capacity to act meaningfully as a Christian. When I say that a Christian religious educator helps learners to construct Christian subjectivity, I regard educational practice as cultivating the whole person—cognitively, affectively, and spiritually.

Religious education does not begin with a learner as tabula rasa. Learners bring their subjectivity to the process, and every aspect of education is influenced by it. Thus, learners' subjectivity shapes the dynamics of teaching and learning; these dynamics include every aspect of religious education, such as the understanding of learners, goals, methods, and educational settings. When goals of and methods for religious education are set based on inappropriate observation of a learner's subjectivity, an educator's effort

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[7] Biesta, Gert J. J. "Pedagogy without Humanism: Foucault and the Subject of Education," *Interchange* 29, no. 1 (1998): 343.
[8] E. Byron Anderson, "A Constructive Task in Religious Education: Making Christian Selves," *Religious Education* 93, no. 2 (Spring 1998): 173.

may well fail to produce a desired outcome. An effective theory and practice of religious education must be based on an accurate understanding of the learners' subjectivity. An important goal of a practice of liberative religious education is not only to construct a Christian self but also to empower it to resist oppressive structures. A religious educator pursuing Korean American women's empowerment must take into consideration the women's ambivalent subjectivity and the complex dynamics of their subordination and resistance.

The primary motivation for this project is my desire to understand and analyze the complex dynamics of Korean American women's subordination and resistance to patriarchy. My motivation for this study is also a desire to faithfully represent Korean American women in theology and religious education. From a postcolonial feminist perspective, Boyung Lee points out the importance of addressing the problem of "the universalizing norms of Western models" in religious education and theology.[9] She argues that religious educators should be conscious of how they might represent non-Western women only as uneducated, passive, or silenced victims. Lee notes that "religious education should be a countercultural discipline, paying special attention to the hidden and neglected voices both in church and society."[10] Introducing womanist religious education, Maisha Handy points out the need for religious educators to pay attention to "the task of reinterpreting and retelling history in ways that claim the voices and contributions of women" who have been unheard and marginalized.[11] Like many other minority women, Korean American women have been often characterized by

[9] Boyung Lee, "When the Text Is the Problem: A Postcolonial Approach to Biblical Pedagogy, *Religious Education* 102, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 50.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Handy, "Fighting the Matrix," 57.

silence, invisibility, and stereotypes. Minding the feminist politics of representation, as I will delineate in chapter 1, this dissertation tells Korean American women's stories in the context of liberative religious education.

Ambivalent Subjectivity and Resistance

Throughout this dissertation, the following terms appear repeatedly: subjectivity, ambivalent subjectivity, fragmented subjectivity, subordination, and submission. I find Chris Weedon's definition of subjectivity helpful: "the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world."[12] My term "ambivalent subjectivity" designates the ways women participate in oppression while trying to resist the power of dominating systems. I use this term based on my observation that women develop ambivalent subjectivity when their struggle with power relations occurs within a context of being unable to escape an oppressive system. In this project, ambivalent subjectivity is contrasted with the term "fragmented subjectivity," by which I mean a sense of self that fails to sustain the tensions emerging from a woman's struggle with power relations. Women characterized by fragmented subjectivity, I contend, choose complicity to domination rather than toggling between submission and resistance. By "subordination," I mean women's experience of gender inequality and marginalization. "Submission" refers to women's submissive acts or their submissive attitudes toward dominant systems and ideologies.

Based on ethnographic observation and analysis, I argue that it is often quite difficult to categorize women's choices regarding and attitudes toward gender inequality

[12] Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 1987), 32.

and patriarchy as either submission or resistance. Put simply, subordination and victimization are not always relevant terms for women's response to oppression. Challenging the tendency to emphasize Korean American churched women's submission, Jung Ha Kim warns against viewing the women's behaviors as simply submission:

> Keenly aware of various limitations of women's traditional roles as daughters, wives, and mothers, most Korean-American women seem to choose to submit themselves (both intentionally and unintentionally) to male leadership. Looking at it from an insider's perspective, however, it appears to be otherwise. What appears to be subjugation to male relatives and public leaders obscures women's conscious efforts to maneuver various authorities.[13]

Kim further argues that these indirect forms of resistance and experiences of empowerment should be taken seriously as a "corrective" to the marginalization of women in Korean American churches.[14] She says it is very important to seriously consider women's strategic choices to survive and preserve the order of their families and faith communities as a significant form of resistance instead of treating them merely as submissive behaviors. With Kim's insights in mind, I argue that a liberative religious educator needs to see more and deeper meanings behind women's seemingly submissive behaviors and attitudes. Emphasizing submission does not always help one explain women's reality, the motivation behind seemingly submissive behaviors and attitudes, nor what the women gain from their choices.

On the other hand, resistance is not always what it appears to be either. Women's sense of self-empowerment, for example, may come from false consciousness or from pleasure gained by participating in oppressive systems, rather than from deliberate resistance. Also, seemingly resistant behaviors may simply be another side of women's

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[13] Jung Ha Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers: Korean-American Women and the Church* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997), 109.
[14] Ibid., 124.

experience of oppression. In spite of this caution against naming various forms of behavior resistance, however, it is critical that we redefine and reclaim Korean American women's actual resistance in light of their lived experience.

My contention in this dissertation is that the interviewed women's ambivalent subjectivity, along with the paradoxical relation between subordination and resistance, complicates the cultivation of resistance as a goal and method of religious education. More specifically, the women's ambivalent subjectivity and their complicated negotiations with dominant discourses challenge the notions of resistance and human capability for freedom, transformation, and transcendence that are shared by liberative religious education scholars. Do the accepted concepts of subject and agency implied in liberative religious education theories adequately describe the subjectivity of the interviewed women? What implications does a discussion of women's ambivalent subjectivity have for liberative religious education? More concretely, how does a changed concept of human subjectivity influence the goals of religious education, our teaching methods, and the interaction between teachers and students? In what ways does the interviewed women's ambivalent subjectivity challenge the concept of resistance as a goal and method of liberative education? Given their claims of freedom and transformation through education, how seriously should religious educators consider the influence of power relations on human capability for transcendence? This project explores how women's complicated struggles with interlocking power structures, their ambivalent subjectivity, and the paradoxical relation between subordination and resistance pose pedagogical challenges to those educators intending to bring empowerment, freedom, and liberation to learners.

Resistance and Liberative Religious Education

This project builds on several religious education scholars' works, especially on the following areas: listening to women's stories of silent and subtle resistance in the midst of marginalization, examining the influence of religious belief and practice on the construction of women's gender identity and subjectivity, and seriously considering the implication of power of oppressive systems for the theories and practices of liberative religious education. My contribution to these discussions are as follows: first, this project illuminates the significance of discussing the notion of resistance in liberative religious education in nuanced ways; second, it highlights the need to bring flexible and nuanced approaches—such as are found in poststructuralist and postcolonial conceptions of human subjectivity—to liberative religious education; third, it enlarges the small pool of studies on the implication of Korean American women's experience for religious education.

Women's Stories of Silent Resistance

One can find valuable efforts to listen to women's stories of resistance in the works of religious education scholars such as Dori Grinenko Baker, Evelyn Parker, Joyce Mercer, and Claire Bischoff. Their works demonstrate the significance of teasing out women's negotiations and silent resistance in the midst of their experience of oppression and dehumanization. For example, Dori Grinenko Baker listens to adolescent girls' stories, particularly their stories about silently resisting cultures in which girls are invisible and their voices are not taken seriously. In their stories, according to Baker, the girls reveal how they employ "a spirituality of resistance" for

"empowerment, subjectivity, and agency shaped in the image of God."[15] Drawing on womanist theology, Baker contends that religious educators should consider women's domestic sphere as "a site of resistance" and inherit "womanist practices of cultivating healthy resistance in adolescent girls"[16] Although I do not focus on girls' stories, I also explore women's resistance in their everyday life, especially their domestic life, and their subtle resistance against oppressive forces. This dissertation is another effort to highlight women's silent resistance in everyday life, especially in Korean American women's stories.

Religious Influence on Women's Subjectivity

Religious education scholars including Joyce Ann Mercer and Claire Bischoff also listen to adolescent girls' stories but focus on the influence of religious identity and practice on the construction of gender identity. Mercer draws ambivalent conclusions about the function of religion on adolescent girls' formation. That is, she sees religion working both as oppressive and empowering forces in girls' lives. Bischoff examines how religious identity and practice help adolescent girls struggle to create true selves in a society that keeps producing distorted images and messages about women's humanity and expects them to be the objects of male gaze.[17] She finds that while women's full humanization is often hindered in religious communities, it is also the case that religious communities can provide safe spaces for women's identity formation. Bischoff also pays attention to the constructive function of religious identity and practice as well as to the oppressive side of women's engagement with religion.

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[15] Baker, *Doing Girlfriend Theology*, 14.
[16] Ibid., 17.
[17] Bischoff, "Narrative Identity and Pedagogy," 1.

Similar to the work of these scholars, my ethnographic study of Korean American women includes observation and analysis of women's subjectivity within a religious framework. The dual functions of religious communities as well as the ambivalent influence of religious identity and practice on women's search for true self are significant for my analysis of Korean American women's experience.

Oppression, Transcendence, and Liberative Religious Education

Liberative religious education scholars pursue education as resistance out of their conviction that human beings are capable of transcending their own situations. For example, Freire believes that one can resist oppression by developing critical consciousness. Similarly, Groome bases his theological anthropology on his belief in human potential for using critical consciousness to reach freedom beyond the historical reality of cultural and political-economic oppression. While both theorists believe that human beings are existential and historical subjects, they also claim the possibility of freedom and self-transcendence.

Tom Beaudoin criticizes Groome's notion of absolute freedom as a goal of Christian religious education. Working from a poststructuralist position, he challenges the very notion of humans as subjects who can transcend and transform their reality through autonomous and critical consciousness, praxis, and dialogue. Beaudoin contends that Groome presents his notion of freedom based on a utopic viewpoint of the relation between subjectivity, knowing, and power, and thus fails to adequately capture the actual constraints of human beings' experience.[18] Beaudoin thus casts suspicion on Groome's notion of absolute freedom as one of the most

[18] Tom Beaudoin, "The Theological Anthropology of Thomas Groome," *Religious Education* 100, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 137.

important goals of religious education and offers as an alternative goal the "creative uses of power relations."

> How are we to talk responsibly about employing knowledge for freedom in ways that reflect adequately the real limits that our histories impose on us, or produce in us? The freedom toward which the knowing subject is or should be oriented, in Groome, tends to be an absolute sort of freedom, a freedom that can be opposed to "unfreedom" or "bondage." This way of construing freedom may be a product of his debt to an existentialist intellectual framework. One may wonder whether we should not, instead, be religiously educating subjects to use knowledge to reconfigure constraints and rigorously critique any utopian frame for interpreting the knowledge-subjectivity relation. In other words, might it not be more adequate to rework an existential understanding of freedom in favor of a more rigorously historical one, which might foreground creative uses of power relations that are always inescapable—toward the more modest goal of merely greater maneuvering room, constantly reassessed and reconstructed?[19]

Although Beaudoin does not focus on the notion of resistance, I share his claim that the constraints of oppressive structures must be considered seriously in our discussion of freedom and resistance as a goal of education. In this project, I also ask what resistance means to the learners who cannot escape interlocking power relations and grapple with the implication of Beaudoin's notion of creative use of power relations for religious education for Korean American women.

Nancy Lynne Westfield makes Beaudoin's critique concrete by pointing out the grave problem of black women internalizing male domination and active participating in a system of oppression. Employing the term "Black female patriarchy," she addresses "what happens as African-American women take ownership of male domination, and participate actively in maintaining and supporting the power and privilege of men to rule over, exploit, and debase women."[20] Westfield argues that a womanist pedagogy as a communal endeavor should deal with this reality of misogyny and debasement,

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[19] Ibid.
[20] Westfield, "Researching a Womanist Pedagogy," 171–172.

maintained in part by black women themselves. Like Westfield, I pay attention to women's active participation in unjust systems and their internalized dehumanization of other women, as well as their resistance.

From a postcolonial perspective, Mai-Anh Le Tran argues that today's Christian religious education should engage in the practice of "organic hybridity." Tran contends that it is a critical task of Christian religious education to pay attention to the learners who are constantly negotiating their identity and faith with "hybrid subjectivities living in the "shifting diasporic spaces." Tran believes that religious educators need a middle-ground between the modern notion of unified self and the postmodern notion of "hyphenated self," which seems to assume a dichotomous view of self and its relation to culture. She suggests that religious educators employ a narrative lens to study how people gather diverse cultural resources with constant subtle negotiations to construct life narratives (and therefore a self).[21]

This postcolonial perspective on learners' hybrid subjectivity and their negotiations of power relations informs my examination of Korean American women's struggle to construct their identity as minority women at the intersection of multiple socioeconomic forces. I agree with Tran's assertion that Christian religious education should pay attention to the learners' organic hybridity. Also agreeing with her use of narrative lens as a middle-ground between the modern notion of self and postmodern notion of self, I engage with Korean American women's narratives through an ethnographic method of interviewing.

[21] Mai-Anh Le Tran, "Narrating Lives, Narrating Faith: 'Organic Hybridity' for Contemporary Christian Religious Education," *Religious Education*105, no. 2 (March–April 2010):188-203.

A Theological Anthropology of Resistance

Religious educators take into account learners' subjectivity by developing theological anthropologies unique to the learners they teach. This dissertation assumes that religious educational practices should be significantly supported by theological anthropology because, as Tom Beaudoin points out, "indifference to theological anthropology would be a mistake, inasmuch as religious education is concerned with the relevance of faith for the life of the anthropos."[22] Beaudoin further notes that since religious education pursues the construction of identity and agency and the transformation of the subject, what theological anthropology a religious educator carries is a significant matter:

> Theological pedagogy "shape[s] Christian identity and agency of participants," toward, in Lonergan's terms, "an intellectual, moral, and religious conversion, that effects a "transformation of the subject and [the subject's] world."… This, above all, is the reason that those who teach in the name of religion should consider carefully the theological anthropologies that guide their work.[23]

It is thereby critical that a religious educator examine her understanding of learners' subjectivity as part of her theological anthropology. In this sense, this project is a search for a theological anthropology of resistance for Korean American women in the context of liberative religious education.

I do not intend to make an essentializing theological claim about Korean American women's victimization or their desire for transcendence and freedom in this dissertation.[24] Neither do I pursue repeating the constructivist claim that women's culture and history construct their subjectivity. I maintain critical distance from both positions.

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[22] Beaudoin, "Theological Anthropology of Thomas Groome," 128.
[23] Ibid., 138.
[24] According to Wonhee Anne Joh, "Essentialism is when certain traits are posited and understood to be an inherent part of that person or group's identity based, for example, on race or gender." Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 2.

More relevant to my approach is Donna Teevan's concept of "strategic essentialism" in that I want to "incorporate some elements of constructivism within a basically essentialist framework."[25] Serene Jones identifies the major difference between constructivism and strategic essentialism, saying "the constructivist is content to offer localized thick descriptions of constructed rules and essences, whereas the strategic essentialist elaborates the normative meaning and power of these universals with respect to the flourishing of women."[26] Here, my attempt to combine normative concepts such as liberation and resistance with a thick description of some Korean American women's struggle against power relations is meaningful only in my effort to empower women through religious education.

With my critiques, I do not mean to deny the value or contribution of liberative religious educators. Neither do I intend to reject their belief in human beings' capability for transformation, without which any endeavor of liberative religious education would lose its direction. My intention in this research is to come up with conceptual foundations for a theological anthropology based on more realistic and nuanced understandings of resistance as a goal and method of education in light of women's ambivalent subjectivity and creative agency emerging from their complicated struggles with power relations. Throughout, the women at the center of the work are the eleven Korean Americans who agreed to participate in this study.

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[25] Donna Teevan, "Challenges to the Role of Theological Anthropology in Feminist Theologies," *Theological Studies* 64, no. 3 (2003): 585.

[26] Serene Jones, *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2000), 26.

Women's Narratives as Beginning of Theological Anthropology

Like several religious education scholars who have listened to women's stories, I began this study with interviews.[27] As I discuss in detail in Chapter 1, I interviewed eleven Korean American women to examine the complex dynamics of women's subordination and resistance. By analyzing their narratives, I explore how they negotiate power relations and multi-layered oppression in their everyday life and focus on the dynamics of women's submission and resistance that lie behind the apparent inconsistencies and contradictions of their behavior and spoken attitudes.

Based on my observations, I contend that the dynamics of the interviewed women's submission and resistance should be interpreted within socioeconomic and sociocultural frameworks. By employing such frameworks, I was able to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of women's subjectivity. At the same time, such an understanding might place a religious educator uncomfortably between her emancipatory intention (based on her analysis of socioeconomic situatedness) and her sensitivity and respect for her learners' sociocultural situatedness. Having taught and related to many Korean American women in church settings, I have often found myself at the junction of my desire to help them find liberation and my effort to respect their culture, tradition, and integrity. As an educator who wants to inspire the women to develop critical consciousness of their reality, my emancipatory intention does not seem to be always in tune with my sensitivity to their everyday struggles and experience.

Religious education scholar Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng discusses how, as feminist-oriented religious educator, she experiences a similar dilemma when she tries to teach

[27] The works of Evelyn L. Parker, Joyce Mercer, Claire Bischoff mentioned above make good examples.

Asian American learners who have been socialized in the culture of Confucianism. Asking what it means for an educator to choose a mutual teaching style under the influence of Freire when the learners are deeply socialized under the Confucian teaching style, Ng says,

> Even those born in North America might be similarly handicapped by socialization at home and in their ethnic community, socialization that takes place before schooling starts. In the ensuing conflict, the liberative, feminist-oriented religious or theological educators are often left wondering how to respond in ways helpful to the family and that do not compromise educators' integrity and commitment. Are we as educators pitted inevitably against Master Kong? Do we have a choice between acting like a master teacher or like a mutual learner, based on Freire's principles? [28]

Although Ng discusses only the tension between the learners' context and the teacher's choice of teaching method, her demand that teachers develop sensitivity to cultural situatedness should influence religious educational practice. In terms of the interviewed women's sociocultural context, I highlight the relation between their ambivalent subjectivity and their struggle between two sociocultural forces: Korean traditional expectations of women's role and status and the mainstream value systems of American society. I also pay attention to the socioeconomic significance of family for Korean American women, and I address the ambivalent influence of Christianity on the women's struggle with power dynamics within church communities.

Theological Anthropology of Resistance in Third Space

The theological approach to this project is multidisciplinary. In my search for an image and concept of resistance that can capture the complex dynamics of women's subordination and resistance, I place my findings from interview study in critical

[28] Greer Anne Wenh-In Ng, "Toward Wholesome Nurture: Challenges in the Religious Education of Asian North American Female Christians," *Religious Education* 91, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 238–254.

dialogue with different theoretical and theological insights on women's subordination and resistance. I attempt mutually critical conversations about women's experience and subjectivity with poststructuralist and postcolonial critical pedagogies, feminist and womanist theological accounts of women's subordination and resistance, the psychological theories of D. W. Winnicott, Jessica Benjamin, and Robert Kegan, and the theological anthropology of Karl Rahner—all of whom provide insights into the notion of a "third space" as a space for resistance, although most of them do not discuss third space explicitly.[29] Nonetheless, their concepts and images of third space serve as a rich source for a theological anthropology of resistance, and I interpret the interviewed women's experience of submission and resistance from each of these theoretical or theological perspectives. All of my conversation partners had much to offer as well as limitations. Therefore, I decided to use a method of critical appropriation. That is, I wanted to retain their contributions to liberative education for the interviewed women while challenging their limitations. I also thought that my conversation partners could gain much from mutually critical conversations. For example, I do not present Rahner's theology in this dissertation as a culmination of my engagement with other theories and theologies. As I indicate in chapter 5, I revisit his theology by inquiring how other conversation partners can enrich or correct his concepts.

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[29] As Leona M. English says, this notion of third space has been developed also by Spivak, Soja, Guttierez, Hollingshead, Routledge, and Khan. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "A Critique on the Politics of the Subaltern: Interview by Howard Winant," *Socialist Review* 90, no. 3 (1990): 81–98; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward the History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999); Edward W. Soja, *Third Space: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996); David. G. Gutierrez, "Migration, Emergent Ethnicity, and the 'Third Space': The Shifting Politics of Nationalism in Greater Mexico," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 2 (1999):481–517; Keith Hollingshead, "Tourism, Hybridity, and Ambiguity: The Relevance of Bhabha's 'Third Space' Cultures," *Journal of Leisure Research* 30, no. 1(1998): 121–156; Paul Routledge, "The Third Space as Critical Engagement," *Antipode* 28, no. 4 (1996): 399–419; Shahnaz Khan, *Muslim Women: Creating a North American Identity* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000).

Chapter Descriptions

Chapter 1 explores the interviewed women's ambivalent subjectivity by examining how they negotiate complex power relations and multi-layered oppression in their everyday lives. I begin by presenting my viewpoint on the politics of representation and the methodological considerations I brought to my research. I then turn to descriptions of the inconsistency, contradiction, and paradox present in the interviewees' narratives and my interpretation that they provide helpful clues for understanding the complex dynamics of Korean American women's subordination and resistance. Thereafter, I provide an analysis of the interviewees' experience of subordination and resistance within their historical, socioeconomic, and sociocultural frameworks.

The main goals of Chapter 2 are twofold: to demonstrate the promises and limitations of poststructuralist and postcolonial critical pedagogies (which, taken together, I term post-critical pedagogies) in light of the interviewed women's experience of subordination and resistance, and to address why liberative religious education for Korean American women demands an alternative theological approach to women's resistance.

I have become interested in post-critical pedagogies for the following reasons. With their more complicated and nuanced views on human subjectivity, they help me observe the issues about goals and methods of religious education that are raised by Korean American women's ambivalent subjectivity. Many points addressed in poststructuralist and postcolonial critique resonate with my observations of the interviewed women. These pedagogical theories also help me critically reflect on previous notions of subjectivity in religious education literature by giving me tools to

evaluate in what sense they help address Korean American women's educational challenges. Most importantly, these theories provide a concept of resistance with which I can develop an alternative form of resistance appropriate as a goal of religious education for Korean American women.

Chapter 2 examines and evaluates Judith Butler's and Homi Bhabha's understanding of subordination and resistance in light of my observations and Freire's notion of subjectivity. I invite Freire's viewpoint here not because I believe he and post-critical pedagogies are on opposite sides. In his later years, he has shown himself willing to incorporate insights from later theories. Rather, I use his voice because my intention in this project is to supplement his perspective, not just to challenge it. I argue that post-critical pedagogies can be used to urge liberatory religious educators to seriously consider and the complexity of power and the fluid subject-positioning many women perform. At the same time, these theories reveal some limitations. The post-critical pedagogies fail to provide a sense of urgency or explain why or how religious educators should facilitate learners' potential for resistance, all of which Freire delivers in his pedagogy. I argue that this problem stems from the theories' limited notion of human subjectivity. Based on my reading of their accounts of subjectivity, I further argue that Butler and Bhabha fail to provide a helpful explanation of how women experience domination psychologically, or what might motivate women to resist or be complicit with oppressive power relations, or how religious educators could facilitate their potential for resistance.

Based on this critical assessment, I contend that a pedagogical ground for a contextually relevant conception of women's subjectivity could be found in a theological anthropology that accounts for learners' desire and capacity for transcendence and

freedom with the complex and nuanced understandings of the correlation of two aspects of human existence: transcendentality and historicity. I argue that one could build such a theological anthropology by exploring the religious and theological significance of the notion of the "third space," an indeterminate, enunciative space in between subject positions, that Bhabha discusses and Butler implies.

In Chapter 3, I engage feminist theologies of women's resistance and sin. Among theologians, feminist theologies have provided the most nuanced and complicated accounts of women's subordination and resistance.[30] In the process of constructing a useable image of resistance with the notion of third space, I critically examine two feminist theological discourses—what I call "Feminist Valorization of Women's Resistance" and feminist theologies of sin—that share an interest in the paradoxical and ambiguous aspect of women's struggle with power relations. Although they do not explicitly mention it, these discourses assume a space in which women try to hold the tension between their historicity and transcendentality. By feminist valorization of women's resistance, I mean feminist theorists' and theologians' work to expand and deepen the concept of resistance based on actual accounts of women's attitudes and behaviors, which are generally regarded as signs of subordination and victimization. I also discuss feminist theologians' accounts of sloth as women's particular sin, and its connection to the ways in which women actively participate in oppression rather than claiming their true self through overt resistance. These two discourses are valuable resources for describing the complex dynamics of women's victimization and resistance and for representing many subaltern and minority women.

[30] My use of the term "feminist theologies" is comprehensive in that it always indicates the works of the U.S. and European feminist theologians, Asian feminist theologians, Womanist theologians, the third-world feminist theologians, and Mujerista theologians as a group.

I value feminist theologians' effort to retrieve women's desire and capability for transcendence from invisibility and silence. I also appreciate their sharp awareness of the debilitating power that oppressive systems exercise over women's agency. At the same time, I argue that some feminist theologians' notion of agency and self are limited in their capacity to discuss women's ambivalent subjectivity because they fail to overcome their perception that women's response to oppression cleaves neatly into binary categories of subordination and resistance. I also argue that while an important task of feminist theologians is to discuss the space of constant negotiation that women occupy, both valorization of resistance and theologies of women's sin may function to release the tension inherent in that space too quickly. Therefore, feminist theologians' valorization of women's resistance should be accompanied by attention to the enormous power of domination and women's complicity with oppression. On the other hand, feminist theologies of sin should be balanced by accounts of the subtle and paradoxical ways women do resist.

My critical examination of pedagogical and feminist theologies reveals that an adequate concept of resistance for Korean American women must include accounts of women's active meaning-making, possible motivations for their resistance, their psychological experience of domination, and the paradoxical interrelatedness of women's subordination and resistance. In Chapter 4, I contend that the concept of resistance as a creative holding of tensions in third space meets these requirements. I examine D. W. Winnicott's psychoanalytic theory of human self and its acceptance by feminist theorists and religious scholars. I chose Winnicott's theory of agency emerging from the subject's struggle with unequal relationships as a ground for accounting for the motivation for

women's resistance, and I engage with Winnicott because his concepts, especially his notion of "transitional space" beyond objective and subjective aspects of human life, are relevant for understanding the interviewed women's struggle with power relations. Since many Korean American women's ambivalent subjectivity can and should be understood in terms of their religious belief and faith, I also discuss some theoretical observations of how religion and Winnicott meet. I introduce the work of Maureen A. Mahoney and Barbara Yngvesson who, drawing on Jessica Benjamin's interpretation of Winnicott in terms of the notion of "paradox of recognition," argue that women's independence emerges from their experience of dependence and their resistance from the recognition of the powerful others. I also contend that a theological anthropology of women's resistance needs a theoretical model for describing how women develop the ways they negotiate power relations and their ability to hold tension between their desire for relatedness and their yearning for independence. To this point, I engage with developmental psychologist Robert Kegan's theory, which describes the way the self engages in the third space in terms of a notion of developmental "era" or "truce" of self-development.

Winnicott provides a helpful image of resistance with his concept of potential space. Resistance, he says, is not made possible by separation from relationships or embeddedness in them but by an ability to hold tensions in an in-between space. With this concept, I can discuss the interviewed women's ambivalent subjectivity as a potential for resistance. As mentioned, the interplay of connection and separation is an important aspect of the interviewed women's subjectivity, and the concept of the third space captures that interplay. Working from Winnicott and Kegan, I argue that one's developmental task, especially in terms of empowering women to resist oppressive

structures, is not to force their separation or autonomy per se but to build up their capacity to hold the tension between separatedness and embeddedness, allowing them to craft negotiations that open the door for equality.

In spite of the contributions of Winnicott, Benjamin, and Kegan, I argue that concepts such as third space and transitional phenomena demand religious or theological languages to accurately account for the mystery that is at the heart of human beings. Moreover, Winnicott and Kegan do not address women's constant oscillation between historicity and transcendentality even though their notion of human beings as beings of becoming is very helpful. To complement these psychological theories with theological insights, I turn to the theological anthropology of Karl Rahner.

In Chapter 5, I focus on those elements of Rahner's theological anthropology that I find relevant for interpreting the interviewees' narratives. As many aspects of Rahner's theological anthropology would be problematic if directly applied to the interviewed women, I discuss critiques of Rahner, including his totalizing and essentializing language and his failure to pay sufficient attention to either concrete historical contexts or the contingency, difference, and inequality of human experience. After addressing these criticisms, I revisit his theology and discuss how it can be made nonetheless useful for proposing a theological anthropology of resistance.

Specifically, I argue that Karl Rahner provides a theological language for describing the ineffable and mysterious realm of human subjectivity, human relationship with God as impetus for resistance, and human beings' constant oscillation between historicity and transcendentality, which the notions of third space suggested by Bhabha

and Winnicott do not fully address and which are necessary for doing justice to the narratives of the women I interviewed.

In Chapter 6, I propose some conceptual grounds for a theological anthropology of third space and suggest images of resistance that seem both valid and promising for the interviewed women. Based on my understanding of these learners, I also address implications of a theological anthropology of third space for liberative religious education as a whole. More concretely, I discuss implications for epistemology, the understanding of teaching and learning, and the role of church communities.

Chapter 1

Korean American Women's Experience of Submission and Resistance

Kelly Chong observes that the stereotypical image of women in Korean society is "double and contradictory." They have been perceived both as "submissive and subordinate" and as "strong and 'tough,' even aggressive."[31] My own observations and interviews of Korean American women reveal these same double images, yet I have often had difficulty distinguishing the two images from each other. I have not been able to discern, for example, whether their "complicity and consent" was "internalized oppression" or a loss of agency. Neither could I determine whether their defiant voices and acts were necessarily forms of resistance.[32] Their statements, actions, and attitudes are in fact too fuzzy, confusing, or variable to be captured by the binary categories of submission and resistance.

To understand the dynamics of Korean American women's experience, I have engaged in research to yield complex descriptions and nuanced analyses of behavior. This chapter explores Korean American women's ambivalent subjectivity by examining how these women negotiate complex power relations and multi-layered oppression in their everyday lives. By situating the narratives of eleven women in historical, sociocultural, socioeconomic, and religious contexts, I have gained a deeper understanding of the paradoxical relation between the women's submission and resistance. I also discovered that their religious beliefs and practices exercised an ambivalent influence in their struggle with power relations. While religious teachings

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[31] Kelly H. Chong, *Deliverance and Submission: Evangelical Women and the Negotiation of Patriarchy in South Korea* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), 142.
[32] Ketu H. Katrak, *The Politics of the Female Body: Postcolonial Women Writers* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), xxii.

reinforced interviewees' submissive attitude to patriarchal system, they were also used for their sustenance, survival, and resistance.

To frame my analysis, I present in the first part of the chapter my viewpoint on the politics of representation and the methodological considerations that underlie the study. In the second section, I describe and analyze the inconsistency and contradiction that emerged from my interviews with eleven Korean American women. In the final section, I contextualize my findings within a socioeconomic and sociocultural depiction of Korean American women.

Methodological Considerations and Research Procedure

It is an illusion that ethnography can be value neutral: Ethnographic observation and recording of women's experience is inevitably a political work of representation. In my case, my research is part of my endeavor to empower the interviewees. For this reason and because of the inherently political nature of qualitative research, it was important for me to develop critical awareness of the power dynamics between the women I interviewed and myself; thus I paid particular attention to political, epistemological, and ethical issues inherent in interviewing.

Politics of Representation

By listening to, analyzing, and interpreting Korean American women's narratives, I am engaging in the act of representing the women. It is a mistake to believe that one can discuss the reality of women separate from constructed images. As Rajeswari Sunder Rajan says, "Our understanding of the problem of 'real' women cannot lie outside the

'imagined' constructs in and through which 'women' emerge as subjects."[33] It is also naïve to believe that one's work of representation can deliver the "true" voice of women without considering the complicated dynamics inherent in the act of representation. Thus Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak talks about the impossibility of fully knowing or speaking for "others."[34] She makes a distinction between two meanings of representation: "representation as 'speaking for,' as in politics, and representation as 're-presentation,' as in art or philosophy."[35] Spivak points out the problem of a "correspondence" view of representation or "representational realism," which presumes that "representation involves the straightforward reflection or revelation of previously marginalized groups."[36] Spivak contends that such an approach fails to address whether any attempt at representation can reproduce a subject's reality and whether the subject of representation can "be recovered through such an epistemic of assimilation."[37]

Acts of representation raise both political and epistemological problems. Amy Hinterburger states that "practices of representation are directly tied to the production of knowledge and power."[38] Thus, despite the emancipatory, generally feminist motivation behind my work, I have needed to be aware that my representation of the women I interviewed could end up as "a totalization or *mis*representation."[39] The fact that I had built some relationship with the women in the midst of their everyday lives certainly

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[33] Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture, and Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 10.
[34] Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 283.
[35] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 275.
[36] Keya Ganguly, "Accounting for Others: Feminism and Representation" in *Women Making Meaning: New Feminist Directions in Communication*, ed. Lana F. Rakow (London: Routledge, 1992), 62.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Amy Hinterberger, "Feminism and the Politics of Representation: Towards a Critical and Ethical Encounter with 'Others,'" *Journal of International Women's Studies* 8, no. 2 (February 2007): 74.
[39] Ganguly, "Accounting for Others," 61–62.

helped me approach them and gain their trust as a researcher. Being another Korean American woman, I was also in a better position to avoid a colonizing or ethnocentric gaze. However, the gap between the interviewees and me in terms of social position, especially our relative access to the production of knowledge, still raised questions about "the exploitive potential of the act of investigating people's lives."[40] For this reason, I needed to remember my biases and my influence on the interviewees as I interpreted the interviews. As Keya Ganguly notes:

> [F]eminists (as much as anyone else) are required to examine the assumptions, categories, and effects of their pronouncements—both in disciplinary and epistemological terms, and also in the light of the consequences our work may (or may not) have in the lives of others. This is especially true in the case of ethnographic work on or with living subjects, namely women.[41]
>
> From the political problem of representation, ethical questions emerged.[42]

Throughout the process of interviewing and writing about the women who agreed to participate, I grappled with occasional doubt and a sense of inappropriateness, even though I openly shared my motivation and intention for the study. My unease stemmed from questions quite similar to those Jung Ha Kim asked herself while researching and writing about churched Korean American women:

> Would the people perceive me as an opportunist, who uses/abuses human relationships in order to collect "data"? Would my relationships with people change because of my desire to do a case study of them? To what extent should I be overt/covert about the intentions, goals, and analyses of the study with the people? To what degree am I committed to being accountable to the people whom I study? Am I not living off less privileged people in order to gain access to the system of the more powerful (through a Ph.D.)? Would this study make any contribution(s) to the people, to the Korean-American church, and to the larger community as a whole? What about the question of "objectivity" in this study?[43]

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[40] Ibid., 65.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers*, 30–31.

Soon after I started my research, I realized that, regardless of my initial intention to empower the interviewees, I had to constantly remember the vulnerability of the researched, the possibility for exploitation, and my accountability to the women as a researcher.

Despite these problems, my experience also revealed many positive aspects of representation. Angela McRobbie mentions that ethnographic research is influenced by "those moments when the writer/researcher is taken by surprise, when the subjects temporarily 'hijack' the research and do the researchers' work for them."[44] McRobbie notes that such moments give the researcher "a fresh humility," "an awareness of the limitations of one form of intellectual activity," and "its absolute dependence on these 'others.'"[45] During my interviews, I had several similar moments, which helped me see the gap between theories on women's experience and my observations of individual women. That awareness helped me pay attention to the ambivalent nature of women's subjectivity, reminding me that different women's discourses may debunk or resist theoretical assumptions about gender and ethnicity. Such moments also reminded me that the subjects of my research influence its direction, shaping the assumptions, analytic categories, and conclusions of my work. As McRobbie claims, neither research nor theory is ever a "privatised" attempt.[46]

This dissertation seeks to preserve the positive aspects of representing Korean American women while maintaining critical awareness of representation's political, epistemological, and ethical issues. Throughout, I have employed "strategies of

[44] Angela McRobbie, "The Politics of Feminist Research: Between Talk, Text and Action," *Feminist Review* 12 (1982): 54–55.
[45] Ibid., 55.
[46] Ibid., 54–55.

vigilance" and self-reflexivity to remain critically aware of the causes and purposes of my research, of my own assumptions and theoretical orientation toward the subjects of my research, and of the possible consequences of my research in their lives.[47] Lila Abu-Lughod's work with Bedouin women required similar vigilance and is instructive, despite the differences between the women we interviewed:

> The everyday forms of Bedouin women's resistance . . . pose a number of analytic dilemmas. First, how might we develop theories that give these women credit for resisting in a variety of creative ways the power of those who control so much of their lives, without either misattributing to them forms of consciousness or politics that are not part of their experience—something like a feminist consciousness or feminist politics—or devaluing their practices as prepolitical, primitive, or even misguided? Second, how might we account for the fact that Bedouin women both resist and support the existing system of power (they support it through practices like veiling, for example), without resorting to analytical concepts like false consciousness, which dismisses their own understanding of their situation, or impression management, which makes of them cynical manipulators? Third, how might we acknowledge that their forms of resistance, such as folktales and poetry, may be culturally provided without immediately assuming that even though we cannot therefore call them cathartic personal expressions, they must somehow be safety valves? [48]

Even as Abu-Lughod tried to analyze "the everyday forms of Bedouin women's resistance," she too struggled with how to overcome an easy categorization of women's everyday practices as either subordination or resistance and to portray authentically the women's negotiations without employing Western academic frameworks that were invalid in their context.

Although it is almost impossible for an ethnographic researcher to bracket her theoretical orientation, she needs to be self-reflexive about the gap or tension between theory and practice. She should be also careful about imposing theoretical labeling on her observation, analysis, and interpretation of people's practice when there is a gap between

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[47] Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak? Speculations on Widow Sacrifice," *Wedge* (Winter–Spring, 1985): 8.
[48] Abu-Lughod, Lila. "The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women," *American Ethnologist* 17 (1990): 47.

theories and particular people's experience. With such critical self-reflexivity, an ethnographic researcher can seek to avoid a static, distorted, or truncated view of others' culture and perspectives. To this purpose, Spivak suggests the method of "deconstruction," which Ganguly defines as "a form of epistemological and political accountability, and not simply the marker of a negativity—that is, a simple dismantling of something or other." Ganguly finds accountability in "persistent self-critique, not in a disabling or paralyzing mode but, rather, as a way of marking the contingency of one's subject position as well as the truth of one's claims."[49]

Interview Method

My interest in women's subjectivity has evolved from my encounter with several Korean American women whose behavior and narratives I found quite intriguing. I chose to conduct interviews to understand how they experience and make meaning out of their own lives and the world around them. Through the interviews, I was, in Chong's words, "trying to see things as they see them, to comprehend their behavior from their own point of view, and to utilize the women's categories of thought when trying to make sense of their experiences."[50]

I conducted eleven interviews, including two pilot interviews. As previously discussed, I do not assume these women represent all Korean American women. The purpose of my project is not to generalize or categorize the women's ways of dealing with power relations. Therefore, I do not draw a conclusive view of how Korean American women as a group engage in submission or resistance. What I will show are the complex forms of ambivalent subjectivity in the women's narratives. My purpose in

[49] Ganguly, "Accounting for Others," 66.
[50] Chong, *Deliverance and Submission*, 39.

conducting interviews in this project was to reveal how women's agency and behavior resist any general explanation about women's submission and resistance. Interviewing was chosen as the best tool for drawing pictures of women's ambivalent subjectivity in the midst of "the messiness of lived experience" and "the plasticity of storytelling."[51]

I recruited interviewees through personal contact with women at three churches I attended over the years. As I had built a personal relationship with each of them, they agreed to the interviews without much hesitation. Although a couple of women showed concern about whether they would be valuable sources for my research, they did not have a problem with meeting with me. At the time of the interviews, one of the interviewees was eighty years old, four were in their forties, and four were in their fifties. Except for a woman in her twenties whom I interviewed for a pilot interview, I failed to recruit women in their twenties or thirties from the three churches. I did not try to recruit interviewees elsewhere because I wanted to interview only women whose background and situation I knew, in order to avoid misrepresentation as much as possible. All the women I interviewed were first-generation Korean Americans. In terms of education, two were high school graduates, six college graduates, and one a Ph.D. Two women were business owners, one woman worked in a restaurant, and five women were full-time stay-at-home mothers. Two-thirds of the interviewees were middle-class, one single mother worked constantly to support her children, and two women lived in poverty.

The interviews were conducted in coffee shops or restaurants or in the homes of the interviewees as the interviewees wished. Each interview lasted about two hours, and

[51] R. Marie Griffith, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 5.

most were conducted in Korean. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed and translated into English.

I conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews that combined life-history sharing and in-depth interviewing. I began each interview with the following prompts, asking the women to reflect on the major events of their life.

a. When did you come to the States?
b. Tell me about your life, dividing it into major chapters.

After a brief life history, I asked the following questions.

a. What does womanhood mean to you? What do you think it means to live as a woman? Are you satisfied with your life as a woman?
b. Are you currently in any responsible position at church?
c. How do you feel about women's status in your church?
d. What do you call yourself, Korean or Korean American? How would you describe your life as a Korean or Korean American in the States? What is good and what is bad?
e. Have you experienced racial discrimination? How did you respond to that?
f. How do you feel other ethnic groups may think of Korean Americans?
g. Have you been always a Christian? If you had a different religious background before Christianity, how did the change happen? How do you feel about the other religion now?
h. How do you feel about your experience of learning at church? In what ways do you try to apply what you learn at church in your everyday life?

The interviews were open-ended. Although the preceding questions structured each interview, I also asked spontaneous questions to solicit greater depth and detail. I also tried to help the interviewees feel comfortable about choosing the topics and directions of the conversation between, before, or after the questions. Like Chong, I gained "a great deal of unexpected but valuable information" from the free-flowing parts of the conversations.[52] I tried to be an empathetic and sensitive listener and conversation

[52] Chong, *Deliverance and Submission*, 39.

partner. Although I tried to be nonjudgmental and withhold my viewpoints about given topics, I did not necessarily hide my feelings or emotion evoked by the interviewees' shared life stories.

Initial Observation and Interpretation of Women's Behaviors and Narratives

In their narratives, none of the interviewees revealed a consistent attitude of submission or resistance in the face of oppression. The women in my study showed an unpredictable and complicated mix of silence and voice, docility and agency. While a woman might look thoroughly submissive within an unequal domestic relationship, her actions or attitudes may also have shown strong initiative or sudden shifts toward radical and overt acts of resistance. Conversely, while a woman may have seemed to take initiative with a strong sense of agency, she might also have shown a strong belief in her secondary place in the family or society. In this section, I introduce my initial observations and interpretations of the interviews and the contradictions they revealed.

Inconsistent Attitudes Regarding Patriarchal Structures

Several interviewees displayed contradictory responses to sexism and patriarchy, both questioning social norms and participating in them. Some brief snapshots of my interviews reveal such contradiction. Young-Ja is a forty-five-year-old woman married to a husband whom she describes as "a man who tries to control (her) in every way."[53] She says,

> My husband thinks that the best wife is an obedient one. He thinks that the supreme virtue of a woman is to be a good cook and good mother. He did not allow me to work outside of the home and only wanted me to give birth to several children. Although he wanted more than three, I told him I could not have more.

[53] All interviewee names are pseudonyms.

> He is most resentful about women who try to come into men's world and compete with men.

Young-Ja married her husband in accordance with her parents' will. She grew up in a middle-class family with a very strict father. Young-Ja emphasizes how tough it has been for her to endure her marriage. She says, "I am quite a sensitive woman, and my husband does not know what it is like for him to invade my privacy as he does." By "invading privacy," she means the ways her husband forces his own opinions on her regarding every kind of choice she makes, including how she styles her hair, cooks, and raises their children. One day, however, Young-Ja felt she could not take it any longer. Frustrated from the way her husband treated her in the company of her in-laws, she initiated an argument with him. Later, as she was having dinner, he caught her around the neck, and she felt a serious physical threat. Her son was near her. She grabbed her cell phone and her son and ran upstairs. She called the police, and her husband was arrested. After telling several anecdotes about her suffering and submission, Young-Ja surprised me with her story of radical resistance. After another minute, however, she puzzled me by saying the she could feel her husband's love from his suggestion that she stay in her parents' house for a while.

To my question about what she thought about her decision to call the police, Young-Ja said, "I think it was good. I did a right thing by expressing that I was going through a tough time." As can be seen from this comment, Young- Ja knew that she was in a problematic situation and that she was capable of resisting her husband's controlling personality and behavior. My conversations with her in other times also revealed how acutely she was aware of her situation. She said that she could not choose divorce even though she wanted it almost every day. She said she knew that people (meaning Koreans)

usually treat divorced women with contempt and mockery and that she could not endure such disgrace. From her self-scorning and inadvertent smiles while describing her marriage life, I concluded that she was not at all self-deceived about the unequal relationship with her husband.

Although Young-Ja said she felt she did not have much option other than submission to her husband, she seemed to choose submission with agency and initiative. She also expressed love and respect for her husband with such comments as "My husband suggested to me sincerely that I go and stay at my parents' house for a while. I knew that he would have a hard time without me. I could feel that he loved me. I decided not to go." Moreover, she felt her husband empowered her. To my question about her experience of racism, she proudly shared how boldly and confidently her husband responded to people when he or his family encountered racial intolerance. Inspired by him, Young-Ja also handles frustrating situations of racism with confidence. When a European-American parent told her in her son's school that she had a problem speaking English, Young-Ja told her, "Why do you say I am poor in English? I speak as well as you do. It is just my pronunciation that is different." What was most puzzling to me was her active effort to live up to his expectations even though she often felt profoundly resentful and frustrated about her marriage life. For example, she began a serious weight-loss plan because her husband wanted her to be in shape.

Sun-Hee, an eighty-year-old interviewee, shows a similar contradiction between assertively resisting sexism and actively participating in patriarchal structure. She says that she is enjoying her grown-up children's love and respect after all the years of hard work as a mother. Sun-Hee is not afraid of voicing her opinion to others. She is an active

member and leader of a Korean immigrant church. She once organized a group of elderly members in the church, hoping that the older members would contribute actively to the church community rather than sit back and do nothing. The group has since supported many ministries of the church, especially with financial means, and Sun-Hee is proud that they have aided missionaries to different countries and Christian education programs for the next generation. Nonetheless, even though she was the organizer of the group, Sun-Hee volunteered to be vice chair and asked a male church member to take the role of chair because she believes that men should take top leadership positions. When he suggested they disband the group a few years later, however, she protested with a passionate voice:

> You know how I started it [the missionary society of elderly members]? Six of us started it. When it is I who organized it, do YOU say we stop it? I will never do it before I die because I made a promise with God. I asked God to use me to revive the church. When the grandmothers were waiting for their children to be done with meetings or gatherings, they were doing nothing . . . only gossiping. I had to do something about it. I wanted them to have faith . . . We sent two hundred dollars to the Mexico missionary recently.

From the fact that Sun-Hee organized the missionary group to assist the church's ministry, one can see her active personality and leadership, but she immediately revealed her traditional interpretation of gender roles by asking a man to be in charge. She displayed another contradiction when she later protested and claimed her position as a founder of the group. Her furious response to the chair reveals that she does not always take a submissive attitude toward men. Although she says that the ministry the group established over the years was "humble," she refused to step back in the face of a man's challenge. Her contradictory attitude raises the question of whether in choosing to follow the conventional role of women by asking a man to be a leader of the group she had not fully internalized the patriarchal viewpoint.

A similar question arises from Sun-Hee's story about her daughter's divorce. During her interview, Sun-Hee criticized a woman in her church who was delaying a childbirth to finish her doctoral study. She thought that the woman was not fulfilling her role as a spouse. She seemed to believe firmly in women's sacrifice. Yet Sun-Hee said that she was proud of her daughter, who had left her abusive marriage. Even though Sun-Hee is usually supportive of patriarchal systems, when she learned about her daughter's repeated abuse at the hands of her son-in-law, she encouraged her daughter to divorce. Considering how many Korean and Korean American women in her generation have endured patriarchal marriage life and exhorted their daughters to do the same, Sun-Hee's support of her daughter's divorce seems unusual.

As Young-Ja and Sun-Hee show, the women in this study engaged in submission and resistance in ways that were unpredictable, inconsistent, and flexible. What leads to such contradictions?

Loyalty to Traditional Gender Roles Regardless of Everyday Reality

Another form of ambivalent subjectivity is found in the gap between the interviewees' everyday experience and their acceptance of gender roles. For example, while Mi-Young, who is fifty-three, has always worked full-time outside the home for the survival of her family, she still maintains her identity as a traditional housewife. The interviewed women's submissive attitude to the patriarchal tradition is quite puzzling.

All of the interviewees who claimed traditional gender roles also valorized the women's presence in and sacrifice for family life. Eun-Hee, a fifty-nine-year-old woman, said, "Women are essential beings for men and children. They have power to straighten up their family. If they do not stand up right, their family would fall apart. There is

nothing more powerful than a woman's love. A woman is source of everything and energy. A woman's love can cover everything." Yoon-Hee, a fifty-year-old woman, who lost her husband to a tragic accident several years ago, has raised two children by herself. She was praised for her sacrifice and courage by her son who graduated from high school with high honors. In her interview, she did not express any regret over her life as a single mother. When I asked her what she thought it meant to be a woman, she said, "Women are better caregivers and sacrifice more than men. I think such a role for women is desirable." Bok-Ja, a fifty-eight-year-old woman, is a highly respected business woman in a local Korean American community. She is apparently an adventurous, courageous, hard-working, and determined woman. Yet in spite of her defiance of gender inequality in the business world, her notion of gender roles in her family life seems thoroughly traditional:

> I have been extremely busy throughout my life working long hours, trying different businesses, and taking care of family. However, in my busy schedule, I have never failed to dedicate myself to serving others. I hold several leadership positions in Korean American community-service organizations . . . I always went home to fix dinner for my husband and my children even though it meant going out again for another appointment or for my work schedule. I respect my husband, and he also respects me for being such a faithful wife and mother in addition to being a good business woman. My daughters are both successful lawyers in their twenties. Growing up, they often told me, "You are the coolest mom!"

It seems that these women believe that their sacrifice and love for their family benefit them and give them status.

Contradictions between Systemic Critique of and Complicity with Patriarchy

Such valorization of women's roles in family life contrasts, however, with the interviewees' ambivalent attitude toward women's role in non-domestic spheres. Often their critique of the system noteably contradicted their active participation in it. In other

cases, a woman might privately criticize gender inequality and other women's passivity in faith communities, but fail to engage in an open critique. Young-Ja's critique of sexism is revealed in her description of lack of female leadership in her church:

> We have more male leaders than female in my church. Even when a wife is more mature spiritually, it is the man who takes a leadership position. It is, however, not just men's fault. Many women think that their husbands would do important things. If some women are active in leadership roles, people gossip behind their backs. [So] they are not interested in taking responsible work. I regret that the women do not try to find positions at church that use their given talents. Often the women think of church just as a social gathering.

Young-Ja is here openly critiquing the common view among church people regarding gender roles and women's self-perceptions. However, when she was asked to consider her own case, she contradicted herself by saying, "My husband used to be a leader at church for a few years. I was asked to be one, but I hoped that my husband would grow his faith by taking the position. Personality-wise, I am not cut out to be a leader." Thus Young-Ja's critical awareness does not lead her to challenge her own beliefs about gender roles.

Other interviewees also often showed acute awareness of their situation without initiating any action to change it. In other words, the interviewed women's systemic critiques often remained an "internal resistance" rather than becoming an explicit challenge to an oppressive system. These women participate in the patriarchal system with strong agency while sensing and even verbally challenging injustices in it. But by actively taking expected roles, these women are not only complicit in the patriarchal system but they also contribute actively to solidifying it, raising the question, What makes these women fail to engage with open and overt resistance?

A related form of internal/external contradiction may be found in Bok-Ja's narrative. Challenging gender inequality in Korean American communities, Bok-Ja

emphasizes that more Korean American women should jump into the business world. Although she is proud of her traditional gender role at home, as mentioned above, she does not want her daughters to follow in her steps as a wife. She says she respects their search for a more equal male-female relationship in family life. However, she also believes that her daughters should get married and have children soon.

> They say that they are not interested in dating Korean American guys. They say that they are too spoiled and expect women to take care of themselves in every way. I agree with them to a point. However, I am really worried that they are not married yet. When I meet people [Koreans], they always end up talking about their children. I always sneak out to bathroom whenever the topic on the table is about the children's marriage. It is just a shame that I have failed to help my children find their spouses.

Bok-Ja's interview also revealed that her gender consciousness for domestic and social life does not necessarily lead her to an awarenss of gender inequality in church. When I ask Bok-Ja how she believes Korean American women are treated at church or Korean community, she says:

> I am not a feminist, although many people suspect so because I am quite assertive and strong. Well . . . I think the female members and male members belong to their own groups and contribute to ministry. Don't you think so? I know that women's ordination has been a big issue for Korean American churches. I am not that interested in the debate, but I like the idea of women preaching.

At first glance it may seem that the interviewees chose their roles in and outside the homes in terms of convenience. From the contradictions these women show, however, one observes their constant negotiation of gender expectations and identity, and one can identify more dynamics at play than mere ignorance or lack of care. A discussion of the contradictions between women's systemic critique and actual positioning also leads one to consider women's active contribution to other women's victimization. We know that women's experience of sexism is often fortified by other women's exhortation to participate in it. Other women's participation in sexism often contributes to a woman's

failure to use her critique of the system as a source of self-transformation or a public challenge of sexism. For example, Young-Ja often talked to a woman, a Bible-study leader at church, who always told her to endure her marriage. Mi-Young shows a similar case. Although her husband was quite controlling and overly protective of her even before their marriage, she could not think of ending the relationship. She says,

> He thought that women always should obey men. I got married in spite of my parents' objection. I later realized that there is a good reason when parents are against their children's marriage. Immediately after we got engaged, he started showing his attitude to women, but I was not brave enough to end my relationship with him. I felt like he would commit suicide or give up on his life if I end it.

Upon their marriage, Mi-Young could not think of herself as an agent who could determine her own fate. Such failure to employ agency in her life was perpetuated by other women, including her mother and a female pastor who urged her to accept her own situation:

> My mother told me, "If you get married, especially when a pastor marries you, you should accept the marriage as your cross and find a way to endure it. If you give it up easily, your act is wrong in front of God."
>
> I felt like I could not continue married life any longer when I had my first child. My husband was so obsessed with me. He checked on me several times a day. I had to give up all of my personal gatherings and relationships. He got married to me because he was attracted to my outgoing personality, but he could not stand it once we got married. He always chastised me without any good reasons. I went to *Kidowon* [a retreat center]. The female pastor in the center would order me to do forty-day-long or one-hundred-day-long prayers. I obeyed and prayed all the time.

Here Mi-Young does not mention how much she struggled with this advice, but like the woman who advised Young-Ja to just obey to her husband, Mi-Young's mother and the female pastor encouraged her to accept sexism in the name of Christian faith. These women's cases reveal how a Confucian perspective on gender and Christian teachings on male superiority work together to influence not only men's behaviors but also women's spirit and their mentality, and to suppress women's voices. Moreover, as the interviews

revealed, other women often play a significant role in a woman's negotiation of gender role and decision-making. From a feminist perspective, this is a serious compromise of women's rights. When women do not agree to patriarchy, why do they contribute to it?

Situating Women's Experience

As stated earlier, the women interviewed for this project do not represent the entire population of Korean American women. My observations of contradictions and inconsistencies in the women's narratives do suggest, however, the complex dynamics of Korean American women's everyday experience and the ways they resist quick generalization about submission and resistance. To understand these phenomena more fully, this section examines Korean American women's experience in light of their locatedness in historical, sociocultural, socioeconomic, and religious contexts.

A comprehensive discussion of Korean American women's locatedness is beyond the scope of this project; here I highlight four important aspects of their socioeconomic and sociocultural contexts. First, I address Korean American women's significant contribution to the sustenance and development of Korean American communities throughout the history of Korean immigration, their assimilation into American society, and their victimization by multi-layered oppression. Second, I focus on their difficult sociocultural struggle to find their way among traditional Korean ideals of women's roles and the ideologies of other value systems. Third, I discuss the socioeconomic significance of family for Korean American women, which helps explain why they maintain a seemingly submissive attitude and traditional gender roles. Last, I discuss the dual meanings of faith communities, especially churches, for Korean American women, which

helps explain the paradoxical influence of religious belief and practice on their submission and resistance.

Historical Context

Before examining Korean American women's socioeconomic, sociocultural, and religious locatedness, a brief historical overview of their locatedness is helpful. One can identify three time periods of Korean immigration to the United States. The first wave of immigration started on January 13, 1903, when 101 Koreans—fifty-five men, twenty-one women, and twenty-five children—arrived in Honolulu, Hawaii.[54] These first immigrants came to the States as contract laborers for the sugar plantations. The shortage of labor was dire in Hawaii in the wake of protests and strikes by Chinese and Japanese workers that resulted in laws banning the immigration of Chinese and Japanese workers.[55]

During World War I, some Korean workers were allowed to leave the plantations to take jobs as "carpenters, tailors, store operators, and laundrymen at Hawaiian military bases."[56] With the money they earned, these non-plantation workers brought picture brides from Korea.[57] Although the first immigrants were determined to go back to their homeland after securing financial means, most of them found it impossible to return. Some of them went to the mainland with their families, mostly to Los Angeles or San Francisco, to find better jobs. According to one report, "[t]here were 1,677 Koreans living on the mainland in 1920, 1,800 in 1930, and 1,700 in 1940."[58]

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[54] Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers*, 3.
[55] Ibid., 3–4.
[56] Moon H. Jo, *Korean Immigrants and the Challenge of Adjustment* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 4.
[57] Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers*, 4. Most of Japanese and Korean immigrant workers in Hawaii found their marital partners through the matchmakers who used only the photographs of brides and grooms for matchmaking.
[58] Jo, *Korean Immigrants*, 4.

The number of Korean immigrants decreased drastically after 1905 when the Japanese government declared Korea a protectorate and discouraged Korean immigration to the States. While those who had immigrated to the States for plantation employment had been poorly educated, most of the immigrants from 1910 to 1924 were highly educated, including "students, intellectuals, and political refugees."[59] These immigrants participated in different activities to build a Korean ethnic community, such as "Korean-language schools, churches, and social and political gatherings," and they supported the independence movement against Japanese colonial rule when the Japanese annexed Korea in 1910.[60] The U.S. Immigration Act of 1924, which regulated the entrance of foreigners based on national origin, completely ended Koreans' immigration as few Asians were allowed in the annual quotas.[61]

The second wave of Korean immigration to the States, the so-called "post–Korean War immigration," mostly consisted of three groups of Korean immigrants: the "war brides," the "war orphans" who were adopted by American families, and the students who came to study in the States. One report claims that 53,629 Korean wives of American servicemen came to the States before 1981.[62] Many of the G.I.s' wives, most of whom were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in Korea, suffered from not only the language barrier but also the neglect or abuses of spouses. Moreover, they could not obtain much help from Korean immigrant communities, from which they felt isolated and which viewed them through ethnocentric stereotypes and taboos. Jung Ha Kim notes that

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[59] Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers*, 4.
[60] Jo, *Korean Immigrants*, 3.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Eui Hang Shin, "Interracially Married Korean Women in the United Sates: An Analysis Based on Hypergamy-Exchange Theory," in *Korean Women in Transition: At Home and Abroad*, ed. Eui-Young Yu and Earl H. Phillips (Los Angeles, CA: Center for Korean-American and Korean Studies, California State University, 1990), 251; Ibid., 7.

these women were "often called an 'invisible group' because they are the least studied group among Koreans in the United States."[63]

The third wave of Korean immigration began with the Immigration Act of 1965, which abolished the policy of permitting immigration on the basis of national origins. Many of the post-1965 Korean immigrants were highly-educated middle-class professionals. According to the 1990 census, there were about 800,000 Korean immigrants in the United States.[64]

Throughout the history of immigration and adjustment to life in America, Korean American women have been the victims of double-marginalization and double-subordination. They have dealt with androcentrism and sexism deeply rooted in the traditional Korean value system and Korean immigrant society, while also going through "the material violence occasioned by racial and sexual discrimination and political and economic inequality in the U.S. and the psychic violence of both abjection and homogenization into conceptual invisibility by the U.S. racialized state."[65] Many Korean American women work in physically draining low-wage occupations. According to Lisa Lowe, "these women constitute an important low-paid workforce within the U.S., 'occupationally ghettoized' in particular sectors: menial, domestic, and reproductive labor, textile and garment industries, hotel and restaurant work, and a current mix of mass production, subcontracting, and family-type firms."[66] Living in situations where

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[63] Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, *Korean Immigrants in America: A Structural Analysis of Ethnic Confinement and Adhesive Adaptation* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1984), 49; Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers*, 5.
[64] Jo, *Korean Imiigrants*, 14.
[65] Elaine H. Kim and Eui-Young Yu, eds., *East to America: Korean American Life Stories* (New York: New Press, 1996), 30–31.
[66] Lisa Lowe, "Work, Immigration, Gender: Asian 'American' Women," in *Making More Waves: New Writing by Asian American Women*, eds. Elaine Kim, Lilia V. Villanueva, and Asian Women United of California (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1997), 270.

interlocking structures of oppression characterize their everyday lives, they are invisible in public and their voices are often silenced. These women are also often the victims of stereotypes perpetrated by non-Korean Americans. As Ai Ra Kim notes, they are generally perceived as "docile, subservient, and passive" women.[67] Sumi K. Cho points out that they have to deal not only with their social image as subservient women but with racial stereotypes such as the "model minority myth" in which traits of passivity and submissiveness are intensified and gendered through the stock portrayal of obedient and servile Asian Pacific women in popular culture."[68] In sum, one can say that Korean American women are the victims of multiple oppressions, namely sexism, classism, and racism.

On the other hand, Korean American women have played highly significant roles in Korean immigrants' survival in and adjustment to American society and in Korean immigrant communities' political, economic, and cultural development. Korean American women's everyday struggle over a century has been filled with constant domestic and out-of-home labor for the support of family, subordination under a Confucian patriarchal value system, and marginalization and discrimination in American society. It is no exaggeration to say they have endured, survived, and actively resisted multiple forces of oppression.

Sociocultural Forces

Although Korean American women's experiences are diverse, they share a struggle with two sociocultural forces: traditional Korean ideology and the value systems of

[67] Ai Ra Kim, *Women Struggling for a New Life: The Role of Religion in The Cultural Passage from Korea to America* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), xi.
[68] Sumi K. Cho, "Asian Pacific American Women and Racialized Sexual Harrassment," in *Making More Waves*, eds. Kim et al., 166.

mainstream American society, particularly as they relate to women's roles and status. Women's submission to patriarchy is enforced not only by the sociostructural conditions they encounter everyday but also by cultural and ideological mechanisms of Korean immigrant society. Neo-Confucianism has deeply influenced Koreans' view of women's proper role in family and conjugal relations. Jung Ha Kim says, "Confucianism has sunk such deep roots into Korean-American women's souls and ethos that very few are able to make distinctions among being a Confucian, a Confucianized Christian, a Christianized Confucian or a Korean."[69]

Confucian ideology and morality are reproduced through women's socioeconomic status and relationships. Especially in Korean culture, where other people's opinion of one's honor is critical, value systems are perpetuated through women's psychological vulnerability. Many Korean American women feel tension and conflict between their traditional heritage and their everyday experience at home, in Korean immigrant communities, and in non-Korean contexts. Even when they begin to adapt their expectations for women's roles and gender equality, their spouses and other members of Korean American communities do not necessarily change. Learning to negotiate these sociocultural forces is a significant task for Korean American women.

Socioeconomic Significance of Family

In the case of many Korean immigrant wives who work outside of their homes to support their families, the sociocultural conflicts may be deeper. A large number of Korean American women work outside the home because their husbands' earnings alone cannot support the family, yet the women's labor does not seem to affect conjugal power

[69] Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers*, 11.

relations.[70] Rather, due to the lack of spousal help and support, many women suffer from double burdens of laboring both outside and inside the home.[71] Added to this, while they are often stressed from fulfilling their roles as wife, mother, sometimes daughter-in-law at home, and partial breadwinner, they also have to struggle to maintain their ethnic identity while dealing with racial intolerance and stereotypes at their work places. In the case of first-generation Korean American wives, the language barrier often increases the challenge.

As Jung Ha Kim makes clear, Korean American women's attitude of submission to their husbands and acceptance of traditional gender roles should be understood within a context of the socioeconomic significance of family. For the Korean Americans who struggle to survive in a society in which they experience underemployment and racial discrimination every day, Kim says that "cross-gender solidarity" is more crucial for survival than claiming women's rights. Kim notes,

> So long as racism functions as a total phenomenon that combines "economic exploitation, political powerlessness, and cultural humiliation," . . . cross-gender solidarity between Korean-American women and men is vital for group survival. Yet, because of group survival, women are less likely to raise critical voices against sexist practices in their homes and churches.[72]

Yen Le Espiritu makes a similar observation about the necessity of maintaining family for many Asian American women:

> Moreover, Asian women's ability to transform traditional patriarchy is often constructed by their social-structural location in the dominant society. The articulation between gender discrimination, racial discrimination against (presumed or actual) immigrant workers, and capitalist exploitation makes their position particularly vulnerable. Constrained by these overlapping categories of

[70] Hye Kyung Chang and Ailee Moon, "Work Status, Conjugal Power Relations, and Marital Satisfaction among Korean Immigrant Married Women," in *Korean American Women: From Tradition to Modern Feminism*, eds. Young I. Song and Ailee Moon (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 85.
[71] Pyong Gap Min, "The Burden of Labor on Korean American Wives in and outside the Family," in *Korean American Women*, eds. Song and Moon, 98.
[72] Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers*, 118.

> oppression, Asian American women may accept certain components of the traditional patriarchal system in order to have a strong and intact family—an important source of support to sustain them in the work world.[73]

Seen from inside the socioeconomic context of Korean American women, their seemingly complicit attitude toward patriarchy is much more comprehensible.

Religious Forces

Unlike the common stereotype of homogenous immigrant congregations, congregants in immigrant and racial-minority churches struggle with cultural difference. In Korean American churches, traditional and contemporary Korean culture and value systems; Christian culture, teachings, and value systems; and "American" culture interact with one another. Furthermore, none of these discourses is homogeneous or static: each is ever in the process of construction and deconstruction. In this complex interaction of diverse cultural influences, Korean American women engage in constant negotiations with multiple power relations.

Korean immigrant churches play dual roles for Korean American women: contributing to both their victimization and their resistance. As Jung Ha Kim suggests, while Korean American churches are oppressive, they are also liberating for Korean American women insofar as they give women a space in which their ethnic and racial identity is affirmed. As we will see below in the interviewees' narratives, the women's active involvement in church ministries and religious practice often bring them a strong sense of empowerment and resistance.

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[73] Yen Le Espiritu, "Race, Class, and Gender in Asian America," in *Making More Waves,* eds. Kim et al., 140.

Dynamics of Submission and Resistance

As I mentioned earlier, imagining women to be thoroughly submissive or resistant is unrealistic and fails to capture women's ambivalent subjectivity. The interviewees' narratives reveal that their experiences of submission, resistance, and empowerment are not separate but are intricately interrelated. In their narratives, one can find the following meanings of submission: submission as strategy for survival and the maintenance of status quo, submission as a source of sense of empowerment and entitlement, and submission as an indirect form of resistance against sexism.

Submission as Strategy for Survival and Status Quo

In their negotiation with different sociostructural conditions, Korean American women not only engage in submission as a means for survival but also as a strategy to maintain the status quo or to effect some change in marital relations. Therefore, one way to account for the women's inconsistent behaviors and attitudes to sexism is to observe the priority they give to survival and to maintenance of their social status. Kelly Chong observes that women's submission is not only "a passive capitulation to male power" but also "a strategy for bringing about changes in the domestic arena, that is, as an instrument of negotiation for improved domestic and marital relations."[74] Jung Ha Kim also pays attention to the strategic aspect of Korean American women's submission. She argues that Korean American women's subjugation to male leadership and authority is in fact their "conscious efforts to maneuver various aspects of their lives without direct confrontation with and reactions from traditional authorities," from which the women

[74] Chong, *Deliverance and Submission*, 150.

gain "both expected and unexpected rewards in their everyday lives."[75] She sees a form of manipulation in this kind of women's behavior and argues that women engage in such behavior because they have limited access to a secure power status and resources:

> In other words, since women historically have had little access to publicly acknowledged power and control, they have learned to use what resources they do have to survive by utilizing informal means of influence. Women's way of interacting with men to offset the power balance between them is also recognized and labeled by some feminist anthropologists . . . .as manipulation from "behind-the-scenes."[76]

Like Kim and Chong, Jenny Hyun Chung Pak suggests that women participate in a "patriarchal bargain." I find such bargaining in the interviewees' behavior: by choosing to remain in traditional gender roles, these women gain "economic security and protection in a harsh, competitive new environment."[77]

Submission as Means of Empowerment and Respect

The women in this study choose submission and hold on to traditional gender roles as the means of empowerment and respect. It is not just economic security and spousal support that these women gain from their submission and cooperation with traditional gender roles. Many Korean American women seem to gain self-empowerment and respect from their family members and other people by holding to the traditions. During my interview with her, Bok-Ja repeatedly emphasized how rewarded she felt by the respect that her husband and children showed to her for the sacrifices she made as a traditional mother and wife. Jung Ha Kim contends that a cross-cultural sensitivity to the factors that empower particular women is required:

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[75] Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers*, 109−110.
[76] Ibid., 109.
[77] Jenny Hyun Chung Pak contends that the experiences of 1.5- and 2nd-generation Korean American women may be different from the first-generation women. See Jenny Hyun Chung Park, *Korean American Women: Stories of Acculturation and Changing Selves* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 38−39.

> A subject-centered understanding of how and why churched Korean-American women claim traditional gender roles as their own enables us to recognize that one culture's perception of burden and vice can be experienced in another culture as empowerment and virtue.[78]

We find not only sociostructural but also symbolic and cultural significance in Korean American women's acceptance of traditional gender roles in their family life. Women's seemingly submissive attitude paradoxically functions as an important source for their empowerment and self-esteem.

Submission as a Form of Resistance against Sexism

The women in this study also choose submission as a form of indirect resistance against sexism. Their submission serves not only as a strategy to secure their place in patriarchy but also as the means of resistance against gender inequality. Borrowing Victor Turner's idea about "the way the oppressed are able to challenge authority structures by exalting their 'positions of structural inferiority,'" Kelly Chong discusses the significance of Korean American women's capacity to turn their experience of submission and sacrifice into a way of gaining "a sense of moral and spiritual authority over their husbands and other 'tormenters.'"[79] The ways in which Young-Ja and Mi-Young try to give religious meanings to their submission can be explained from this theoretical viewpoint. This concept of women's submission as a form of indirect resistance highlights women's conscious use of agency without overtly challenging the inequality they experience. For example, while Young-Ja interprets her submission in religious terms, her choice to submit is also her strategy to change her husband's attitude. In fact, she exemplifies

[78] Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers*, 118.
[79] Chong, *Deliverance and Submission*, 161.

Korean American women's engagement with a "long-term strategy for effecting change in others by inspiring gratitude and admiration."[80]

Ambivalent Influence of Religious Belief and Practice

Another important observation from the women's narratives is the significant role their religious belief and practice play in their struggles with power relations. Women's religious faith generally reinforces their submission. It is true, for example, that church teachings on atonement are often used to solidify women's low self-esteem and subordinate status. However, in this section, I highlight the fluctuating roles that religious belief and practice play in women's negotiation of their place in patriarchy. That is, while the interviewees' submission and victimization are supported by their faith, the women also employ their faith and religious practice for survival and resistance.

Religious belief helps my interviewees find sustenance and empowerment while at the same time reinforcing submission. For example, Young-Ja's rationale for her submissive and docile attitude to her husband is her faith in God's will and in Jesus as the supreme model of obedience. She says,

> I have thought a lot about Jesus. Since I am a Christian, I should follow his obedience even though I cannot fully accept unjust situations. And all of the things my husband tells me are right. I try to obey him as much as I can . . . I think that God gave me such a tough spouse because he wanted to correct many parts of myself. I regard my marriage life as long-term training.

On the other hand, religious belief and practice also nurture Young-Ja's strong sense of entitlement. As we saw above, her belief yields not only a significant amount of sustenance and strength but also hope that her husband will become a wonderful man and Christian leader someday. Her faith and prayer have given her an incredibly positive and

[80] Ibid., 160.

active attitude to life, and, at least to this degree, her dependence on God's authority and her choice to accept utter humility paradoxically operate as the source of empowerment.

Similarly, the interviewees' religious belief and practice help them weather hardship and simply survive while all the while reinforcing their participation in a system of oppression. Many Korean American women seem to find the power to sustain themselves and survive domestic problems through their faith and active participation in church ministry. In Mi-Young's case, her religious learning ensures she remains in an unequal marriage, but her faith also gives her incredible strength and perseverance. While she was once a docile and submissive wife, she cites her faith as one reason that she has changed into a more assertive and active person who confidently voices her opinions and decisions within her family. This change is the more remarkable given that the controlling attitude of Mi-Young's husband got worse after they came to the United States and escalated to verbal violence. In the beginning, their life in the States was full of pain and suffering. They had taken over a business when they arrived, and they soon realized that the previous owner had deceived them. They lost a lot of the money they had brought from Korea and were forced to sell many of their possessions. Mi-Young explains her husband's descent into verbal abuse, and her response, this way:

> Not a day passed without my enduring his serious complaints and yelling after we moved to the States. He was very unhappy because his life completely changed coming here. He had been in a very comfortable white-collar job in Korea, but he had to work from very early morning to night here. He had had many friends in Korea, but he had no free time after we moved here. He kept complaining and I endured the whole time.

A few years ago, Mi-Young was diagnosed with cancer. She credits her prayers and spiritual relationship with God for providing the power to sustain herself through pain, to affirm the value of life, and to hope for the future. She says her religious practice

and faith were crucial for both surviving and figuring out the meaning of her own experience as an immigrant wife and a cancer patient, and it is clear that her religious meaning-making and theological interpretation of her experience provided her with helpful means of "reality reconstruction."[81]

> I believe that God wanted to train me by marrying me to my husband. He gave me a hard training so that I would not go to the world but get closer to Him through hardships. God loved my husband constantly. I am thankful because God gave me a hard time so that my husband would come back to Him. God led me to wilderness so that my family and my husband would experience God's majesty. God trusted that I could go through the hardship. Doesn't a serious cancer mean death? But God showed me that I can live if I hold onto God. God gave me a stepping stone on which I grow to be bolder in witnessing God to others . . . I have hardly cried over my disease since I know that I will go to heaven when I die.

A similar conceptualization of hardship as God's training is also found in Young-Ja's interpretation of her relationship with her husband:

> I have become a better Christian because of my husband. Since I am weak, God made me depend on and trust him. Although I sometimes feel like I am reaching my limit, I have faith in my husband. How I am now is just a part of the whole process. I know the end of the process. God will turn him into the most beautiful being. I pray to God to make him a Christian leader who is more spiritually mature and noble. Unless I had had faith, I could not have lived with a husband like mine.

Both women believe that they are able to go through the wilderness of marriage because God's providence gives them power and courage to endure their difficult married life.

Mi-Young's surrender to God paradoxically works as the source of her empowerment and pride. As well as bringing her healing and relief from the hardship of being an immigrant's life, her spiritual practices lead her to participate actively in church ministry. During the long and painful time of her treatment for cancer, Mi-Young went to

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[81] Lewis R. Rambo, "The Psychology of Conversion," in *Handbook of Religious Conversion*, ed. H. Newton Malony and Samuel Southard (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1992), 173; Chong, *Deliverance and Submission*, 100. Chong says that the process of reality reconstruction provides Korean evangelical Christian women "not only new, compelling explanations for the way things are but also dramatic implications for how the members cope with their earthly dilemmas and conflicts."

her church every morning to pray. Even when she was in severe pain, she did not miss the early-morning prayer. Her prayers were not only "daily vehicles for experiencing healing and relief from inner suffering" but also "an important channel of self-revelation on the part of the believer to God."[82] For her, a close relationship with God and the faithful life of a Christian meant "being faithful to church," by which she meant praying in the church as often as possible and doing as much as she could to help the ministry. In Mi-Young's view, her faith did more than sustain herself alone:

> My husband changed only when he realized that I had a terminal illness. He wanted to give me a chance to do everything that I wanted to do before I die. What do you think that was? Yes, to be faithful to church and God. Following me to church often, he himself changed and experienced God's providence in our life.
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> As I would be in pain whether I was at home or at church, I would choose to be at church. Why? I would rather die at church. It is God's house. God is everywhere, but the church is a house of prayer. God watches you with more care [there]. Since I have been so close to death and may die anytime, I am not afraid of anything. I always think that today is my last day. Thus I try to go to the church if I have any energy left. The fact that I can move is the proof of my being alive. Later I want to hear from God "Good job, faithful servant!" rather than hearing "This lazy servant!" when I see him. I try to be really helpful to my church. Since I cannot be helpful financially, I try to do many things that I can do physically.
>
> People often read the Bible as if they are reading a novel. But if you carve the words into your bones, God will provide you with everything you need. Children go anywhere they like, and the parents follow them and move them if they are in danger. God cares for us like that. About those who die from accident or from disease, people often say it is because of their sins. That is so wrong. God decides how long we live in this world. If one can glorify God or God needs her, she will live longer. All living beings have their time to die. Therefore, we should not have a grudge against God. I think the parable of the talents applies to our life expectancy also. This is why I think of each day as my last day. Since I don't know when God will take me from this world, let's try to do our best every day. As long as I live, I try to lay one more brick to build God's kingdom in this world. I tell people around me. "Don't think that there will be tomorrow. We don't know what will happen after this hour. Do your best in living for God and serving others! . . . People often think that it is God's response to their prayer only when they gain what they wanted. But I think that it is also God's response to my prayer when he does not get me what I want. I have realized such truth. My husband has

[82] Chong, *Deliverance and Submission*, 83, 96.

> experienced every day how faithfully God responds to our prayers and how he gives us reasons to thank him. I am happy and joyful every day no matter what. People tell me that I do not look like a patient.

Similarly, Sun-Hee's relationship with God gives her a sense of promise and a conviction of her own value as a Christian leader. I was impressed by how these women were sharing their own "theologies" with much pride and satisfaction. Such observations certainly demand an explanation of the role of religious belief and practice in women's negotiation of power relations and self-perception.

For these women, religious practice provides significant means of resistance as well as easing the difficulty of accommodation. Young-Ja's religious meaning-making makes it possible for her to employ her submission not only as "an important coping mechanism to deal with the intense trials of domestic life" but also as the means of "resisting a sense of powerlessness."[83] To my question, "How do you feel about living as a woman?" Mi-Young answered:

> I don't have any regret. I had to quit school because of my younger brother. I want to go to school when I am fully recovered. I want to serve and do God's work better with my schooling. God has trained me a lot so far. I have prayed with the words of the Psalms in front of me: "I will live and proclaim God's will." I have a growing conviction that the words will be fulfilled.
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> I am still in pain all the time. But I think that I feel pain because I am alive. My cells are alive. Thus it is a good thing to feel pain. Sometimes I reduce my dose of pain reliever on purpose because I feel like I am a robot when I depend on all kinds of medicine to be alive. However, I don't refuse medicine altogether because God gave me that.

As Mi-Young's surrender to God paradoxically gives her a way of asserting her own value, one may sense her struggle to empower herself and claim her own agency. She says:

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[83] Ibid., 159.

> I told God in my prayer. It is your loss if you take me now. What is it that I cannot do well? I am a good cook, good singer, etc. It is to your disadvantage. [Smile.] It is better I live and work hard for you. I also asked God, "Should you make me learn even how to receive radiation treatment so that I can be a good witness?" I think God led me to different kinds of tough experience so that I can be of good help for people.

Sun-Hee's spiritual relationship with God gives her a similar sense of entitlement and empowerment, one that she uses as a means of protest. Specifically, her assertive attitude to men is motivated by her relationship with God. In that moment of challenging the chair's decision to disband the missionary group that Sun-Hee founded, the value of keeping her promise to God was more important than maintaining her gender identity; obedience to God was more important than taking a woman's position and following traditional mores by making men look good in public.

For these women, faith and religious belief help them engage in resistance through the "displacement of male authority." In her analysis of Korean evangelical women's submission to patriarchy, Chong observes, "Although they may abide by the injunctions of obedience to men, many women see this as an act of submission to the commands and authority of God, not to their husbands, a reasoning that displaces the earthly authority of men."[84] The ways Young-Ja and Mi-Young interpret their own marital situation as God's training course follow exactly this kind of strategy. We see that their submission to their husbands, in the name of surrender to God's power and authority, gives them the power to endure their spouses' domineering attitudes, although indirectly

In sum, faith and religious practice help the interviewees create an ambivalent subjectivity that allows them to respond to oppressive contexts with flexibility. They seem to be well aware that their religions could function to both oppress them and

[84] Ibid., 161.

empower them. Instead of being passive and naïve participants in their religious systems, however, the women employ their own faith and interpretations of doctrine and scripture to make sense of their situations and empower themselves.

Creative Negotiation of Religious Teachings

The interviewees also chart a course between the need to claim their affiliation with certain religious traditions, groups, or institutions and the need to be flexible within them. For example, Greer Anne Ng finds a gap between Asian American women's "inter-religious dialogues within the self" and churches' monotheism-based teachings, which raises "special nurture needs."[85]

> The fact is, besides bearing within themselves centuries of collective memories from strong cultural heritages, children born into East Asian American/Canadian Christian homes are also brought up in an ethos steeped in Confucian, Taoist, or Buddhist values and spirituality. While living religiously as Christians, they behave more like their forebears than they realize. They practice filial piety, respect elders and seniors, prize the communal over the individual, and are conscious of being in continuity with ancestors and the departed. Their almost innate capacity for the both/and, the yin and the yang, their awareness of the place of the human within nature/creation, their occasional references to an "existence before" and an "existence after," betray their communal Taoist and Buddhist legacies. Some scholars have tried to distinguish between "cultural dual citizenship," "ethical dual citizenship," and "dual citizenship in faith . . . ," but this very attempt at separating these dimensions betrays a western, not an eastern, approach.[86]

What I have found from the Korean American women in my study is that most of them employ ambivalent subjectivity to deal with this gap. To my question about how they feel about their religions, the women showed openness and flexibility even when they claimed they were serious Christians, and they seemed quite comfortable with interreligious dialogue. Sun-Hee, for example, was a Buddhist until she came to the

[85] Ng, "Toward Wholesome Nurture," 246.
[86] Ibid.

States. Although she is now a fervent Christian, she remains proud of her experience as a Buddhist and sometimes interprets her situation in light of Buddhist teachings. Most of the other interviewees also seem to have absorbed the church's teachings into a multi-religious self that they developed by interacting with traditional Korean culture and religion. For example, the interaction of Christian and Confucian teachings on submission at once reinforces women's submission and helps them distance themselves from either ideology's teachings. In these women's complex responses to church teachings, we see more than a simple choice between submission and resistance.

The interviewed women also demonstrated creative ways to negotiate religious teachings. Many Korean American churches reinforce women's victimization through intentional and unintentional teachings about the importance of submission. These women, despite being deeply influenced by the church's teaching of patriarchy, are quite flexible in their understanding and application of the teachings to everyday reality. As we see from Sun-Hee's case, Korean American Christian women negotiate meanings for their own interest. Most interviewees accepted God as the ruler of all beings. At the same time, I found it quite interesting that they refused to accept the idea of God's judgment. Several women said that they often worried about people who seemed to live contrary to God's will. Their concern lay, however, on moral ground rather than on doctrinal. While most interviewees defined sin as "disobedience to God," they used a moral reference to support their definition. That is, they often expressed their understanding of sin as bringing harm to others or failing to fulfill one's moral responsibility. This made me suspect that they were connecting the church's teachings with the teachings of

Confucianism, and that Confucianism holds the dominant position in their multi-religious value systems.

Another example of the women's flexibility in navigating the gap between their experience of everyday life and their religious educations may be found in their response to feminism. Most of the women I met and interviewed simply refused to engage openly with feminism. They seemed to assume that such engagement would require accepting a clear-cut attitude toward the interlocking power structures they deal with each day. For different reasons—including the complexity of their constant struggles with gender expectations in their home lives and the power dynamics, including gender relations, that they experience in their religious communities—the women may feel distant from or uncomfortable aligning themselves with others who often speak in terms of strict dichotomies of victimization vs. liberation or silence vs. voice. Nonetheless, most of the Korean American women I have met have displayed some openness to feminist discourses. They seem to decide carefully when and where to reveal an interest in women's liberation. It is important to note that the women I interviewed revealed scarcely any openness to interreligious dialogue while in their faith communities, especially while attending official classes offered in their churches or conversing with church leaders. I suspect the informality of our interviews gave the women a sense that they were in a safe space where they might freely discuss interreligious connections.

The interviewed women also showed that while they sometimes find it beneficial to assert their racial, ethnic, and gender identity, they also suppress such claims of identity in the interest of group or family solidarity or to increase their own comfort and sense of power. I have observed that many Korean American women reveal an

ambivalent and fluid identity in their church life also. Depending on the power dynamics within any given situation, they choose to either engage in normative claims of identity or to avoid them. Korean American women employ also ambivalent subjectivity when navigating gender roles both in everyday life and church communities. As we saw in Sun-Hee's case, the interviewees showed different behavior depending on their assessment of the power dynamics in their religious communities or religious educational settings.

Conclusion

The narratives of Korean American women discussed in this chapter reveal different ways of responding to everyday reality. Through both seemingly submissive and seemingly resistant behaviors, the interviewees contribute to their subordinate positions and develop ways to empower themselves. We have observed that these women negotiate numerous tensions and dilemmas in their everyday life and in church communities with ambivalent subjectivity, navigating different identities with great flexibility. In their church life also, the women engage with the curricula by taking multiple subjectivities in reaction to the dynamics of power and knowledge.

The inconsistency, flexibility, and paradox revealed in the interviews should be understood in terms of the dynamics of the women's negotiation with power relations—their employing of complex means of submission and resistance. Instead of choosing overt forms of resistance, the women engage with indirect, subtle, and passive modes to deal with power relations. A sociocultural and sociostructural analysis is important particularly because the interviewees engaged with different acts of submission and resistance out of their realization that they cannot easily move themselves out of the

power relations they belong to. The women's awareness of their inability to move beyond traditional gender roles keeps them from either removing themselves from the unjust system or openly challenging the ideology. The above sociostructural analysis of their submission and resistance reveals that they engage with different modes of submission not necessarily out of internalized oppression but as a strategy to deal with the dilemmas in their lives. While cultural and religious ideologies seem to determine the behaviors of women like Young-Ja, Mi-Young, and Sun-Hee, the women actually negotiate the gains and losses that any choice to submit will yield. An analysis of how power operates within oppressive systems is important also because it can help one account for women's attachment to the status of subordination in spite of their critique of it.

At the same time, one should be careful about celebrating women's apparent resistance. Resistant acts might be symptoms of confused perception of self and power relations. The women's accounts of their relationship with God, for example, revealed how deeply they have internalized patriarchal and sexist teachings of the church. Thus their religious life parallels their ambivalent attitude toward marriage. Such observations underscore why one should take caution against single-mindedly emphasizing women's subordination or romanticizing their resistance. Korean American women engage in both submission and resistance in inconsistent ways. It is undeniable that their submission yields not only helpful means of resistance but also empowerment and a sense of entitlement. However, it is also true that their resistance often fails to openly challenge systems of oppression.

An emancipatory effort to observe and analyze Korean American women's everyday practice requires overcoming the binary notions of subordination/victimization

and resistance/agency in order to see the complexity of the negotiations women make within multi-layered structures of oppression. As this chapter has revealed, the interviewees' narratives do not allow a neat binary perception of submission and resistance. For example, it is quite tricky to name the choices and decisions that women like Sun-Hee make regarding gender roles and sexism either as submission or resistance. As Traci West says, "The web of subordinating social dynamics that ensnare women discourages a dichotomous notion of victimization and agency."[87] An observation of the women's complex struggle with power relations makes determining what is resistance and what is not and how to facilitate resistance also a complicated matter.

Instead of employing such easy dichotomies, it is helpful to utilize a concept of ambivalent subjectivity to describe women's struggle with power relations. In other words, it is necessary to pay attention to how women simultaneously engage in resistance while participating in oppressive systems, and how the choices they make are evidence of their ambivalent subjectivity. I argue that women's ambivalent subjectivity is a sign of active meaning-making and that one needs to examine this ambivalent subjectivity to draw a more precise picture of women's struggle with oppressive situations. The interviewed women use ambivalent subjectivity to deal with and negotiate numerous tensions and dilemmas in their everyday life and in church communities. As some interviewees showed, they also navigate multiple subject positions with flexibility.

Along with women's ambivalent subjectivity, the paradoxical relationship between subordination and resistance should be noted. As the interviewed women show, their resistance and transcendentality emerge paradoxically from their historical

[87] Traci C. West, *Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence, and Resistance Ethics* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 160.

embeddedness. Women's transcendentality (their desire and capacity to pursue transcendence beyond their situatedness) emerges out of their everyday struggles. Although the women may find it impossible to get beyond power relations, most of them have chosen survival, hope, and playful use of their submissive status instead of despair and thorough submission. In spite of their seemingly submissive and confused attitudes, the interviewed women showed active meaning-making and constant questioning of their situations. Without a serious consideration of their transcendentality as active meaning-makers, an account of their experience is not fully satisfying.

My interpretation of the interviewees' narratives also demonstrates that while relationality is a crucial motivation for women's experience of subordination and resistance, their pursuit of independence should also be considered seriously. The largest motivating factor for the interviewees when choosing their behaviors and attitudes was often their faithfulness to relationships. At the same time, their narratives reveal that they could neither survive nor resist without some autonomy or separation from their relationships. A valid account of their subjectivity, therefore, should pay attention to how the interviewees struggle between connection and separation.

These observations lead one to bring a flexible approach to a theological anthropology of women's resistance. In other words, such a theology should consider the complex and paradoxical dynamics between subordination and resistance, between the power of oppression and women's transcendentality, and between relationality and desire for independence. I seek to build such an approach by exploring different concepts and images of third space in the following chapters.

In the next chapter, I begin the search for a useable image of resistance by examining the concepts of subjectivity suggested by poststructuralist and postcolonial critical pedagogies. Poststructuralist critical pedagogy, with its attention to the influence of power structures on the construction of subjectivity, offers helpful challenges to liberative education. Postcolonial critical pedagogy also makes a relevant conversation partner, with its discussion of the ambivalent subjectivity of postcolonial subjects. I will particularly examine the notion of "third space" in these theories as a useful concept for describing the paradoxical relation between subordination and resistance.

Chapter 2

Post-critical Pedagogies and Religious Education

In this chapter, I examine the challenges that poststructuralist and postcolonial critical pedagogies pose to liberative religious education, paying particular attention to concepts of resistance. Poststructuralist critical pedagogy is particularly important because of its assertion that one cannot transcend power relations in the search for liberation, an assertion that illumines the power of oppressive structures in the lives of Korean American women. I also engage with postcolonial critical pedagogy as it connects resistance to an ambivalent postcolonial subjectivity. Considering the ways in which many Korean Americans show ambivalent subjectivity in their daily lives on the margins, the postcolonial concept of resistance is worthy of consideration.

My goal in this chapter is twofold: first, to discuss the advantages and limitations of post-critical pedagogies, especially the concepts of resistance, in light of Korean American women's subjectivity, and second, to address why liberative religious education for Korean American women demands an alternative theological account of women's resistance. I first explore the ways in which poststructuralist and postcolonial critical pedagogies, described together as post-critical pedagogies, challenge the goals and methods that have been generally accepted in liberative educational theories. To evaluate models of human subjectivity found in these pedagogical theories, I discuss the forms of subjectivity revealed in the theories of Judith Butler and Homi Bhabha, representative figures of poststructuralism and postcolonialism, respectively. Providing helpful theories of human subjectivity and the paradoxical nature of human agency and

resistance, these theorists' concepts of resistance are promising for a religious educator working with Korean American women.

The criteria I use to evaluate post-critical pedagogies emerge from two sources: my observation of Korean American women's subjectivity and a Freirian vision of human subjectivity and education. I do not believe that post-critical pedagogies require a religious educator to discard the vision of liberative religious education advocated by Freire. The emancipatory vision that Freire and many religious educators have held is not old-fashioned or replaceable. I also believe that Freire's perspective on liberative pedagogy can complement some limitations of poststructuralist and postcolonial critical pedagogies. Thus, I address some aspects of the Freirian vision of education and human subjectivity that a religious educator cannot afford to give up, especially one working for Korean American women.

My arguments in this chapter are the followings: First, a religious educator's goals and methods of education are deeply influenced by her perception of the learners' subjectivity; second, a liberative religious educator should consider the learners' ambivalent subjectivity seriously; third, in spite of their contributions, poststructuralist and postcolonial pedagogies fail to provide either a normative vision for religious education for resistance or a helpful account of the motivation behind women's resistance, and that these limitations stem from the theories' implied notion of human subjectivity; last, that one can nevertheless still find a helpful notion of resistance and ambivalent subjectivity in the notion of the third space found in Bhabha's theory and implied in Butler's work.

Post-Critical Pedagogies

Post-critical pedagogies belong to a broad school of educational philosophies named "Critical Pedagogy," functioning as internal critiques of it. This section begins with an overview of critical pedagogy before moving on to poststructuralist and postcolonial notions of resistance and human subjectivity.

Critical Pedagogy

Traditional liberal educational theories regarded schooling as "providing opportunities for individual improvement, social mobility, and economical and political betterment to marginalized people such as the poor, ethnic minorities, and women."[88] This position was challenged by critical reproduction theory, which rejects the idea of school as a neutral arena. Critical reproduction theorists contend that schools are social and cultural agencies that reproduce the dominant ideologies of their society. The limitation of critical reproduction theory for liberative pedagogies is its failure to address issues of experience and agency or to provide for the possibility of transformation so necessary for encouraging educators to commit to change.[89]

Resistance theory, another alternative to traditional liberal educational theory, assumes the ability of educators to protest hegemony. Individuals are considered passive recipients of a dominant discourse but struggle and create their own meaning.[90] The limitation of this theory for our purposes is its division between sociocultural structure

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[88] Adriana Hernandez, *Pedagogy, Democracy, and Feminist* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1997), 9.
[89] Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux, "Curriculum Theory and the Language of Possibility," in *Education Under Siege* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey, 1985),139–62.
[90] Kathleen Weiler, *Women Teaching for Change* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey, 1998), 14–18; Hernandez, *Pedagogy, Democracy, and Feminist*, 9.

and human agency and its failure to dialectically interrogate either.[91] It also fails to explain how oppression is internalized through education.

After these theories took the stage for some time, critical pedagogy emerged to pay attention to the politics and operation of power in the process of the production and transmission of knowledge and the construction of learners' subjectivity through education. In this theoretical framework, an educational setting is not just a site of socialization or indoctrination but the place where ideologies and social forces collide out in the effort to gain dominant positions. According to critical pedagogy, unjust social relations and unequal power structures based on race, class, and gender are transmitted and reproduced through mainstream schooling. Critical theorists regard their important task as disclosing how education serves the interests of the dominant and reinforces the marginalization of the subordinated.

Yet critical theorists also view education as a tool for empowerment and the means for giving voice to the marginalized. Critical pedagogy has as its aim empowering subjects to become agents in a process of both social transformation and reaffirmation and reformulation of their own histories and experiences. In short, it is interested in empowering learners to understand and critically reflect on themselves and their situations. It aims at social transformation and liberation of the oppressed through education. In this sense, Peter McLaren notes that critical pedagogues

> stress that any genuine pedagogical practice demands a commitment to social transformation in solidarity with subordinated and marginalized groups. This necessarily entails a preferential option for the poor and the elimination of those conditions that promote human suffering. [92]

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[91] Aronowitz and Giroux, "Curriculum Theory," 96–104.
[92] Peter McLaren, *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education* (Boston, MA: Pearson, 2007), 189.

Of necessity, critical pedagogy examines the relation between knowledge and power. From the perspective of this theory, traditional education theories are "primarily concerned with how-to questions and do not question relationships between knowledge and power or between culture and politics.[93] That is, traditional theories disregard the function of school as "an agency of social and cultural reproduction."[94] Theorists in critical pedagogy share the belief that "knowledge is always an ideological construction linked to particular interests and social relations,"[95] and they explore why and how knowledge is constructed, validated, and passed on and in what ways certain knowledge contributes to the protection and reinforcement of power structures. They also pursue what Habermas calls "emancipatory knowledge," the knowledge with which marginalized people can create critical consciousness of themselves and their social reality and try to challenge and transform unjust power structures.[96]

As Peter McLaren notes, there are many approaches in critical pedagogy.[97] Some of the more common include feminist pedagogy, critical constructivism, postcolonial pedagogy, postmodern pedagogy, poststructuralist pedagogy, and multicultural education. Within each of these, as McLaren points out, one can find numerous interdisciplinary efforts, and any scholar's view of critical pedagogy may embrace more than viewpoints. I introduce the theoretical approaches of poststructuralist and postcolonial pedagogies in more detail, especially their perspectives on the matter of subjectivity in education, later in the chapter, but it is helpful here to identify what kind of critical stance they take in common.

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[93] Henry Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals: Toward a Critical Pedagogy of Learning* (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1988), 6.
[94] Ibid.
[95] McLaren, *Life in Schools*, 209.
[96] Ibid., 198.
[97] Ibid., 227.

Marit Trelstad names three main points of criticism raised by poststructuralist and postcolonial pedagogy: first, they call for critical self-reflection on critical pedagogies because critical pedagogies can serve oppressive ends rather than liberating ones. For example, Elizabeth Ellsworth describes how her critical pedagogical attempts in a college classroom ended up oppressing students.[98] Second, critical pedagogues are also challenged for failing to critically examine their practice of representing marginalized groups. Poststructuralist and postcolonial feminist critical pedagogies have pointed out how well-intentioned educators' practice can contribute to the further subordination of marginalized groups through over-simplification and over-generalization of their cultures and voices. Chandra Mohanty points out that emancipatory educators may "'speak for,' exoticize, and therefore objectify minoritized women from a Euro-masculinist perspective." Third, post-critical pedagogies caution that critical pedagogies can be commodified or tokenized instead of furthering social transformation.[99] Scholars like Michelle Jay and Mohanty mention how academic institutions keep "the same hierarchical, Western, white-biased systems in place" even as they create a market for celebrating diversity in terms of race and gender. Trelstad gives an account of several scholars of critical pedagogies who are encouraged to pursue justice and diversity in their teaching and research yet who become tamed and compliant tokens, failing to challenge or critique the institutions to which they belong.[100] In time, critical pedagogy would largely give way to its post-critical critics.

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[98] Elizabeth Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't this Feel Empowering? Working through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy," in *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, eds. Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore (New York: Routledge, 1996), 106.
[99] Marit Trelstad, "The Ethics of Effective Teaching: Challenges from the Religious Right and Critical Pedagogy," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 11, no. 4 (2008): 195.
[100] Ibid., 196.

A Poststructuralist Conception of Subjectivity: Judith Butler

To examine the notion of human subjectivity in poststructuralist pedagogical theories, I have chosen to discuss Judith Butler's conception of subjectivity. I do not mean to imply that all poststructuralist-oriented educational theorists agree with her view of subjectivity and its relation to education. However, Butler's ideas about the human subject, agency, power, and social relations provide a succinct introduction to poststructuralist critical pedagogy.

Addressing women's subjectivity, Butler challenges essentialist notions of identity because of their failure to account for differences of identity and experience. Butler points out that identity categories such as "we" or "woman" not only exclude many people who do not fit common definition of what constitutes the group, but they also fail to capture complex and unpredictable layers of identity or indefinable areas of members' experience.

A feminist theologian's use of this point will help us understand the significance of the issue. Based on this poststructuralist critique of identity categories, Mary McClintock Fulkerson criticizes those who try to solve the problem of difference with inclusionary politics. She contends that feminist theologians have failed to address differences of women appropriately, because they assumed a politics of identity based on the essentialist notion of "women's experience" and assumed that the identity of "woman" would be an adequate basis for a politics of emancipation. However, Fulkerson contends, the notion of "women's experience" is a false universal with which we may overlook many particular women's realities. She argues that, when feminist theology relies upon appeals to women's experience as the origin of or evidence for its claims, it

cannot account for the systems of meaning and power that produce that experience. It cannot account for the different realities of different women.

Butler also challenges the modern conception of a self with autonomy, free will, and reason. She rejects unified, autonomous, integrated, and monolithic notions of the subject as the source of knowing and doing. She contends, "There is no ontologically intact reflexivity to the subject which is then placed within a cultural context."[101] She argues that what one perceives as self or subjectivity is not given but contingent on different discourses of time and place. A subject is "not an entity, a substance, but a relation, or sets of relations."[102] In Butler's view, the self is fluid, ever-changing, contingent, and politically, socially, historically and bodily situated and constituted.

Thus the notion of self-coherency or self-continuity is an illusion. For Butler, these concepts are the "ideals we hold about the self rather than actual descriptions of our lived experience as selves possessing an identity."[103] She uses the term "performativity" to describe how our identity is enacted and appears coherent or stable. As there is no self-coherent actor behind the act, she chooses the word performativity instead of performance: "there is no being behind doing, expecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything."[104] The illusion of self-coherency derives from the repetition of acts and performances.

Feminist theologian Jennifer Beste questions Butler's suspicion of self-continuity or self-coherency. She points out that Butler fails to distinguish "between the absolutely

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[101] Judith Butler, "For a Careful Reading," in *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 46.
[102] Mary McClintock Fulkerson, *Changing the Subject: Women's Discourses and Feminist Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 82.
[103] Jennifer Beste, *God and the Victim: Theological Reflections on Evil, Victimization, Justice, and Forgiveness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 63.
[104] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 25.

unified, encapsulated Enlightenment self and the minimal sense of self-coherency necessary for any kind of purposive action."[105] For Beste, Butler's view of self cannot help the healing of those who are the victims of violence. Similarly, a religious educator could oppose Butler's view believing that one cannot work on developing concrete plans for education if she does not believe in learners' minimal core of self. However, Butler does in fact believe in a minimal core of self; for her it is a capacity and desire for transcendence and freedom. As I will discuss more below, she advocates an agency emerging from discursive relations.

For Butler, subjectivity is deeply related to meaning and language. Meaning is not regarded as a lasting and stable presence but as "the ongoing play of signifiers."[106] Language exists prior to subjectivity; thus the subjective consciousness cannot be the origin of meaning. Words produce reality and identity. One cannot avoid the textuality of signification prevalent in reality, and subjects are not stable sites of meaning but sites of constantly competing and emerging/deferring meanings and interests. Meanings and identities can therefore be said to be generated out of convergences of signifying processes: One system of meaning intersects with other systems of meaning to construct actual "women." But as meanings are characterized by instability and fluidity, what it means to be a "woman" changes from one historical context to another. Butler thus posits multiple subjectivities, and "woman" is taken to include many differently constructed subject positions.

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[105] Beste, *God and the Victim*, 70.
[106] Donna Teevan, "Challenges to the Role of Theological Anthropology in Feminist Theologies," *Theological Studies* 64, no. 3 (2003): 589.

Butler criticizes the liberal notion of agency with its image of an autonomous subject that challenges and transforms power relations. She questions the potential for agency external to the operation of power relations this way:

> [W]hat are the concrete conditions under which agency becomes possible, a very different question than the metaphysical one, what is the self such that its agency can be theoretically secured prior to any reference to power?[107]

According to Butler, agency is not a universally given existential or "capacity for reflexive mediation that remains intact regardless of its cultural embeddedness."[108] In *Gender Trouble*, she argues that subjects are constructed by cultural discourses and subjectivity is flatly impossible. The subject is constructed as "a consequence of certain rules-governed discourses that govern the intelligible invocation of identity." [109] There being no way to get outside power relations, one cannot separate transforming, liberating subjects and structures from oppressive and patriarchal subjects and structures.

Butler contends that "what the person 'is' is always relative to the constructed relations in which it is determined."[110] This argument evokes the criticism that her notion of subject and power is deterministic and that in discussing only the effect of discourse she abandons the notion of the subject. For example, feminist scholars including bell hooks, Nancy Hartsock, and Seyla Benhabib ask, "why are claims about 'the end of man' most vocal at this particular historical moment when colonized others struggle for and begin to acquire small spaces in which to write themselves (e.g., women in some spaces in the academy)?"[111] These theorists are concerned that skepticism about the subject and

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[107] Butler, "For a Careful Reading,"136–137.
[108] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 143.
[109] Ibid., 145.
[110] Ibid., 10.
[111] Carmen Luke and Jennifer Gore, eds., *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 6; bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990); Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson

normative claims comes at a time just when women are poised to claim their own identities.

Responding to such criticism, Butler in later works discusses social "constitution" instead of social construction and other social relations including "the materiality of the body and the unpredictable dynamics of the psyche" in addition to discourse. She turns to how power not only oppresses but also enables subjects,[112] and she provides two meanings of power: "power as the condition of possibility for the very existence of the subject" and "power as it is taken up by the subject's own actions."[113] According to Butler, the subject is "*neither* fully determined by power *nor* fully determining of power (but significantly and partially both)."[114] She contends:

> We may be tempted to think that to assume the subject in advance is necessary in order to safeguard the agency of the subject. But to claim that the subject is constituted is not to claim that it is determined; on the contrary, the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency.[115]

The ambivalent operation—production and repression—of power allows a paradoxical notion of agency. Agency emerges from discursive practices. Due to the contingency of discourse, agency derives from moments of performativity. As David Kyuman Kim points out, Butler's move from the use of the term "construction" to the term "constitution" is significant in that it allows "a more complex account of power and agency that focuses on the materiality of the body as well as on the constitution of the

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(New York: Routledge, 1990); Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community, and Postmodernism, in Contemporary Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[112] David Kyuman Kim, *Melancholic Freedom: Agency and the Spirit of Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 100.

[113] Amy Allen, *The Politics of Our Selves: Power, Autonomy, and Gender in Contemporary Critical Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 202. Amy Allen helpfully refers to these as "domination" and "empowerment."

[114] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 17; Ibid., 202.

[115] Butler, "Contingent Foundations," 46.

moral subjectivity of the psyche."[116] For religious educators, the concept of constitution is more helpful for discussing subversive acts of agency and "the vulnerability and the unpredictability of subject constitution."[117]

Out of this notion of agency and discursive relations, Butler presents a paradoxical notion of subversion. According to Butler, the possibility of resistance emerges from the unpredictable ways in which agency works. Subjects constantly negotiate power relations and the relationship is "a complex play of desires." From the constant and unpredictable repetition and conflicting reenactment of discursive relations, a challenge to dominant discourses may emerge. Butler contends, "Subjection consists precisely in this fundamental dependency on a discourse we never chose but that paradoxically, initiates and sustains our agency."[118]

If one understands the Korean American women's acts and behaviors we saw in chapter 1 in light of Butler's notion of agency and subversion, one could say there will never be moments of their struggle that will have same effect even in one woman's life. It is unpredictable what kind of political effect any act might bring even when the actor appears utterly submissive. The moments of their faithful performing as Korean Americans, women, mothers, wives, and religious people may in fact operate as resistance.

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[116] Kim, *Melancholic Freedom*, 99–100.
[117] Vicki Bell, "On Speech, Race and Melancholia: An Interview with Judith Butler," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 16, no. 2 (1999): 170; Kim, *Melancholic Freedom*, 100.
[118] Butler, *Psychic Life of Power*, 2.

Butler does not negate self-consciousness or intentionality. Her discussion of agency includes a "self-conscious self."[119] As Jennifer Beste states, statements like the following show how Butler considers the subject with critical consciousness:

> My position is mine to the extent that I replay and resignify the theoretical positions that have constituted me, working the possibilities of their convergence, and trying to take account of the possibilities of their convergence, and trying to take account of the possibilities that they systematically exclude. [120]

Butler rejects the premise that political acts require a stable subject, contending that such a claim is an "authoritarian ruse" that does not allow any political opposition to her concept of the subject. She contends that challenging the notion of the subject as the condition for politics does not mean discarding the notion of the subject:

> To refuse to assume, that is, to require a notion of the subject from the start is not the same as negating or dispensing with such a notion altogether; on the contrary, it is to ask after the process of its construction and the political meaning and consequentiality of taking the subject as a requirement or presupposition of theory.[121]

> The critique of the subject is not a negation or repudiation of the subject, but, rather, a way of interrogating its construction as a pregiven or foundationalist premise.[122]

Stated another way, Butler's notion of the contingent subject does not necessitate discarding the normative foundations for an emancipatory struggle but rather lays the foundation for difference. Her task is to liberate the usage of the subject from constricting, given meanings:

> To deconstruct the subject of feminism is not, then, to censure its usage, but, on the contrary, to release the term into a future of multiple significations, to emancipate it from the maternal or racialist ontologies to which it has been

[119] Kim, *Melancholic Freedom*, 100.
[120] Butler, "Contingent Foundations," 42.
[121] Ibid., 36.
[122] Ibid., 42.

> restricted, and to give it play as a site where unanticipated meanings might come to bear.[123]

Theories of subjectivity that do not ask who establishes the foundation for political (liberative) action may easily end by working only as another form of violence and domination.

In sum, Butler does not try to discard the notion of the subject or political efficacy. Her notion of the subject is just very different from the subject as passive object of power relations or as active agent of transformation with consciousness. She describes a subject "who is constantly negotiating the social, cultural, political, and even psychic sources for identity that emerge from the distinctions and infections established by power"[124] By showing how the self is constituted by social relations and also can challenge or change them from a position of subjection, she defines ambivalent subjectivity. She is very much onto the paradox of subjectivity, contending that "the very conditions for subjection are the conditions for freedom." [125]

Poststructuralist Critical Pedagogy

Poststructuralists contend that power is not only repressive but also productive. Power is ambiguous and manifests as constant negotiation. Power is not something to possess or discard. For poststructuralists, the binary notion of power distinguishing oppressors and the oppressed are irrelevant. With this notion of power, poststructuralist critical pedagogy takes interest in "the technology of control, the silent regulation, deployed by signifiers such as 'power,' 'voice,' 'democratic freedoms,' and the 'class, race, gender' triplet."[126]

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[123] Ibid., 50.
[124] Kim, *Melancholic Freedom*, 98.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Luke and Gore, *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, 4.

It reveals the complexity of the learners' struggle to negotiate the gaps between their everyday knowledge and knowledge taught at school.

Poststructuralist pedagogies critique previous liberative pedagogies for ignoring the multiple discourses, identities, and subject positions that students and teachers constantly negotiate. While critical pedagogies call for the transformation of "reality" through consciousness of one's social position and the articulation of one's voice, little or no attention is given to the multiple social positions, multiple voices, conscious and unconscious pleasures, tensions, desires, and contradictions that are present in all subjects in all historical contexts. In poststructuralist critical pedagogy, "texts, classrooms, and identities are read as discursive inscriptions on material bodies/subjectivities." Teachers and students must be thought of as "unfixed, unsatisfied, . . . not a unity, not autonomous, but a process, perpetually in construction, perpetually contradictory, perpetually open to change."[127]

A Postcolonial Conception of Subjectivity: Homi Bhabha

Postcolonialism is a critical discourse on the aftermath and the remaining forms of colonialism and imperialism, including economic and cultural globalization. Postcolonial theorists believe that colonial logic and viewpoints still persistently operate in multiple forms of domination. Therefore, R. J. Sugirthatrajah notes, the task of postcolonialism is

> an active interrogation of the hegemonic systems of thought, textual codes, and symbolic practices which the West constructed in its domination of colonial subjects. In other words, postcolonialism is concerned with the question of cultural and discursive domination.[128]

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[127] Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London: Methuen, 1990), 132.
[128] R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism, Bible and Liberation* (Maryknoll, N. Y.: Orbis Books, 1998), 17.

While earlier liberation paradigms followed the modern concept of identity based on "discrete and mutually exclusive categories: same/other, spirit/matter, subject/object, inside/outside, pure/impure, rational/chaotic,"[129] postcolonial theory, as Gayatri Spivak argues, pays critical attention to "the hidden ethicopolitical agenda that drives the differentiation between the two [oppressor/oppressed]."[130]

I would like to discuss how postcolonial theorists understand ambivalent subjectivity by focusing on insights from Homi Bhabha. Bhabha's postcolonial theory is a search for an alternative language to describe the colonial subject by paying attention to the paradoxical nature of the postcolonial process. He criticizes Edward Said for presuming the universality of colonial discourse and thus making it impossible to find any potential for resistance in the colonized subject. For Bhabha, a move to search for the purist origin of a nation is problematic because it is based on a binary notion of cultural identity and a unified conception of colonial power. Bhabha notes that "the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference."[131] While colonial domination is based on "the rules of recognition" that distinguish "insiders" and "outsiders," the complex interaction between colonizers and colonized subjects paradoxically threaten the political strategies of colonial oppression and subordination based on the core distinction.[132] By arguing that colonial discourse does not completely suppress the colonized subject and that the subject actually turns the discourse into a site of subversion and mockery, Bhabha presents a new image of a colonial and postcolonial subject.

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[129] Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera, "Introduction: Ailen/Nation, Liberation, and the Postcolonial Underground," in *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, eds. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner, and Mayra Rivera (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 11.
[130] Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 332.
[131] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 107.
[132] Ibid., 110.

Bhabha tries to identify a postcolonial subject by employing psychoanalytic concepts of ambivalence to describe the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. He argues that colonial domination is not operated as absolute or solely as one-way power but as interdependence between the colonizer and the colonized. Although the colonizer wants to produce the totally submissive subject, the colonized subjects engage in ambivalent responses to colonial oppression: They are "half acquiescent, half oppositional, always untrustworthy."[133] Moving beyond "narratives of originary and initial subjectivities," he suggests we pay attention to "those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences."[134] With these "in-between" spaces, one can discuss "strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself."[135] Bhabba notes that "it is in the emergence of the interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated."[136]

Deconstructing modern conceptual categories such as class and gender, Bhabha proposes a new understanding of subject positions. For Bhabha, self is found "in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion."[137] This in-between space is a place of hybridity that mediates the polarities of postcolonial relations. This "third space" functions as the site of "communication, negotiation and, by

[133] Ibid., 330.
[134] Ibid., 1.
[135] Ibid., 2.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Ibid.

implication, translation."[138] The colonized subjects assume "the unstable site of cross-cultural meanings and interactions,"[139] and their hybridity questions the clear boundaries of identity, culture, and nationality. The hybridity of the colonized subject "disrupt(s) the categories that authorize the very exercise of power: patriarchal, social, national, or cosmological" and makes the dominant power of the center unstable and uncertain.[140] At the same time, such positioning makes the identity of the colonized subject always fluid and unstable. Hybridity is "not a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures [or two religions or two ontological poles] . . . [It] creates a crisis" for "authority based on a system of recognition."[141]

The everyday experience of the Korean American women interviewed for this project demonstrates what Bhabha explained with the term "colonial ambivalence." They often feel attracted to the mainstream of society while distancing themselves from the center and locating themselves at the margins. Their reaction to power relations constituted by multiple oppressions of patriarchy, classism, white supremacy, and so on is not an absolute submission. Rather, Korean American women appropriate the dominant discourses in their own ways. Creating a third space of enunciation, they identify neither with the mainstream society nor with their own ethnic community. They resist being "coded and marked by others."[142] The hybrid subject develops "numerous,

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[138] Leela Gandhi, *A Critical Introduction to Postcolonial Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 131.
[139] Ibid., 135.
[140] Mayra Rivera, "God at the Crossroads: A Postcolonial Reading of Sophia," in *Postcolonial Theologies*, eds. Keller, Nausner, and Rivera, 189.
[141] Bhabha, *Locations of Culture*, 114.
[142] Leona M. English, "Feminist Identities: Negotiations in the Third Place," *Feminist Theology* 13, no. 1 (September 1994): 100.

and at times paradoxical, identities."[143] According to Bhabha, hybrid subjects hold subversive power against dominant power structure, and women's mimicry of the center actually often works as "parody" or "mockery." For Bhabha, it is important to include these passively resisting subjects in the reconstruction of postcolonial subject.

Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and third space have been widely welcomed in different fields. For example, several scholars have used the postcolonial concept of hybridity to discuss cultural encounters between European Americans and other ethnic groups.[144] Asian American theologians have employed Bhabha's theory to develop theological languages describing Asian Americans' struggle to sustain their identity in their experience of living in the margins.[145] These theologians have provided viewpoints with which one can picture Asian Americans' immigrant life in more dynamic and complex ways. Moreover, they find "great potential for resistance and anti-colonial politics" in Bhabha's concepts.[146] Asian Americans' immigrant experience of being at the margin of the Empire causes the sense of displacement and *Han* and yet reconstructs their identity and develops hybrid identity in the space between the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized.[147] It is this space that Bhabha calls, in full, "the third space of enunciation" or liminality. Asian American theologians show how Asian Americans

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[143] Susan Vanzanten Gallagher, "Mapping the Hybrid World: Three Postcolonial Motifs," *Semeia* 75, no. 1 (1996): 235.
[144] For example, see Nestor Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books, 1999); Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press,1999).
[145] For example, see Namsoon Kang, "Who/What Is Asian? A Postcolonial Theological Reading of Orientalism and Neo-Orientalism," in *Postcolonial Theologies*, eds. Keller et al., 100–117; Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).
[146] Keller, Nausner, and Rivera, "Introduction" in *Postcolonial Theologies*, eds. Keller et al., 13.
[147] According to Andrew Sung Park, *Han* can defined as "the critical wound of the heart generated by unjust psychosomatic repression, as well as by social, political, economic, and cultural oppression." Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 10.

resist binarism in their everyday life and sustain their lives by resisting power, a phenomenon known alternately as "*jeong"* or "interstitial integrity." For example, Wonhee Anne Joh employs Bhabha's concepts to account for Korean Americans' negotiation with different social forces.

Although there are several kinds of criticism of postcolonialism, including Bhabha's theory, I focus on those that question the lack of attention to sociopolitical power relations and the political agency of the colonized subject. Critics such as Abdul R. Jan Mohamed and Bart Moore-Gilbert argue that Bhabha "collapses the colonizer and the colonized into a singular, hybrid 'colonial subject'" and fails to pay attention to the economic, political, and social inequalities and material power relations.[148] Robert Young claims that Bhabha's analysis fails to provide "the historical evidence of resistance."[149] He argues that, by focusing on the internal fragility of colonial domination, Bhabha failed to explain how the colonized can develop historical consciousness and political act. Young contends that Bhabha makes the colonized a simple actor, not a political subject. Moore-Gilbert claims that Bhabha is unclear to what extent the colonized subject's resistance is active or passive.[150] David Jefferess further contends that Bhabha fails to distinguish between subversion and transformation. His notion of resistance, says Jefferess, is "too broad to have any political currency and forecloses the possibility of activism."[151] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri contend that "postcolonial theorists who advocate a politics of difference, fluidity, and hybridity in order to challenge the binaries

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[148] Abdul R. Jan Mohamed, *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983); Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politic*s (London: Verso, 1997); David Jefferess, *Postcolonial Resistance: Culture, Liberation, and Transformation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 32, 35.
[149] Robert J. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001).
[150] Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory*, 132–133.
[151] Jefferess, *Postcolonial Resistance*, 31.

and essentialism of modern sovereignty have been outflanked by the strategies of power."[152] In general, these critics question how one can envision the subalterns' intentional and organized resistance given Bhabha's theory.

Jefferess argues, however, that Bhabha's theory does not disregard the power inequalities or material relations but is an attempt to "analyze the way in which the actors that take part in these relations are shaped by colonial discourse."[153] Challenging previous ideas of resistance that are based on the modern notion of autonomy and a system of binary oppositions, Bhabha proposes a concept of resistance on the basis of the ambivalent postcolonial subjectivity. However, I agree with the critics that Bhabha's notion of resistance does not include a vision of intentional and organized resistance derived from political agency of the colonized subject. In other words, Bhabha accounts for resistance as an effect, not as an act out of agency. I think it is heuristically valuable to distinguish two kinds of resistance here with the help of Jefferess's terms—subversion and transformation. Bhabha addresses subversion, not transformation. This does not mean that one should discard Bhabha's notion of resistance. Rather, one may ask what is the value of acknowledging resistance as subversion, especially if it does not guarantee transformation. In other words, what does Bhabha gain by reconstructing postcolonial subject with his concepts of hybridity, ambivalence, and the third place?

Postcolonial Critical Pedagogy

Postcolonial critical pedagogy emerged as a discourse of resistance against the colonial power using the dynamics of education and a hybrid construction of subjectivity. Postcolonial pedagogy highlights the importance of situating pedagogical practices in the

[152] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 138.
[153] Jefferess, *Postcolonial Resistance*, 36.

global economy. It pays attention to the ideological orientation of curricula, particularly focusing on the imbalance of power between the Wetsern and the non-Western world. It asks whether a given curriculum privileges and secures Western hegemony and the marginalization of the subalterns. It inquires how one's teaching constructs "the other" for the learners. Postcolonial feminist pedagogy, for example, reveals how many women are produced and maintained as "the others" through the politics of education.

Postcolonial critical pedagogy seeks to sever the cycle of colonization perpetuated through education. As Trelstad states, it tries to challenge and avoid the following process: "The call of authority, the answer by the subject, the movement of the subject through an oppositional process only to return as loyal subjects to the master's authority and continue the cycle of colonization"[154] Learners are instead challenged to develop critical consciousness about the politics of power and knowing. In other words, postcolonial critical pedagogy helps the teachers and students critically reflect on the operation of Western hegemony in the construction of subjectivity through education.

Post-critical Challenges for Liberative Religious Education

Poststructuralist and postcolonial critical pedagogies raise fundamental questions about the goals and methods of liberative education, especially how they operate in relation to the power dynamics of educational settings. In what follows, I discuss these challenges, focusing on their implications for the goals and methods of religious education and the concept of resistance.

[154] Stephen Slemon, "Teaching at the End of Empire," in *Order and Partialities: Theory, Pedagogy, and the "Postcolonial*," eds. Kostas Myrsiades and Jerry McGuire (New York: SUNY, 1995); Trelstad, "The Ethics of Effective Teaching," 195.

First, an educator is challenged to be aware that her goals of religious education—such as liberation, resistance, voice, and empowerment—may be founded on an essentializing concept of subjectivity. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, liberative religious educators aim to help learners transform their reality of oppression and dehumanization and find liberation and freedom. Post-critical pedagogies demand educators probe of the meaning of liberation and freedom for each subject. For example, poststructuralist feminist critical theorists criticize the feminist emphasis on strengthening women's voice as a significant part of a journey toward emancipation, arguing that the concept of subjectivity implied in such a view of student voice is based on the "realist and essentialist epistemological positions regarding subjectivity."[155] Ellsworth and Selvin state:

> Discourses on student voice are premised on the assumption of a fully conscious, fully speaking, "unique, fixed and coherent" self. These discourses, enmeshed in humanist presuppositions, ignore the shifting identities, unconscious processes, pleasures and desires not only of students, but of teachers, administrators and researchers as well. Discourses on student voice do not adequately recognize that one's social position, one's voice, can "at best be tentative and temporary given the changing, often contradictory relations of power at multiple levels of social life—the personal, the institutional, the governmental, the commercial."[156]

Moreover, English says, "The essentialising of women as caring and connected learners is a problem in that it ignores the variety of women's experiences and ways of knowing."[157] Highlighting Korean American women's ambivalent subjectivity challenges the prevalent approaches of seeing their subjectivity with exclusive emphasis on their victimization or their strength and persistence. Such an either/or approach fails to capture

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[155] Mimi Orner, "Interrupting the Calls for Student Voice in 'Liberatory' Education: A Feminist Poststructuralist Perspective," in *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, ed. Luke and Gore, 75.
[156] Elizabeth Ellsworth and Arevalo Selvin, "Using Transformative Media Events for Social Education," *New Education* 8, no. 2 (1986): 77.
[157] Leona English, "Revisiting Voice, Subjectivity, and Circles: Feminist Pedagogy in the 21st Century" [paper presented at the annual meeting of Religious Education Association, Boston, MA, November 2, 2007].

the contradiction, confusion, ambivalence, or paradox contained in different women's behavior, desire, and attitude. A liberative religious educator is thereby challenged to take seriously how women employ multiple subjectivities.

Second, post-critical pedagogies challenge the notion of agency implied in liberative religious educators' discourses on resistance. For example, postcolonial feminist pedagogy critiques the modern, unified notion of agency for failing to account for the complex ways in which many subaltern women negotiate different power relations with their indigenous knowledge and cultural codes. This critique contends that an adequate conception of agency should be able to embrace different "forms of valuable human flourishings," and it is concerned about the conceptual distinction between "us" and "them" in the relationship between educator and learners given such a notion of agency. [158]

According to poststructuralist feminism, the notion of empowerment implied in previous critical and feminist pedagogies is overly optimistic and based on the distinction between "those who aim to empower" others and "those who are to be empowered." Like educators in the banking model, some liberative educators are perceived to approach learners with the arrogant mindset of "what we can do for you" under the premise that the educators are already empowered and the learners are yet to be empowered.[159] As Patti Lather points out, with such a view of agency, an educator may risk "the profound dangers in attempting to speak for others, to say what others want or need, or performing

[158] Elizabeth Pritchard, "Agency without Transcendence," *Culture and Religion* 7, no. 2 (November 2006): 279.
[159] Jennifer Gore, "What We Can Do for You? What *Can* 'We' Do For 'You'?; Struggling over Empowerment in Critical and Feminist Pedagogy," in *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, ed. Luke and Gore, 61.

as the Grand Theorist, the 'master of truth and justice.'"[160] It also ignores the fact that "teachers are constrained by, for example, their location in patriarchal institutions and by the historical construction of pedagogy as, and within, discourses of social regulation."[161]

Third, a liberative religious educator is challenged to reconsider her notion of power, given women's struggles with interlocking power relations and their ambivalent subjectivity. Post-critical pedagogies are interested in "how ideas and identities are located within circuits of power and knowledge."[162] Therefore, De Lissovoy says, "Just as dominant institutions must be interrogated for the strategies of power they conceal, so too the voices of students need to be questioned, since they are also effects and expressions of power and contain their own limitations and contradictions." [163] Poststructuralist feminist pedagogy particularly challenges the notion of power as property. Gore says, "To *em*-power suggests that power can be given, provided, controlled, held, conferred, taken away."[164] From a poststructuralist perspective, women, not being able to control or transcend power relations, employ creative ways to negotiate them. This perspective helps one see that the ways in which women find pleasure and empowerment in submission toward religious authority is not easily explained by previous notions of power. Therefore, a liberative religious educator is challenged to take seriously not only the symptoms of women's victimization but also "the conscious and

[160] Patti Lather, *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy with/in the Postmodern* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 137.
[161] Gore, "What We Can Do for You," 57.
[162] Noah De Lissovoy, *Power, Crisis, and Education for Liberation: Rethinking Critical Pedagogy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 112.
[163] Ibid., 111.
[164] Gore, "What We Can Do for You," 57.

unconscious pleasures" women pursue or experience by engaging in different power relations.[165]

Fourth, post-critical pedagogies challenge the notion of voice-raising as a goal of education for resistance. An important task of religious education for women has been to encourage women to raise their voice as a way to take seriously their own experience and to debunk sexism that has been connected with women's silence.[166] In religious education for women, breaking women's silence and helping them find their own voice has been regarded as an important goal of education. [167] Lee says, "The voices and contributions of women and the poor, the most marginalized, are critical for religious education's pursuit of truth, liberation, and justice."[168] However, post-critical theorists argue that a universal call for women's voice as a sign of emancipation ignores women's multiple and fluid subject positioning. Lather provides a chilling and enlightening statement about the possibility of exerting oppression in the name of emancipation and the need for an educator's critical self-reflexivity: Educators concerned with changing unjust power relations must continually examine their assumptions about their own positions, those of students, the meanings and uses of student voice, their power to call for students to speak, and their often unexamined power to legitimate and perpetuate unjust relations in the name of student empowerment. To paraphrase Lather, What are the sins of imposition we commit in the name of liberation? As she notes, "Whether the goal of one's work is

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[165] Mimi Orner, "Interrupting the Calls," 78–79.
[166] In *Women and Teaching*, Maria Harris discusses silence both as women's problem and an educational method: Maria Harris, *Women and Teaching: Themes for a Spirituality of Pedagogy* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988). Mary Elizabeth Moore notes, "She [Harris] suggests silence as the movement of listening, listening especially to the silences of women." Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, "Feminist Theology and Education" in *Theological Approaches to Christian Education, ed. Jack Seymour* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990), 77.
[167] For example, see Hess, *Caretakers of Our Common House*; Handy, "Fighting the Matrix."
[168] Lee, "When the Text is the Problem," 49–50.

prediction, understanding or emancipation, all are ways of disciplining the body, normalizing behavior, administering the life of populations."[169]

As I will discuss more in the next chapter, an emphasis on voice may be oppressive to women, including Korean American women whose culture tends to value silence as a virtue. From a poststructuralist feminist perspective, Mimi Orner says, "Student voice, as it has been conceptualized in work which claims to empower students, is an oppressive construct—one that I argue perpetuates relations of domination in the name of liberation."[170]Also, some women employ silence as their strategy against patriarchy. In religious educational settings, educators may easily observe how several Korean American women choose silence as a tool in their complex negotiation with different relational and political factors. Therefore, from a Foucaultian perspective, English suggests teachers use voice flexibly to respect the learners' diverse ways of knowing and difference:

> As teachers we can encourage voice by providing the option to do personal reflection or to choose other assignments altogether. In encouraging multiple ways of knowing we can honor women's difference, the effects of our infra-laws, and the tyranny of normalizing discourses that want all women to be caring and feeling.[171]

Fifth, along with this critical reflection on the use of students' voice, a liberative religious educator should also probe the meaning of dialogue as a method for education. Dialogue or conversation has been regarded as a valuable method of liberative religious education for women. For Letty Russell, religious education is a "process of actualizing and modifying the development of the total person in and through dialogical

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[169] Lather, *Getting Smart*, 19.
[170] Orner, *Interrupting the Calls*, 75.
[171] English, "Revisiting Voice."

relationships."[172] Rebecca Chopp emphasizes the importance of conversational learning in theological education. She argues, "theology is about 'saving work,' the emancipatory praxis of God and of Christian community in the world,"[173] and she contends that theological education should be done through "dialogue that is itself a process of conversation."[174] Kim also believes that genuine conversations in education transform learners' "ways of thinking, worldviews, and values."[175]

According to Ellsworth, the democratic connotation of dialogue is promoted under the assumptions that "all members have equal opportunity to speak, all members respect other members' rights to speak and feel safe to speak, and all ideas are tolerated and subjected to rational critical assessment against fundamental judgments and moral principles."[176] Giroux says that students in a liberative classroom participate in a dialogue sharing a common and agreed sense of the direction: "All voices and their differences become unified both in their efforts to identity and recall moments of human suffering and in their attempts to overcome conditions that perpetuate such suffering."[177] These assumptions—that the learners can participate in an educational practice with unified struggles and collective goals, as rational subjects able to objectify and overcome the power relations in a classroom—are problematic in the eyes of poststructuralist and postcolonial feminist pedagogy. They easily become another force for oppression by presuming the commonality of learners' interests and goals even when they share much

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[172] Letty M. Russell, *Growth in Partnership* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster John Knox, 1981), 59.
[173] Rebecca S. Chopp, *Saving Work: Feminist Perspectives of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Know, 1995), 77.
[174] Ibid., 108.
[175] Eunjoo, M. Kim, "Conversational Learning: A Feminist Pedagogy for Teaching and Preaching," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 5, no. 3 (2002): 172.
[176] Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't this Feel Empowering," 106.
[177] Henry Giroux, "Literacy and the Pedagogy of Voice and Political Empowerment," *Educational Theory* 38, no. 1 (March 1988): 72; Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't this Feel Empowering," 106.

of ethnic and racial backgrounds and experience. I have seen many circumstances in which Korean American women constantly negotiate the politics of voice and silence and that of involvement with and distance from the subject matters on the table depending on their sense of the power dynamics of the classroom. Therefore, a liberative religious educator for the Korean American women in this study should take into consideration "the consequences for education of the ways knowledge, power, and desire are mutually implicated in each other's formations and deployments." [178]

In sum, poststructuralist and postcolonial critical pedagogical perspectives challenge the notion of a unitary and autonomous self and understand learners and educators as those who unceasingly construct, change and negotiate their identities and subjectivities:

> This "post-humanistic" subject does not exist with a unified identity even understood as an articulated manifests itself in every practice. Rather, it is a subject that is constantly remade, reshaped as a mobilely situated set of relations in a fluid context. The normadic subject is amoeba-like, struggling to win some space for itself in its local situation. The subject itself has become a site of struggle, an ongoing site of articulation with its own history, determinations and effects.[179]

In other words, post-critical pedagogies help religious educators reexamine to what extent the goals and methods of their educational efforts reflect different learners' subjectivities.

[178] Ellsworth, "Why Doesn't this Feel Empowering," 108.
[179] Peter McLaren, *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture: Oppositional Politics in a Postmodern Era* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 42.

Evaluating Poststructuralist and Postcolonial Critical Pedagogies

In this section, I evaluate post-critical pedagogies, asking in what ways they can contribute to liberative religious education for resistance, especially in Korean American women's context. Based on my evaluation of the theories, I argue for the need of a theological anthropology of women's resistance by using a religious educator's appropriation of Freirian vision of education for Korean American women as the criteria for evaluating post-critical pedagogies.

Paulo Freire's Concept of Subjectivity and Korean American Women

Paulo Freire analyzed the sociopolitical situation of Brazil from a Marxist perspective of class struggle. From his perspective, one belongs to either the oppressors or the oppressed. His notion of human subjectivity emerged from his observation of dehumanization and the "culture of silence" deriving from the power discrepancy between oppressors and the oppressed.[180] Since the oppressed internalize oppression, they tend to perceive the ideal image of a human being as that of the oppressor. The oppressed also tend to regard themselves as unable to objectify or critically reflect on their situations. Freire believed that it was untrue that the oppressed are not able to develop an awareness of their situations, but also that their awareness was often incomplete because of their "submersion" in oppression.[181]

According to Freire, human vocation is liberation, namely a situation in which a human being can change her situation and make her destiny. He states, "[M]an's ontological vocation [as he calls it] is to be a Subject who acts upon and transforms his

[180] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1995), 14.
[181] Ibid., 27.

world, and in so doing moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and richer life individually and collectively."[182] As is well known, Freire believed that it was possible to change the oppressive discourse, which was spread through the banking concept of education, by employing a liberative educational method, which he called "conscientization." In the banking model, a teacher is the only agent and the students are perceived to passively receive transmitted information. In the problem-posing education suggested by Freire, however, teachers and students both become active agents of knowledge.

Freire's idea of education is based on his notion of human beings as conscious and historical beings. Through a process of cultural action, named conscientization, people realize their sociocultural reality, move beyond the constraints to which they are subjected, and affirm themselves as conscious subjects and co-creators of their historical future. He notes,

> As conscious human beings, we can discover how we are conditioned by the dominant ideology. We can gain distance on our moment of existence. Therefore, we can learn how to become free through a political struggle in society. We can struggle to become free precisely because we can know we are not free. That is why we can think of transformation.[183]

Freire's belief in human liberation is also grounded in his belief that human beings have potential for freedom and such freedom is achieved through liberative education. He views humans as "beings in the process of becoming . . . unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality."[184]

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[182] Ibid., 14.
[183] Paulo Freire and Ira Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey, 1986), 13.
[184] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 58–59.

Freire's epistemology centers on the human potential for freedom and creativity in the midst of the historical reality of cultural and political-economic oppression. Freire's vision of the free and autonomous individual subject presumes the "epistemological privilege to the oppressed."[185] He states,

> Those who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both."

For Freire, true freedom includes "autonomy and responsibility."[186] As it is a human vocation to act with responsibility, human beings, especially the oppressed, are responsible for their own learning.[187]

Freire developed his model of education also based on his belief that human beings can construct and change their own reality. He says, "Whereas animals adapt themselves to the world to survive, men modify the world in order to be more."[188] Freire thought that a struggle for social transformation occurs through praxis and that people are beings of praxis[189]—"self-reflecting, fully intentional beings capable of fashioning themselves and the world according to their own designs."[190] He believes that humans have the vocation to be in community, which is characterized by praxis, solidarity, dialogue, creative communion, openness to the future, and engagement in transforming the world: "To change the world through work, to 'proclaim' the world, to express it, and

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[185] This is a coinage of Hugo Assmann, "Statement by Hugo Assmann," in *Theology of the Americas*, eds. Sergio Torress and John Eagleton (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis, 1976), 300.
[186] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 29.
[187] Paulo Freire, *Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Continuum, 1973), 16.
[188] Paulo Freire, *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey, 1985), 70.
[189] Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Crossroad, 1998),102.
[190] Mauel A. Vasquez, "Paulo Freire and the Crisis of Modernity," *Studies in Religion* 26, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 188.

to express oneself are the unique qualities of human beings."[191] For Freire, social transformation is a human vocation and an ethical call.

The social dimension of knowing and the struggle for liberation is critical for Freire. He states,

> In communicating among ourselves, in the process of knowing the reality which we transform, we communicate and know socially even though the process of communicating, knowing, changing, has an individual dimension. But, the individual aspect is not enough to explain the process. Knowing is a social event with nevertheless an individual dimension." [192]

Freire contends that the oppressed can participate in the struggle for liberation only when they understand themselves as part of the oppressed class rather than as individuals alone. In this sense, he is concerned about the individualistic perception of empowerment. He contends further that one's feeling or experience of empowerment does not lead one to true freedom if it does not lead to social transformation:

> [I]t is interesting to me how people in the United States are so preoccupied in using this word and concept "empowerment." There is some reason in this, some meaning to it. My fear in using the expression "empowerment" is that some people may think that such a practice simply empowers the students, and then everything is finished, our work is done, over![193]

Even when you individually feel yourself most free, if this feeling is not a social feeling, if you are not able to use your recent freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom. [194]

Freire's belief in the social dimension of knowing and human existence is revealed in his choice of dialogue as a critical teaching method. He believed that the subject "is to be in dialogue, rises out of dialogue," and a true dialogue reflects the nature

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[191] Freire, *The Politics of Education*, 21.
[192] Freire and Shor, *Pedagogy for Liberation*, 99.
[193] Freire, *Pedagogy for Liberation* , 108.
[194] Ibid., 109.

of human beings as social being and being of communication: "Dialogue belongs to the nature of human beings, as beings of communication. Dialogue seals the act of knowing, which is never individual, even though it has its individual dimension."[195] A teacher and students participate in dialogue as active agents of knowing in Freire's dialogical model of education:

> For dialogue to be a method of true knowledge, the knowing subjects must approach reality scientifically in order to seek the dialectical connections that explain the form of reality. Thus, to know is not to remember something previously known and now forgotten. [196]

Freire's idea of liberation based on rationality and critical consciousness is reminiscent of the spirit of the Enlightenment represented by Descartes and Kant. However, Manuel Vasquez provides a helpful distinction:

> Unlike Kant and his predecessor Descartes, Freire does not start with an isolated, abstract and disembodied subjectivity deploying its critical capacities, but rather wth historical individuals located in a particular web of social relations. [197]

Sharing the modern desire for emancipation and absorbing the influence of Marxism and Catholic social thought, Freire perceives the agent for liberation not as a "detached, rational individual" but as a relational being and "a collective subject" who is oppressed and therefore is called to liberate the whole of human beings (both herself and oppressors) from dehumanization.

It is not practical to juxtapose post-critical pedagogies and Freire's theory of education partly because in the mature stages of his scholarship he accommodated poststructuralist and postcolonial analyses of language, subjectivity, and power in order to develop better strategies for viewing learners' subjectivity. As he moved to the later

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[195] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 4.
[196] Freire, *Politics of Education*, 55.
[197] Vasquez, "Paulo Freire and the Crisis of Modernity," 189.

stages of his scholarship, Freire acknowledged the need to understand human subjectivity through a more complex comprehension of culture and greater attention to different human experience. Exposed to different cultural settings, he understood the need to acknowledge the reality of multiple subjectivities and the many ways people negotiate their identity. In his later years, he took a more flexible attitude to the applicability of Marxist social analysis. Aware of the different political, economic, and social dynamics of different societies, he acknowledged that it would be a problem to universally apply the framework of class struggle. In his later works, he critically and seriously reflected on the power dynamics of educational practice and the potential for domination behind liberative attempts for education. He questioned whether he had been too optimistic about the possibility of liberation through education.

However, Freire never ceased to believe in the urgency of dealing with social injustice and the importance of a Marxist perspective:

> I have never labored under the misapprehension that social classes and the struggle between them could explain everything, right down to the color of the sky on a Tuesday evening. And so I have never said that the class struggle, in the modem world, has been or is "the mover of history." On the other hand, still today, and possibly for a long time to come, it is impossible to understand history without social classes, without their interests in collision. The class struggle is not the mover of history, but it is certainly one of them. [198]

Although Freire's views of human subjectivity are essentializing and universalizing, his conception of subjectivity and practice of education was also contextually relevant and effective.

Attending to both Korean American women's subjectivity and Freire's vision for education, a religious educator finds the following points important for her educational

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[198] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Robert R. Barr (New York: Continuum, 1992), 90; Wayne Cavalier, "The Three Voices of Freire: An Exploration of His Thought Over Time," *Religious Education* 97, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 260–261.

efforts for the women. These points serve also as criteria for evaluating post-critical pedagogies. First, a theory of education for Korean American women should account for their desire for freedom and transcendence. Without such account, a liberative education is impossible. Given that Butler and Bhabha would reject the Freirian view of transcendence as an essentializing and totalizing concept, the religious educator should ask what Butler and Bhabha say about transcendence and how helpful are their notions of transcendence for Korean American women. Second, a theory of education for Korean American women should include an account of women as meaning-makers. What would Butler and Bhabha say about meaning-making behind women's resistant acts? Third, it is important for a religious educator to have a sense of urgency about education for women. Liberative religious education is always founded on an educator's sense of the learners' experience and the reality of their victimization and oppression and of their vocation as human beings. What can the new theoretical perspectives say about the need for liberative education for learners here and right now? What do they say about learners' responsibility as human beings? These questions are about the ethics of pedagogy.

Evaluating Post-Critical Pedagogies

This section evaluates post-critical pedagogies, focusing on Butler and Bhabha's notions of human subjectivity, in light of the above criteria. I first compare the conceptions of resistance delineated by Butler and Bhabha to Freire's very different view of resistance. Whereas Freire grounds his theory in the notion of a unified self and human beings' potential for liberation, Butler and Bhabha argue that such a notion of human subjectivity is essentializing and therefore may end up excluding many people's complicated subjectivities. While Freire believes in agency emerging from critical consciousness,

Butler and Bhabha refuse such connection. They say that there is no way to predict what motivates agency.

Butler tells us that every system has places of resistance that are not readily apparent to us. As the features of oppression vary for different people, resistance can also occur in different ways. Butler's view of the subject and subjectivity helps us see how we can avoid reading the world with a representative theory of knowledge. We cannot, that is, nurture justice without addressing people's specific experience of oppression and liberation and how power is produced in specific discourses. According to Bhabha, resistance is explained in terms of the hybrid and ambivalent self that negotiates different boundaries and territories of identity in the in-between space of intersubjectivity. For Butler and Bhabha, resistance is not explained in terms of one's agency in terms of intentionality, choice, or autonomy but through the unexpected convergence of discourses or disrupted categories.

In light of the earlier examination of the challenges posed by post-critical pedagogies, I have identified the following contributions of post-critical pedagogies to the discussions of liberative religious education. First, poststructuralist critical pedagogies challenge a liberative educator to ask how one can build a vision for liberative education for women without falling into a totalizing vision. Poststucturalism encourages serious attention to the possible dangers in constructing a normative and constructive vision on the basis of one's anthropological viewpoints. Poststructuralist critical pedagogy keeps "our hermeneutic of suspicion lively with regard to the anthropological elements we choose to accept or to reject as constant."[199] Accordingly, a

[199] Donna Teevan, "Challenges to the Role of Theological Anthropology in Feminist Theologies," *Theological Studies* 64, no. 3 (2003): 591.

religious educator should avoid universalizing her epistemological claims or making them certify discourses that establish reality with representational notions. When we construct a theological basis for religious education, we have to ask how we can construct a narrative that drives us to the real possibility of liberation without making the theological work a tool for exercising power to keep people from finding their own voice. When we theorize religious educational practice, we should be sensitive about our social position and power, and ask ourselves how our status may blind us to people's reality and block us from hearing their voices.

Second, poststructuralist and postcolonial theories help one see how women's everyday struggle with power relations is deeply related to their engagement with power dynamics in religious educational settings. They also illumine how a consideration of women's subjectivity and the tensions and dilemmas they struggle with complicate the goals and methods of liberative religious education. In an educational setting filled with fluidity and uncertainty, a religious educator constantly should engage with critical reflection, and post-critical pedagogies provide helpful methods with which liberative religious educator can critically reflect on her own goals and teaching methods in light of her observation of the learners' subjectivities. Butler's and Bhabha's descriptions of subjectivity provide a ground on which a religious educator is invited to critically reflect on her assumptions and rationales for her educational practices. They do not ask to discard the ideals advocated by liberative educational discourse but challenge educators to seriously probe to what extent they consider the power dynamics behind their educational efforts and the multiple subjective positions of different learners, which is a

sign of their political struggles with the power dynamics in everyday life and in church communities.

Third, postcolonial critical pedagogy helps us see the intersubjective space beyond the binary distinction between us and them. It helps a religious educator to attend to the difference among the learners instead of imposing on them a homogeneous group identity. The liberative educator is invited to critically reflect on her views of community and urged to constantly check her commitment for "the concrete other."[200]

Fourth, poststructuralist theory, especially Butler's account of human subjection, helps one examine why women beome attached to subordination in spite of their critique of the oppressive system. As Amy Allen explains:

> How and why, in other words, does an attachment to pernicious and subordinating norms of femininity persist alongside a rational critique of those very norms in one and the same self? . . . In her recent work, particularly in *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, Butler expands the Foucaultian notion of subjection—which refers to the ambivalent process of becoming a subject in and through being subjected to power relations—to encompass an analysis of the ways in which subordinated individuals become passionately attached to, and thus come to desire their own subordination.[201]

At the same time, the following points are limitations of post-critical pedagogies when they are considered from within an educational setting for Korean American women. First, poststructuralist and postcolonial critical pedagogies do not provide a normative vision for religious educators, nor do they adequately account for what may motivate a learner to engage with resistance. For example, Beste points out that Butler's acknowledgement of agency in connection with critical consciousness and intentionality does not lead her to provide an account of what motivates one to engage with subversion

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[200] Teevan, "Challenges to the Role of Theological Anthropology," 592.
[201] Amy Allen, "Dependency, Subordination, and Recognition: On Judith Butler's Theory of Subjection," *Continental Philosophy Review* 38 (2006): 200.

or resistance.[202] Butler does not explain why anyone chooses resistance and social transformation over seeking pleasure in the situation of subordination.[203]

Second, post-critical pedagogies do not carry a sense of urgency for liberative education, a problem that emerges partly due to the theories' lack of interest in material relations of power. Freire shows us that sociopolitical and economic analyses of people's reality are crucial for the work of an educator. Given his analysis of ubiquitous power discrepancy and victimization, he believed from the beginning that education for emancipation was an urgent matter. He did not lose the sense of urgency throughout his career despite his increasingly flexible and open attitude to different theoretical approaches because people's reality continued to demand an immediate response. Compared to Freire, postcolonialists can give insufficient attention to the material relations of power. For example, some critics argue that Bhabha "collapses the colonizer and the colonized into a singular, hybrid 'colonial subject'" and fails to pay attention to the economic, political, and social inequalities and material power relations.[204] Korean American feminist theologian Wonhee Anne Joh mentions her mixed acceptance of postcolonialism due to its failure to adequately account for the material relations of racism:

> As a Korean American feminist, I also have a double-edged relationship with postcolonial theory. One area that is problematic in my predominant acceptance of postcolonial hybridity is the absence of theorizing, specifically about material expressions of racism. In postcolonial critiques, it appears as if race and ethnicity become so conflated that the work of critically analyzing racial oppression becomes difficult. [205]

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[202] Beste, *God and the Victim*, 67.
[203] Fiorenza says, "Insofar as postmodernism or the 'New Historicism' assumes that subjectivity is constructed by various cultural codes, it stresses subjectedness, not agency." Quoted in Teevan, "Challenges to the Role of Theological Anthropology," 585.
[204] Jefferess, *Postcolonial Resistance*, 32 and 35.
[205] Joh, *Heart of the Cross*, 69.

Third, post-critical pedagogies do not provide a language of transcendentality. Butler and Bhabha would oppose to Freire's view that human beings can transform the dominant discourse and transcend power relations with critical consciousness and praxis. Wayne Cavalier argues that Freire's conception of subjectivity, which is obviously grounded on his belief in the human potential for transcendence, is full of religious tone. In contrast, Butler and Bhabha offer no language to describe the mysterious aspects of human spirit. Or they avoid such an essentializing and totalizing move. I contend that Butler and Bhabha deliberately avoid such discussion of what might motivate people for subversion in order to secure the unknowability of human subjectivity.

However, I would like to argue here that Butler and Bhabha share an implicit notion of agency as a capacity even as their explicit discussion of agency explains it as an effect of discourse. The reason they cannot provide a normative vision for education or an account of motivation for resistance is not that they deny agency as a capacity but that they are silent about it. I further argue that Butler, Bhabha, and Freire share a view of human beings as transcendental, although their approaches to transcendence are quite different. Butler and Bhabha even hint at some religious ideas of human transcendentality in their discussions on human subjectivity. David Kyuman Kim argues that one can find a religious motive or human yearning for transcendence in Butler's notion of agency.[206] He contends that Butler implicitly advocates that human beings yearn to transcend discursive relations. Susan Abraham makes a similar argument for Bhabha, claiming that he is certainly moving to a religious realm with his notion of hybridity:

> Bhabha is more than willing to say that the phenomenon of hybridity goes beyond what can be expressed in words alone. In my reading, his rhetorical flourishes that ask questions of the Bible in the colonized space make some room for an

[206] Kim, *Melancholic Freedom*, 103–104.

> imagination of a very different kind. Bhabha does acknowledge that "culture" possesses transcendence, though he does not develop this idea comprehensively. Bhabha in his post-postmodern mode wants to assert that the idea of the beyond has to do with moving beyond the narratives of particular subjectivities and identities to the realm of culture. The idea of the beyond has to do with "exceeding the boundaries" . . . , which is an unknowable and unrepresentable act. The space just outside the boundary then functions as the space of invention and intervention: an encounter with "newness that is not part of the continuum of the past and the present." He further argues that the process of hybridity opens up uncanny and strange spaces and nowhere is this more clearly seen than the manner in which "God's name" is made uncanny and strange. [207]

As we saw above in the different scholars and theologians' appropriation of Bhabha's notion of hybridity, his view of subjectivity holds religious and theological nuance. For Bhabha and Butler, human transcendence or transformation does not occur in the form of transcending power relations but paradoxically emerges from their everyday lives. However, they avoid employing religious languages to describe this realm of the paradoxical interplay of historicity and transcendentality.

A liberative religious educator, on the other hand, needs a specifically theological anthropology that can ground her notion of human subjectivity in the awareness of people's difference and of the constant negotiations in which they engage. Such a theological anthropology demands a concept of subjectivity that can describe both learners' embeddedess in sociopolitical and material relations and their capacity and yearning for transcendence and freedom with the complex and nuanced understandings of their everyday struggles. I believe that a religious educator can critically appropriate Butler and Bhabha's view of resistance as a localized vision for Korean American women, not as a totalizing proposal. I suggest that a critical appropriation of Bhabha's

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[207] Susan Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence in Postcolonial Theory: A Rahnerian Theological Assessment* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 82–83.

notion of third space, an intersubjective realm for transcendence, might be especially helpful for constructing an alternative view of resistance.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined poststructuralist and postcolonial critical pedagogies and the notions of resistance suggested in the theories, especially by Butler and Bhabha. I argued that a religious educator working for Korean American women should critically appropriate post-critical pedagogies. Although Butler and Bhabha do not provide normative visions of education or helpful accounts of what motivates resistance, I argue that their notions of the intersubjective third space as a territory of transcendence should be retrieved for a theological anthropology of women's subjectivity and resistance. In the next chapter, I attempt a critical appropriation of feminist theologies focusing on their accounts of women's resistance and complicity with oppression.

Chapter 3

Feminist Theological Accounts of Women's Subjectivity

Feminist theology is another helpful resource for developing a theological anthropology of third space. In this chapter, I examine and evaluate feminist approaches to women's subjectivity with two particular foci: women's "covert" or "creative" resistance and feminist theological accounts of women's sin, especially their conceptualizations of sloth.[208] By "feminist valorization of women's resistance," a phrase analyzed in depth in the chapter, I mean theorists' and theologians' efforts to expand and nuance the concept of resistance drawing on different women's attitudes and behaviors that have been generally regarded as signs of subordination and victimization. I also discuss feminist theologians' accounts of sloth as women's sin, by which they mean the ways in which many women participate in oppression rather than claiming their "true" selves through resistance.[209]

Feminist discourses provide nuanced accounts of women's subjectivity by complicating the pictures of women's victimization and resistance. Through valorization of the diverse forms of women's resistance and active affirmation of their resilience and wisdom, feminist theorists and feminist theologians highlight the paradoxical aspect of women's experience of subordination and resistance. Such efforts help us better examine how women negotiate multiple oppressive systems and how they retain their capability for transcendence even when dominated. On the other hand, feminist theological accounts of women's sloth depict how women's search for true self often gets distorted by the power of oppressive systems and how they further oppress themselves with active

[208] These are Carol Lakey Hess's words in *Caretakers of Our Common House*.
[209] Although I recognize that "true" is such a loaded term, I find it most relevant for my discussion in this chapter.

complicity while being already victimized. Women are described as employing agency even in their submission rather than being mindless and helpless victims.

The chapter first delineates the several ways feminist theorists and theologians expand the notion of resistance by interpreting different women's behavior and attitudes toward power relations. Thereafter I address the advantages of these alternative conceptualizations of resistance, as well as criticisms posed by other feminist theorists and theologians. Acknowledging the importance of considering women's complicity with oppressive forces, I move to a discussion of feminist theologians' accounts of sloth and critically examine the notions of women's sin in the works of Rosemary Ruether, Carol Lakey Hess, and Delores Williams.

A theological anthropology of resistance for Korean American women, in my view, should include two aspects: the diagnosis and description of the ways in which women employ their subjectivity to cope with power relations and a theological image of a woman's self that can function as a norm for Christian women's efforts for liberation and freedom. I engage with the first task in this chapter: to describe women's subjectivity. I argue that an account of women's subjectivity should include a picture of how women's victimization and complicity with oppression is interrelated in complicated ways with their resistance.

In sum, the chapter argues that both feminist valorization of women's resistance and feminist theologies of sin contribute to describing women's ambivalent subjectivity as observed in chapter 1. I also argue that feminist theologians, who both valorize women's resistance and engage with women's sin as sloth, share an interest in the paradoxical and mysterious aspect of women's struggle with power relations. They

assume a space in which women try to hold tension between their historicity and capacity for transcendence. Feminist valorization of women's resistance and feminist theologies of sin do not explicitly address this space of tension, but they can provide valuable resources for discussing such a space.

At the same time, I argue that some feminist theologians' notion of agency and self are limited in their capacity to discuss women's ambivalent subjectivity, because they hold onto the modern notion of self. While a task of feminist theologians is to discuss the space of constant negotiation in which women live, the valorization of resistance and theologies of women's sin may function to release the tension of the space too simply. Therefore, although feminist theologians' valorization of women's resistance is necessary for describing women's ambivalent subjectivity, it should be accompanied by their attention to the power of domination and women's complicity in oppression. Likewise, feminist theologies of sin should be balanced by accounts of the subtle and paradoxical ways women engage with resistance, accounts that are too frequently missing in their discussions of sin.

Feminist Valorization of Women's Resistance

While feminist theologians and feminist religious historicists and anthropologists have tried lay bare the reality of women's victimization, they have also unearthed and celebrated the diverse ways women resist oppression. While rather overt actions, behaviors, or speeches are generally regarded as resistance, several works have shown interest in women's diverse modes of resistance, including their seemingly submissive or compromising acts and attitude.

Attempts to expand the concept of resistance are not new. There has long been interest in redefining and reclaiming resistance in diverse academic disciplines. For example, we can find such efforts in the works of historicists on black slavery[210]; James Scott's notion of "Everyday Forms of Resistance" is well known.[211] We also find expansion of the concept of resistance in the work of theorists such as Michelle Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu who provide complex and non-totalizing explanations of how power operates.[212] Feminist interest in "the other" is another significant factor in this trend. Alongside other theorists, feminist theorists and theologians have had a growing awareness of the danger of representing any particular subject or experience as universal or context-free. We find much effort to rescue subaltern women from culturally insensitive representations in a series of works on identifying resistance in the everyday life of women who refuse to call themselves feminist.[213] This broader trend has operated as the background for several feminist theologians who argue that resistance must be re-conceptualized in order to faithfully engage with people's everyday experience.

After identifying different ways of valorizing women's resistance, I consider to what extent such an approach helps one talk about women's ambivalent subjectivity.

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[210] A good example is Anne Devereaux Jordan and Virginia Schomp, *Slavery and Resistance: The Drama of African American History* (New York: Benchmark Books, 2006).
[211] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press,1990).
[212] For a good review of the history of the notion of resistance in Modern West, see Vincent Wimbush, "Introduction: Interpreting Resistance, Resisting Interpretations," *Semeia* 79 (1997): 1–10.
[213] See the following examples: Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers;* Fulkerson, *Changing the Subject*; Jamillah Karim, *American Muslim Women: Negotiating Race, Class, and Gender within the Ummah* (New York: New York University Press, 2008); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

Redefining and Expanding the Concept of Resistance

As R. Marie Griffith notes, "women have always carved out spaces for themselves within the social, historical, cultural, and religious structures that constrain them and have resisted those structures in subtle and unexpected ways."[214] I have identified the following expanded concepts of resistance employed to describe various ways women engage in resistance. First, resistance is defined not only by an explicitly defiant attitude or behavior but also by absence of consent. Postcolonial feminist Rajeswari Sunder Rajan says, "Resistance is not always a positivity; it may be no more than a negative agency, an absence of acquiescence in one's oppression."[215] In this sense, Traci C. West, dealing with intimate violence against African American women, says that "any sign of dissent with the consuming effects of intimate and social violence" makes resistance.[216]

An example of this form of resistance is found in the Korean American women I have met who find their own ways to modify biblical and theological teachings instead of openly discussing their ideas or challenging their pastors or teachers. While they may use the teachings to reinforce their inbuilt sexism, they also seem to employ biblical and theological resources to resist patriarchal power structures.

Second, resistance is not always conceptualized as mobility or even accompanied always by mobility. Ketu H. Katrak challenges our notion of mobility as a necessary factor of resistance. She contends that third-world women writers demystify "an often glib valorization of spatial mobility as part of the modern and progressive."[217] She further notes the inequality of access to mobility: "We are unequally mobile on the routes to

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[214] Griffith, *God's Daughters*, 14.
[215] Rajan, *Real and Imagined Women*, 12.
[216] West, *Wounds of the Spirit*.
[217] Ketu H. Katrak, *Politics of the Female Body: Postcolonial Women Writers of the Third World* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 12.

knowledge and capital—between 'backward' Asian peripheries and centers in the 'West.'"[218] Therefore, Katrak argues that it is important to acknowledge "the small acts of subversion and resistance that women undertake from within circumscribed spatial boundaries."[219] The third-world authors, according to Katrak, explore how women and men strategize from within oppressive structures "created by globalization" to challenge "dominant histories but also re-author them."[220] By accepting this alternative conception of resistance, one can avoid a carelessly adopting a "woman-blaming" attitude toward many women's inactive responses to obvious injustice.[221] The ways in which some of the interviewed women respond to their situations suggested their limited education, resource, and capability to resist, and my interviews also captured moments of self-deception and internalized perspectives that may amount to brain-washing. However, to demand the women to react to and challenge those who have greater power with mobility and active, overt agency can easily become another way of reinforcing their victimization and devaluing their struggle to make meaning out of their experience.

Third, passive and covert acts can produce resistance. For survival, women often use indirect, subtle, and passive strategies of resistance. Instead of challenging the system with loud and obvious acts, women often "use what is traditionally known as 'feminine,' 'deceptive,' and 'behind the scenes' language to their own advantage."[222] Traci West identifies resistance in singer Tina Turner's tactic to survive her abusive husband's violence by "trying to be sweet" to him and "trying to sing it whatever way he

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[218] Ibid., 12.
[219] Ibid., 3.
[220] Ibid., 12.
[221] West, *Wounds of the Spirit*, 156.
[222] Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers*, 209.

wanted."[223] Women's covert resistance is not believed to be equal to powerlessness any longer. It does not mean their total loss of agency. Katrak argues for the critical need to pay attention to seemingly covert acts of resistance:

> It is important to discover these covert means and not to be too quick to assume powerlessness when a woman "conforms" to traditional roles. What is more significant are the many ingenious strategies of working from within institutional structures rather than defying them outright, which can have fatal consequences. This covert action is not less radical than an overthrow of the system; it is often more courageous to conform to the surface while devising resistances from within accepted institutional, such as marital frameworks.[224]

Similarly, it is important to acknowledge the need to utilize "passive agency" as a creative means of resistance.

Many Korean American women choose to employ indirect and subtle means to resist domestic inequality and to respond to sexism present in their churches. Instead of directly challenging gender hierarchy, they defy the patriarchal leadership with indirect methods such as back talk, giggles, eye contact with other women, and withdrawing from church attendance. Within the church community, I have observed women employing indirect ways to respond to the church's teaching. As a good example, silence has been counted as a form of covert and passive resistance. Jung Ha Kim recognizes how Korean American women maneuver when to speak and when to keep silence as a way of surviving and resisting the patriarchal system in their everyday lives. For the women she met and interviewed, acquiring the skill of using silence and submission is a sign of a woman's maturity and functions as a significant means of resistance. Kim further notes that women learn how to take advantage of the traditionally feminine attitude of silence and submission, as the result of which they gain some intended and unintended rewards:

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[223] West, *Wounds of the Spirit*, 163- 164.
[224] Katrak, *Politics of the Female Body*, 159.

> [T]hrough their explicit display of subjugation by silence and submission, churched Korean-American women have also learned to hold on to the "good" that lies in playing the traditional gender roles. Rather ironically, then, through their engineering of learned silence and embrace of traditional gender ideology, churched Korean-American women can experience both expected and unexpected rewards in their everyday lives.[225]

Similarly, Patti Duncan argues that breaking silence or speech has not been always liberating for Asian Americans, especially Asian American women, even though they have been silenced throughout their history of assimilation into U.S. culture. She further notes that their marginalization and experience of being unheard "forced" the women to develop "alternative strategies of resistance," one of which is silence. As silence is accepted as a form of resistance among those for whom silence is key to survival, feminist predispositions of regarding silence as lack of agency while viewing overcoming silence as a sign of emancipation should be challenged.[226]

Fourth, even self-destructive behaviors can be regarded as the means of resistance, depending on context. Katrak examines how in Sati one can find Indian women's complicated negotiations with tradition, culture, class, and gender roles. She demonstrates how their seemingly complicit and conforming actions can be read as the means to "assert their subjectivities" and to resist oppressive tradition.[227] Even in such an extremely self-destructive action as agreeing to be killed in the name of tradition, says Katrak, women engage in the most radical act of resistance.

Carol Lakey Hess identifies protest and resistance against sexist culture among girls with anorexia. Instead of the common conception that anorexia is caused by the girls' distorted self or body image or pathology from a developmental failure in the girls'

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[225] Kim, *Bridge-Makers and Cross-Bearers*, 110.
[226] Ibid. Kim says, "If it is the case that the churched Korean-American women cultivate learned silence not merely as an act of submission but also as a survival strategy and indirect source of power, then the claim that 'breaking the silence' . . . of the oppressed as the key to liberation needs to be reexamined."
[227] Katrak, *Politics of the Female Body*, 158.

early years, Hess argues that they are actually protesting against a culture that tries to control women and to deny their power. By starving, the girls are paradoxically rebuking the culture that considers their power "too much." According to Hess, anorexia may look like an act of giving away one's body, but it may be a radical act of claiming self-control and life. She notes, "Anorexia, rather than being a death wish, is a desperate attempt to grasp and take hold of one's life."[228]

Mi-Young in chapter 1 shows an example of this concept of resistance. As a cancer patient, she goes to the church for early morning prayer every day. Although she knew that this dedication could delay her healing or even threaten her life, she did not stop. Such an act could be seen as an individual effort for recovery. However, it was in the end her commitment to defy the power relations she experienced in a foreign country and survive. The seemingly dangerous act of Mi-Young was actually a source of spiritual strength and empowerment.

Fifth, when women strategize to survive, they may be said to resist. In her discussion on how many black women suffer from intimate violence, Traci West says, "When a woman survives, she accomplishes resistance."[229] In *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*, Delores Williams proposes taking black women's survival, symbolized by Hagar's story, as a new paradigm for discussing black women's resistance against oppression. According to Williams, there are two traditions of biblical appropriation in African American communities: the tradition of liberation and that of survival and quality-of-life. A theology for black women, Williams says, should prioritize the tradition of survival and quality of life over that of liberation for African American

[228] Hess, *Caretakers of Our Common House*, 134.
[229] West, *Wounds of the Spirit*, 151.

women do not always experience God as liberator. Proposing to reinterpret Hagar's story in the Bible as a paradigm for understanding black women's resistance against oppression, Williams says, "Hagar becomes the first female in the Bible to liberate herself from oppressive power structures" for she runs away from harsh treatment upon her instead of enduring it.[230] However, what God offers Hagar in response to her initiation of agency is not liberation but sheer survival and the promise of improved relations. Based on Hagar's experience, Williams presents wilderness as a symbol for black women's persistent struggle to survive and build quality-of-life in family and community. Williams makes an important move in the development of womanist theology by highlighting African American women's experience, which cannot be fully explained with a liberation-focused theology. Her example of a womanist theology productively describes African American women's daily struggles to survive multi-layered oppression out of their salvific encounter with God.

Sixth, women resist by valorizing their inferior social position. Borrowing Victor Turner's idea about "the way the oppressed are able to challenge authority structures by exalting their 'positions of structural inferiority,'" Kelly Chong discusses the significance of how Korean women turn their experience of submission and sacrifice into a way of gaining "a sense of moral and spiritual authority over their husbands and other 'tormenters.'"[231] The ways in which Young-Ja and Mi-Young try to give religious meanings to their submission—their belief that they go through the wilderness of marriage because of God's providence gives them power and courage to endure their marriage—can be explained from this kind of theoretical viewpoint. Also, Sun-Hee's

[230] Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 19.
[231] Chong. *Deliverance and Submission.*

sense of entitlement and the empowerment that she gained from her spiritual relationship with God works as the means of her protest. Her assertive attitude when insisting that the elderly church group remain intact was motivated by her belief in God's relationship with her. It made her defiant act possible. At the moment that Sun-Hee confronted the group's male chair, keeping her promise with God was more important than maintaining her traditional gender identity or making men look good in public. In her negotiations with the power structures in which she was embedded, she chose religious identity over gender identity at the particular moment.

Such internal resistance is also shown in the way the interviewees honor their female ancestors. Most of the women I interviewed referred to the strong influence of their mothers. Eun-Hee talked about how her deceased mother, who had immigrated to the States for her children's education, was the best role model for her life. She deeply revered her mother's strength and perseverance. Growing up, Eun-Hee learned from her mother how important it is for women to be independent and strong, and it was her mother who supported Eunhee's decision to pursue a doctorate and become a professional woman. Young Ja believed that her family was blessed because of her mother's generous service to many people, especially Christian ministers. For these women, the virtue, aspiration, and dedicated lives of their mothers provided almost sacred inspiration, which motivates them to follow their mothers' steps.

Seventh, feminist theologians and religious historicists have tried to reclaim the paradoxical power of empowerment and resistance in women's submission. R. Marie Griffith explores the "paradox of surrender and control" in *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission*, an ethnographic study of Women's Aglow

Fellowship International, an interdenominational women's mission organization.[232] From her careful observation of the women's adherence to the doctrine of submission, Griffith claims that she discovered "a high degree of innovation . . . in Aglow women's interpretation of female submission."[233] She finds "more expansive, if ambivalent, forms of resistance" in Aglow women's critical stance toward how cultural views conflate their submission with "obedience to social structures."[234] Griffith depicts how Aglow women "bend the rules, negotiate the disciplines, and subvert the expectations and requirements of the group in various ways."[235] Unlike the general perception of evangelical women, Aglow women find freedom, authority, and self-empowerment in effectively negotiating and maneuvering the doctrine and biblical teaching of submission, male leadership and power, and protocols and expectations of the organization. Griffith contends that the examination of the admittedly rather short history of Aglow fellowship shows fluid and various meanings of submission. She notes:

> While many outsiders might assume that the conservative Christian women in Aglow are merely participating in their own victimization, internalizing patriarchal ideas about female submission that confirm and increase their sense of personal inferiority, the women themselves claim the doctrine of submission leads both to freedom and to transformation, as God rewards His obedient daughters by healing their sorrows and easing their pain. Thus interpreted, the doctrine of submission becomes a means of asserting power over bad situations, including circumstances over which one may otherwise have no control.[236]

For example, many Aglow women contend that women's submission is not only key for an ideal Christian family but also brings benefits to women as it domesticates husbands and changes their willfulness and tendency to dominate into appreciation and protection of wives. Griffith pays attention to the fact that, while Aglow women were

[232] Griffith, *God's Daughters*, 150.
[233] Ibid., 14.
[234] Ibid., 16.
[235] Ibid.
[236] Ibid., 179.

taught absolute submission to husbands based on Colossians 3:18 and Ephesians 5:22 in the past, Aglow International President Jane Hansen claimed in 1995 that such interpretation is a distortion of the Bible and advised the members to embrace a doctrine of mutual submission. For Aglow women, submission is a strategy to "help the relatively powerless recover their power and create a space within which they can feel both fulfilled and free."[237] To the evangelical women, according to Griffith, submission is "a meaningful source of religious and social power."[238] In sum, Griffith challenges the prevalent image of evangelical women as uneducated and naïve followers of biblical teachings of male-dominant churches by highlighting how they engage in active meaning-making and gain empowerment from their negotiation of traditional doctrines and teachings.

The interviewed women often puzzled and intrigued me by describing their submissiveness with a strong sense of conviction, firm agency, and high self-esteem. Compared to the Aglow women, the women in my study show rather uncritical acceptance of the teachings of submission. At the same time, however, they are not just brain-washed victims of subjugation. One cannot deny that they use their own interpretations and understandings of biblical teachings of submission for their own interests: for example, in order to justify their subordination, to bring optimistic viewpoints to the inequality, or to empower themselves. The submissive attitudes of the women we saw in chapter 1 that help them create stability in life make good examples of such resistance.

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[237] Ibid., 186.

[238] Similar to Griffith's book, Brenda E. Brasher's *Godly Women: Fundamentalism and Female Power* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997) depicts evangelical women as active agents and leaders in families and ministries, gaining significant power from their religious belief and affiliation with evangelicalism. I do not discuss Brasher's work as her tone is not quite as valorizing as the works introduced here.

Eighth, women engage with resistance when they acknowledge the need for a "safe space" to share their experience of oppression and suffering. Traci West notes, "Serious resistance work has to make it possible for women to elude the consigned cultural roles that forbid displays of weakness in response to violence."[239] It is important for women to find "a space to feel vulnerable" as well as "a space to heal and time and place to break down."[240] I have seen many Korean American women engage in forming such a space for themselves. Rather than expecting the leaders of their faith communities to initiate such formation, the women built their own unofficial spaces to share their own struggles.

Lastly, resistance is defined in terms of the social function and the result of certain acts. Rajan attempts to "redefine individual resistance itself in terms of its social function rather than its performative intentionality."[241] Ketu H. Katrak argues that one must ask "Resistance to what end?"[242] This does not mean that the legitimacy of a woman's resistant act or behavior should be evaluated in terms of its success in changing the social conditions of oppression. In her analysis of literary and non-literary productions of the writers, Katrak asks, "How does a resistant action or non-action enable a protagonist to grow, change, learn, or be destroyed?"[243] What matters in a woman's resistant act or behavior should be how it influences her self-development and her interpersonal relationships. Although the sense of empowerment women feel at the moment of engaging with dissident acts is important, it is equally important to ask whether their resistance yields healthier ways of claiming themselves.

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[239] West, *Wounds of the Spirit*, 175–176.
[240] Ibid., 176.
[241] Rajan, *Real and Imagined Women*, 12.
[242] Katrak, *Politics of the Female Body*, 2.
[243] Ibid.

Evaluating Valorization of Women's Resistance

These examples of alternative conceptions of women's resistance are valuable in many ways. First, they provide a more realistic picture of women's experience by nullifying the dichotomy of victimization and resistance. Discussing the multiple ways black women resist violence, Traci West mentions the need to overcome such dichotomy:

> The web of subordinating social dynamics that ensnare women discourages a dichotomous notion of victimization and agency. As feminist legal theorist Martha Mahoney notes, the use of such a dichotomy rests upon the separation of the act of physical violence from its context of broader patterns of social power, and from other issues related to the complexity of needs and struggles in a woman's life. Pitting notions of victimization against those of agency nurtures the false assumption that a woman can isolate the male violence in her life and then choose to respond to it in one of two ways depending upon the strength of her character on her psychological health.[244]

West points out that the dichotomy of victimization and agency produces the "unrealistic" conception of "authentic" resistance that women are perceived to engage in when they take up overt resistance by separating themselves from oppression and power relations. As "a useful corrective to the totalizing formulations about power and domination," the above approaches of valorizing diverse modes of women's resistance provide ways to avoid the simple treatment of women as naïve victims.[245]

Second, expanded concepts of women's resistance also help us open the eyes to women's different realities. Some feminist scholars who researched women in different religious groups argue that feminists should extend their respect for non-feminist religious women. For example, Griffith quotes Adrienne Rich:

> It is pointless to write off the antifeminist women as brainwashed, or self-hating, or the like. I believe that feminism must imply an imaginative identification with

[244] West, *Wounds of the Spirit*, 160.
[245] Chong, *Deliverance and Submission*, 176.

> all women . . . and that the feminist must, because she can, extend this act of the imagination as far as possible.[246]

Valorizing women's diverse acts of engaging in resistance is a political move because the emphasis on women's subordination and the omission of women's resistance from official histories has contributed to women's invisibility in public space. Exploring various forms of women's resistance helps one find the "hidden transcripts" of women's history.[247] For example, when many Asian American women are still victims of racism and sexism, it is politically significant to highlight how they use their wisdom and agency to survive and refute oppression.

In an effort to observe, describe and understand Korean American women's reality, such interest in redefining women's resistance should be welcome. This effort to celebrate women's acts as resistance is a postcolonial attempt to liberate the representation of women from the lens of a Western paradigm. In other words, the scholars representing the subaltern women refuse to let the women get treated as victims or resistors in modern framework using as a standard image of an autonomous and rational subject. Although their political commitment does not always free them from the potential for silencing the women, it is still an important step in the right direction.

Third, feminist valorization of women's resistance helps one see women's capacity for transcendence within their historicity. When Korean American women seem to be embedded in their sociopolitical situatedness, their desire and capacity for transcendence and freedom is found in their everyday struggles. When one reads the paradoxical dynamics behind women's struggle with power relations, one finds their yearning to move beyond their confined realm of meaning-making.

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[246] Griffith, *God's Daughters*, 201.
[247] This is James C. Scott's concept in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*.

Lastly, such valorization of women's resistance allows one to perceive women's ambivalent subjectivity, not just their fragmented subjectivity, in "their simultaneous efforts to resist and liberate themselves from oppression while acquiescing to the validity of hegemonic gender ideologies."[248] Women do not always take submissive attitude from a position of a fragmented subjectivity. They also show capacity to hold the tensions between themselves and others and between submissive attitudes and desire for resistance.

While these points are quite valuable, one should also be careful about celebrating women's seemingly resistant behaviors or speeches, and pay attention to the voices of caution about this trend of rediscovering and valorizing women's resistance. First, scholars have pointed out the tendency to romanticize women's resistance and to underestimate the power of domination.[249] For example, Abu-Lughod notes that academic interest in alternative notions of resistance carries a "tendency to romanticize resistance, to read all forms of resistance as signs of the ineffectiveness of systems of power and of the resilience and creativity of the human spirit in its refusal to be dominated."[250] She further says that we need to remember that particular acts of resistance are the indicators of the complicated operation of power. Along with Abu-Lughod, Lyn Parker argues that "many actions and practices, especially individual actions and practices, have been romanticized as 'resistance' and wrongly appropriated to emancipatory causes, radical action and even revolution."[251] While Abu-Lughod contends that our concern with resistance does not have a meaning by itself but helps us gain "a greater sense of the complexity of the nature and forms of domination," Parker is

[248] Chong, *Deliverance and Submission*, 185.
[249] Abu-Lughod "The Romance of Resistance,"41-55; Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry B. Ortner, *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Lyn Parker, *The Agency of Women in Asia* (New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2005).
[250] Abu-Lughod, "The Romance of Resistance," 42.
[251] Parker, *The Agency of Women in Asia*, 65.

concerned that the tendency to emphasize the resilience and persistence of human spirit and struggle for freedom may lead one to easily overlook the operations of power.[252]

Second, Kelly H. Chong argues that while it may bring some sense of empowerment and freedom to women, resistance often tends to remain internal, without leading women to openly challenge the system of oppression. Chong contends that valorizing such resistant acts may "ironically undermine our efforts to analyze the dynamics and conditions of gender transformations."[253] She points out many Korean women's "consent" and "acquiescence to religious patriarchy" through evangelical beliefs, despite its personally empowering effect and "emancipatory potential," contribute to maintaining "existing gender/family arrangements" and to "the reinforcement of their subordination."[254] Mi-Young shows such a case. Even though she sounds critical when she points out the problems of other church members, she does not challenge the traditional view of gender roles. Her belief and theology do not lead her to critically reflect on gender inequality. Chong notes:

> Women may acquire through their spiritual experiences and individual relationship with God a new sense of dignity, self-respect, self-esteem—not to mention personal consolation—but these experiences appear to stop short of developing into impulses for public challenges or critique of men as has been described in other cultural contexts; instead, they remain at the level of internal empowerment and resistance.[255]

Chong also notes that women's strategic use of submission as resistance also makes them better at submission:

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[252] Abu-Lughod, "The Romance of Resistance," 41. Abu-Lughod says, "If the systems of power are multiple, then resisting at one level may catch people up at other levels" (53). Only when we examine the operation of power, says Abu-Lughod, can we understand "the implications of the forms of resistance" as fully as we intend. In this sense, observing the complex dynamics of women's submission and resistance will teach us how domination works in their lives.
[253] Chong, *Deliverance and Submission*, 177.
[254] Ibid., 171–172.
[255] Ibid., 172.

> [T]he mechanisms of submission through which women struggle for gender negotiation and resistance can, no matter how strategically they are deployed, lead to the reinforcement of their subordination. Women's attempts to reform male behavior through submission, for instance, implicate them in a process of their own behavioral transformation, intensifying their role adherence and thereby helping to maintain existing power structures.[256]

Therefore, Chong observes that women's internal resistance should be critically viewed in terms of their ideological acquiescence and complicity with the re-domestication of women by church and other dominant systems.

Third, one may also challenge this tendency to valorize women's resistance by asking, "Why be content with women's survival and passive resistance, rather than seek their thriving?" In this sense, Renee Harrison provides a critique of Delores Williams's theological account of black women's survival as resistance.[257] Harrison argues that neither the liberation paradigm nor the survival paradigm in the Bible may advance African-American women's thriving. She points out that Hagar's story stops short of black women's thriving. Wilderness imagery only reinforces African-American women's subjugated position and dismisses black women's agency—which Hagar was willing to employ and which God suppressed and silenced—altogether. Harrison challenges the Genesis account in which God orders Hagar to return to her owner so that she can secure safety and well-being for her and her child, dependent on Abram. Moreover, God promises only a future of nation-building through Hagar's son and pays no attention to her needs. In Harrison's eyes, Hagar is "the voiceless protagonist" who does not challenge or question God's plan for her,[258] and Harrison argues that Williams "gives too

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[256] Ibid.
[257] Renee K. Harrison, "Hagar Ain't Workin', Gimme Me Celie: A Hermeneutic of Rejection and a Risk of Re-appropriation," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 58, nos. 3–4 (2004): 38-55.
[258] Harrison, "Hagar Ain't' Workin'," 41.

much weight to Hagar's enactment of agency."[259] She further contends that the wilderness paradigm offers African American women only a future of oppression/survival, not hope for a life of thriving and wholeness. By paralleling the story of Hagar and that of Celie, a protagonist of Alice Walker's novel, *The Color Purple*, Harrison re-appropriates black women's struggle to survive, which leads to thriving. With communal support and an understanding of resistance as an enactment of agency [an assertive act towards thriving]," Celie challenges oppression and finds ways to thrive without depending on God or her oppressors.[260] Instead of waiting on God to secure her a better future, Celie thrives by claiming her own voice and agency.

These criticisms remind us that describing women's subjectivity is itself a complicated and ambivalent act. Whether one emphasizes women's victimization or women's survival and resistance, liberative religious educators need to wrestle with the following questions: Should we treat women's experience of empowerment and their resistance as same? Who determines whether a woman's act counts as a "true" form of resistance?

It is true that there is a risk of romanticizing women's resistance and disregarding their oppression when we valorize as resistance diverse acts and behaviors of women. It is true that what one considers resistance may not be immediately emancipatory. It is true that women should carry in them an expectation for thriving rather than surviving. However, I contend that the following points are important in reading women's resistance. First, transcendentality matters. I regard one of the most significant contributions of feminist theologians' effort to valorize women's resistance their implicit claim that

[259] Ibid.
[260] Ibid., 49.

women can choose and yearn for transcendence even under the enormous burden of oppressive systems. Any act, therefore, should be regarded as resistance when by it a woman pursues her own transcendentality over historicity. At the same time, what feminists claim is that a woman's transcendentality emerges from her historicity and embeddedness in relations. This means that it is important to pay attention to how women engage with transcendental moves in their everyday life.

Second, our caution against the hasty celebration of women's resistance does not suggest that one should dismiss the political meaning of valorizing women's resistance. It is still important to engage in the political task of naming alternative forms of women's resistance, and the effort to acknowledge and valorize diverse forms of women's resistance should continue.

Third, one should take seriously the concern that this tendency to valorize women's resistance may lead to dismissing women's consent to or compliance with oppression.[261] What if we overlook women's participation in their oppression by focusing on and celebrating their resistance? Parker says that it is unethical for a social scientist to attribute unintentional action as an act of resistance: "I would argue that the social scientist has a responsibility not to ascribe such actions to 'resistance' if the intention of the actor is not to oppose or subvert power or domination."[262] This discussion leads us to question to what extent one should take into consideration women's intention and motivation. Is it okay to overlook the intention and motivation of the actor?

Although the approaches of valorizing women's resistance may contribute significantly to the empowerment of women, such discussions should be accompanied by

[261] Chong, *Deliverance and Submission*, 176–177.
[262] Parker, *The Agency of Women in Asia*, 69.

the serious consideration of women's compliance with oppression and women's motivation for resistance. It is, therefore, meaningful for us to explore feminist theologies of sin, wherein we find another approach to women's subjectivity.

Feminist Theologies of Sin and Sloth

The interviewed women actively participate in the patriarchal system even though they sense and verbally challenge the injustice in it. By actively taking expected gender roles, these women are not only complicit in the patriarchal system but also actively reinforcing it. As I asked in chapter 1, when they do not wholly agree with patriarchy, why do these women contribute to it? The answer from several feminist and womanist theologians is women's sin. In this section, I explore and evaluate feminist theologies of sin, especially the notion of sloth as women's self-loss.

Feminist Theologies of Sin

The doctrine of sin, utilized by the church along with the oppressive social systems, has functioned to oppress the powerless, including women. As Mary Potter Engel states, "it is this doctrine that continues to be one of the most powerful tools in the church's collusion with society in the victimization of women, children, and elders"[263] At the same time, the doctrine of sin has also functioned to describe and reveal the reality of injustice and suffering and name the power and ideology that works behind inhumane conditions. In this sense, Rebecca Chopp says, "A discourse of sin is in itself a resistance to injustice and the expression of the desire for human flourishing, for correcting all that is false, distorted, depraved."[264] Some feminist theologians challenge the Christian West's over-preoccupation with sin and propose abandoning the notion of original sin. These theologians criticize Western theology for failing to properly address human suffering and unnecessarily blaming victims out of its preoccupation with the narratives of the fall and original sin.[265] However, sin-talk has certainly helped women name their own

[263] Mary Potter Engel, "Evil, Sin, and the Violation of the Vulnerable," in *Lift Every Voice and Sing: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, eds. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1990), 150. For example, Delores S. Williams discusses how nineteenth-century African American slave women gained the sense of "ontological sin" or a feeling of "unworthiness" from their exposure to Christian teachings accompanied and enforced by white racism. Delores S. Williams, "A Womanist Perspective on Sin," in *A Troubling in My Soul*, ed. Emilie M. Townes (New York: Orbis Books,1993), 140–144.

[264] Rebecca S. Chopp, "Anointed to Preach: Speaking of Sin in the Midst of Grace," in *The Portion of the Poor: Good News to the Poor in the Wesleyan Tradition*, ed. Douglas Meeks (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1995), 105.

[265] Catherine Keller, *From a Broken Web: Separation, Sexism, and Sel* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1986); Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (New York: Crossroad, 1988); Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence: Original Sin in Relational Theology* (New York: Continuum, 1994); Wendy Farley, *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: A Contemporary Theodicy* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990); Kathleen Sands, *Escape from Paradise: Evil and Tragedy in Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994); Joy Ann McDougall, "Sin—No More? A Feminist Re-Visioning of a Christian Theology of Sin," *Anglican Theological Review* 88, no. 2 (Spring 2006): 215–235.

experience of being trapped in structures of oppression and, in some cases, transcend victimization. Susan L. Nelson relates:

> Naming sensuality as women's sin reflected the actual experience of many women. Heard into speech in consciousness-raising groups, women were able to find a place from which to name the supposed "givens" of women's experience as a cultural/historical construction—and see and name their own complicity. Naming complicity a sin in this case was not about guilt, but about leaving the old behind. For me, calling hiding sinful worked as permission to come out of hiding—free from the guilt in which the care-for-other/care-for-self bind had caught me.[266]

As Joy McDougall says, feminist theologies of sin not only "perform acts of lamentation and truth-telling" that uncover and expose hidden forms of sin women suffer from but also empower individual women and communities of faith to name and resist gender oppression.[267]

Feminist and womanist theologians have produced variety of approaches to discuss women's experience of sin. Many of them, including Rosemary Ruether and Marjorie Suchocki, define sin as violation and distortion of right relations.[268] However, they have different opinions regarding the origin or root of sins. Rosemary Radford Ruether and Sallie McFague perceive patriarchy as original sin. To such a proposition, younger-generation theologians including Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Margaret Kamitsuka claim that viewing patriarchy as original sin does not allow one to talk about women's freedom, for it tends to essentialize women as victims.[269] They employ poststructuralist discourse theories to discuss women's experience of sin. From the

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[266] Susan L. Nelson, "Pride, Sensuality and Han: Revisiting Sin from the Underside," *Political Theology* 7, no. 4 (October, 2006): 422.
[267] McDougall, "Sin—No More?" 186.
[268] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing Cultures* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993); Sallie McFague, *Models of God: Theology for an Ecological, Nuclear Age* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1987); Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*.
[269] Mary McClintock Fulkerson, "Sexism as Original Sin: Developing a Theacentric Discourse," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 653–675.

perspective of Process theology, Marjorie Suchocki argues that the origin of sin is not pride but violence. Although many feminist theologians talk about women's sin particularly, Ruether and Mercadante refuse to view sin divisively according to gender, and Mercadante notes that men and women both commit sins of self-loss and pride. Feminist theologians also hold different viewpoints on the God-world relationship. Ruether, McFague, and Suchocki hold a panentheistic view of the God-world relation, which tends to "take creation very seriously, recognize humans as one species among many, and help us to value all created matter equally."[270]

According to these theologians, sin is "a violation of right relationship between species, creatures, nature and God."[271] Angela West and Linda Mercadante propose theistic approaches to sin, in which they assume God's freedom and separation from creation. But most feminist theologies of sin tend to reject the notion of transcendent God due to its sexist connotation, which powerfully influences women's experience of subordination and oppression. Theologians such as Joy Mcdougall and Alistair McFadyen point out that feminist theologies of sin overall fail to secure God's transcendence and freedom, resulting in "pragmatic atheism" and losing distinctive theological ground necessary for challenging oppressive structures.[272] From a different angle, womanist theologians challenge feminist theologians' failure to perceive experience of racism as an important factor in discussions on women's sin and show more interest in the social dimension of sin. For example, Delores Williams presents defiling and dehumanizing black women as a significant sin. From these debates and

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[270] Mary Elise Lowe, "Woman Oriented Hamartiologies: A Survey of the Shift from Powerlessness to Right Relationship," *Dialogue* 39, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 126.
[271] Ibid.
[272] Alistair McFadyen, *Bound to Sin: Abuse, Holocaust, and the Christian Doctrine of Sin* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 10; McDougall, "Sin—No More," 219.

diverging opinions, one can see feminist and womanist theologies' struggle to describe women's complex engagement with oppression.

Sloth

In the 1980s, after Valerie Saiving's suggestion that women's sin is not too much self (pride) but lack of self or self-loss, feminist theologians such as Judith Plaskow and Susan Nelson Dunfee discussed sloth as women's experience of sin.[273] It is a topic that has continued to capture feminist theologians' attention. For example, Mary Potter Engel, Linda Mercadante, and Carol Lakey Hess have discussed sloth as a serious sin that women commit, although these theologians employed diverse terms to name women's sin, such as "triviality," "hiding," "anguish," "self-abnegation," "self-loss" and "giving self away."[274] Ruether also employs terms such as "passivity," "lack of selfhood," "timidity," and "reversed egoism" to describe how men and women "acquiesce in the relationships set by the dominant male group ego."[275] Although she acknowledges the contribution of Saiving and Plaskow in discussing women's sin of self-loss, Ruether refuses to accept the gender dualism of naming male and female sins, and argues that sloth applies to both men and women.

Developed by feminist theologians as a concept useful for discussing the complexity and deeply serious operation of sinful structures, sloth describes not only the destructive giving away of self explicitly and implicitly forced on women through the

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[273] Valerie Saiving Goldstein, "The Human Situation: A Feminine View," *Journal of Religion* 40, no. 2 (April, 1960): 100–112; Judith Plaskow, *Sex, Sin and Grace: Women's Experience and the Theologies of Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1980); Susan Nelson Dunfee, "The Sin of Hiding: A Feminist Critique of Reinhold Niebuhr's Account of the Sin of Pride," *Soundings* 65, no. 3 (Fall 1982): 316–27.

[274] Hess, *Caretakers of Our Common House*; Linda Mercadante, *"Anguish: Unraveling Sin and Victimization," Anglican Theological Review* 82, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 283–302; Engel, *"Evil, Sin, and Violation of the Vulnerable*; McDougall, "A Feminist Re-visioning of Sin," 218.

[275] Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 164, 189.

process of socialization but also the complex ways in which women experience, participate in, and contribute to whatever structures violate right relationships in their lives. As McFadyen argues, sloth indicates both a condition and an act. Sloth not only means "self-loss," but also participating in patriarchy with "a mode of personal agency." McFadyen notes:

> Women are not, then, the passive recipients of the effects of "patriarchy"; rather, their oppression has a personal and voluntary aspect, in that will and other organs of intentionality are engaged. Women participate in their own oppression as subjects; that is, they do so personally. And yet sloth is also presented as a collapse in the conditions of subjective agency, as a "loss of self." [276]

Even as sloth is a helpful concept for representing women's struggle with oppression with nuance, it has been criticized as being too limited to describe women's self. One example of criticism is found in *Sex, Race and God: Christian Feminism in Black and White,* in which Susan Thistlethwaite introduces a black female student who claims that sloth "could never be construed as the besetting sin of black women."[277] Acknowledging the student's voice as valid, Thistlewaite proceeds to say that the theological term sloth developed by white feminist theologians cannot be applied to black women without paying close attention to women's experience defined by race, class, and sexual role.[278] I do not think that this student argues that no black woman consents to oppression. The student's claim implies that the feminist notion of sloth fails to depict the ways in which many black women struggle within interlocking systems of oppression. It is therefore appropriate to ask whether the feminist and womanist theological discussions on sloth provide nuanced notions of subjectivity that could incorporate women's

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[276] McFadyen, *Bound to Sin*, 142.
[277] Susan B. Thistlethwaite, *Sex, Race and God: Christian Feminism in Black and White* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 78.
[278] Ibid., 79.

complicated negotiation and struggle in everyday life. Similarly, I examine elsewhere this chapter whether the interviewed women's ambivalent subjectivity is captured by the concept of sloth. Here I would like to reflect on the concept of sloth employed in the works of Rosemary Ruether, Carol Lakey Hess, and Delores Williams, focusing on the relation between self and resistance. I evaluate these feminist and womanist theologies of sin based on my claim that a theology of sin should deal with how a woman constantly encounters and copes with the possibilities of sin and resistance by splitting or doubling her self.

Rosemary Radford Ruether

For Ruether, sin is "a distortion of relationship" between humans, between humans and creation, and between humans and God.[279] In her view of sin, Ruether refuses dualisms between the individual and the communal, male and female, and pride and lack of power. Instead, "sin as distorted relationality has three dimensions, an interpersonal dimension, a social-historical dimension, and an ideological-cultural dimension."[280] She also refuses the idea that pride is the root sin of sexism. Instead, Ruether argues that insecurity is the root sin. She says, "I believe that pride is only part of the story of distorted relationship. Underlying aggressive egoism are the less named sins of passivity, insecure fearfulness and the lack of a grounded self which allow one to acquiesce to one's own victimization or the victimization of others."[281] Ruether defines sin in terms of how it affects self: "Sin implies a perversion or corruption of human nature, that is, of one's good or authentic potential self. This capacity to sin is seen as based on the distinctively human

[279]Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 142; Lowe, "Woman Oriented Hamartiologies," 121.
[280] Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 38, Lowe, "Woman Oriented Hamartiologies," 121–122.
[281] Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 35; Lowe, "Woman Oriented Hamartiologies," 121.

characteristic of freedom."[282] But Ruether is careful to say that when women gain feminist consciousness, they reach "freedom" and "grounded self."[283] She also points out that the church's teaching on sin, which identifies "anger and pride" as sin and "humility and self-abnegation" as virtue, works as another "barrier to feminist consciousness."[284] Genuine liberation or salvation is found when one finds "the self that is grounded in community as a free and individuated self."[285] Ruether acknowledges that, depending on individual ability and economic status, women's potential to articulate their feminist consciousness varies.

Within Ruether's framework, women's metanoia should be a "breakthrough" experience and such experience is "the basis for the development of consciousness."[286]

> In this context, conversion from sexism is truly experienced as a breakthrough, as an incursion of power and grace beyond the capacities of the present roles, an incursion of power that puts one in touch with oneself as a self. Metanoia for women involves a turning around in which they literally discover themselves as persons, as centers of being upon which they can stand and build their own identity.

Thus, for Ruether, conversion of a woman from sexism is finally meeting her true self and turning from their self-loss.

In *Sexism and God-Talk*, Ruether discusses women's resistance to sexism, contending that women have "never appreciated this ideology or fully believed it" and have always engaged in certain level of "noncompliance or proto-feminist consciousness" as women's writings from different periods reveal. However, according to Ruether, such "covert resistance" did not become "real feminist thought and practice" because individual noncompliance could not exercise sufficient power to overcome the dominant

[282] Ruether, *Gaia and God*, 160.
[283] Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 188, 189.
[284] Ibid., 185, 186.
[285] Ibid.
[286] Ibid., 186.

system. Rather, a cultural ideology claiming human equality and feminist-oriented networks of communication are necessary to support women's dissent. Ruether takes into consideration many women's situations in which covert and subtle noncompliance are the only form of resistance possible. She cites women who have "no skills to support themselves at their present economic level" and are "one man away from welfare." And she acknowledges that unless a woman has "the courage of feminist consciousness" to lead her to a "breakthrough experience," she has to remain subordinated in order to survive. Ruether insists that a woman reaches a legitimate resistance only when she has "genuinely faced up to sexism as a massive historical system of victimization of women and allowed [herself] to enter into . . . anger and alienation." Unless women go through such an experience, they will remain "basically timid and accommodating."[287]

Ruether employs an effective rhetoric to persuade women to leave their subordinated status and find freedom. I appreciate her attention to overcoming group egoism and finding a communal nature of liberation. However, her conceptualization of "true self" is certainly too narrow. In what sense does Ruether claim a woman loses and retains her "true self"? Can one say that a woman has not found her true self if she shows passive attitudes towards oppression without feminist critical consciousness and yet desperately longs to survive oppressive situations? Ruether implies that "overt resistance" is the only way of reversing women's sinfulness. However, I would argue that some women's complicity with oppressive structures can be resistance born of their integrity and desire to find their inner divine freedom. Some women's seemingly submissive and passive behaviors can be their ways of surviving oppression based on their keen awareness of and negotiations with their sociocultural constraints. I argue that such a

[287] Ibid., 188.

view of resistance should complicate our understanding and representation of women's experience of sin, but it does not seem to have affected Ruether's theology of sin. Ruether's concept of sloth points to women's damaged ability to resist oppression and fails to leave room for an alternative notion of women's resistance. I am not denying that sin affects women's ability to resist. However, sloth ceases to be a useful concept if it embraces only narrow images of resistance in which only subversive acts taken out of critical consciousness count as genuine resistance.

A similar problem is also found in Mary Potter Engel's discussion of women's sin. Engel challenges how traditional sins such as anger and defiance doubly victimize women by leading them to blame themselves, who are victims of violence. Engel renames sin as distortion of feeling, as betrayal of trust, as lack of care, and as lack of consent to vulnerability. She argues that women should end violence inflicted upon them by expressing anger and resisting any unjust treatment. Although her analysis of how sin and evil intertwine in violence against women is quite illuminating, Engel does not consider the subtle and quiet forms of resistance many marginalized women employ. Ruether and Engel both imply that "overt resistance" is the only way of reversing women's sinfulness.

As we saw above, feminist theologians' notion of sloth is an advanced approach for capturing women's complex negotiation with power relations for it describes the ways they participate in victimization with agency. However, Ruether and Engel fail to pay attention to how women can express and claim their selves through different modes of resistance, possibly because the two theologians have not overcome the modern notion of self, and therefore fail to witness or value women's ambivalent subjectivity women.

Feminist theologians such as Mary McClintock Fulkerson and Mari Kamitsuka point out that feminist theologies of sin risk deterministic and essentializing tendencies. I would suggest that where this problem arises in Ruether and Engel it comes from the binarism of victimization and resistance, which is implied in the notion of self the theorists presume in their discussions on women's experience of sin. Along with Margaret Kamitsuka, I believe that a feminist theology of sin needs a more dynamic and nuanced notion of women's self and feminist theologians need to work on how "to nuance the concept of selfhood that a doctrine of sin either implicitly or explicitly presupposes."[288] Feminist notions of sloth should include not only women's active participation in sin but also how sloth is related to the different forms of women's resistance.

In their theological works, Carol Lakey Hess and Delores Williams engage women's resistance with greater complexity. While Ruether supports only overt resistance deriving from feminist consciousness as true resistance, Hess and Williams recognize and celebrate women's diverse ways of resisting and hold a more comprehensive and nuanced views of women's self. Hess urges women to move beyond the woman "de-selfing" culture and fight back with self-assertion and anger, but she also acknowledges and celebrates different modes of women's resistance against the dominant system. Williams proposes a new paradigm for theology by unearthing and acknowledging forms of resistance from black women's struggle for survival. Yet despite these expanded the notions of self, Williams and Hess seem to be still caught in the binarism of victimization and resistance. I argue that their argument could serve women

[288] Margaret D. Kamitsuka, "Toward a Feminist Postmodern and Postcolonial Interpretation of Sin," *Journal of Religion* 84, no. 2 (April 2004): 181.

better if they incorporated women's different modes of resistance into their theological accounts of sin. More concretely, their descriptions of women's sin would have had greater nuance and richness if they had presented their notions of women's self more clearly in their discussions of sloth.

Carol Lakey Hess

In her book *Caretakers of Our Common House: Women's Development in Communities of Faith*, Carol Lakey Hess argues that women live in a culture that promotes "de-selfing of women."[289] Girls grow up under pressure to become the primary caregivers in family, which means that their genuine growth and chance to become themselves are inhibited by a patriarchal culture that encourages women's loss of self or giving of self away. According to Hess, it is not only the secular society that demands women's sacrifice; theology and church traditions have also worked to "promote self-sacrifice and censor self-assertion."[290] Western theological tradition, says Hess, brings to women's life "prophetic torpor," a form of acedia that Hess uses to mean "the diminished capacity to care about and respond to injustice."[291] She further notes, "An overemphasis on self-abnegation blunts the person's prophetic and dissenting voice."[292] Many women are led to choose self-sacrifice, humility, and obedience before they learn how to claim their self or even grow into a self to give away. Instead they learn only how to define themselves in relationships and live up to other people's expectations.

[289] Hess, *Caretakers of Our Common House*, 102.
[290] Ibid., 55.
[291] Ibid., 44.
[292] Ibid., 45.

Hess emphasizes that her explanation of the construction of women's subjectivity does not "exonerate women from sin."[293] She says, "Quite the contrary. Along with Plaskow, Saiving, and Dunfee, I wish to make the theological weight of irresponsibility more visible to women."[294] She proposes distinguishing between celebrating Christian virtues and causing harm by reinforcing such virtues. She does not, however, suggest that we give up the virtue of self-sacrifice or discourage women's ability to care.[295] One reason why we need to take this problem of denying women's self seriously, according to Hess, is because women's self-loss is directly connected with communities' loss:

> When women, and others, give themselves away, the community loses as well. When faithfulness to the self is silenced, the community's hope for justice is diminished; when faithfulness to the self is encouraged, the community's hope for justice is enhanced.[296]

Hess argues that finding a true self is possible with "a genuine and honest expression of one's feelings and voice."[297] Any negotiation or compromise should be allowed only when it is mutually beneficial. That is, unlike Ruether, Hess does not insist on overt resistance as the only legitimate option for women struggling for recovering true self, but rather distinguishes between "creative resistance" and "bold resistance." Depending on her situation, each woman chooses her own way to resist oppressive system. Some women have to take subtle means of resistance rather than choosing "the potential martyrdom of transformation."[298]

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[293] Ibid., 38.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid., 53.
[296] Ibid., 47.
[297] Ibid., 113.
[298] Ibid., 173.

Hess says that creative resistance is "a way to preserve self-esteem in dehumanizing situations where it is too risky to directly confront the social order."[299] On the other hand, she suggests that the women whose situations allow security in life have "a special calling" for bold resistance.[300] In both subtle and bold resistance, according to Hess, women can claim their "true" selves. She also addresses passive modes of resistance. For example, as mentioned above, she boldly claims that one should see in patients with anorexia nervosa a form of resistance against forced subordination to socially induced femininity. Within young women's act of hiding their true selves, Hess paradoxically finds their resistance.

Hess's account of women's sin provides a valuable resource for a theological anthropology of women's subjectivity by reminding us the following points. First, a theological anthropology of women's subjectivity should deal with the power of oppressive structures with utmost seriousness. It should pay attention not only to individual sin of sloth but also to the social sin of dehumanizing and devaluing women. Second, a theological anthropology of women's subjectivity should address how an individual woman's experience of self-loss influences the whole society and or community. This theological position helps us caution against prematurely spiritualizing or romanticizing Korean American women's suffering and sacrifice.

My greatest critique of Hess's work in this field is that her theological account of how women's sin relates to women's resistance could be clearer. It is very helpful that her description of women as the victims of a sexist culture and her accounts of women as resistors are both presented with rich examples, but they do not complicate her definition

[299] Ibid., 175.
[300] Ibid., 177.

of women's true self. For example, Hess notes that hiding true self can be a mode of resistance, but she also argues that true self is accompanied by a genuine and honest expression of one's feelings and voice. I would like to hear her say more about how such forms of resistance have anything to do with women's self-loss. Although Williams's discussion of women's experience of sin is quite different from Hess's, it reveals a similar problem.

Delores S. Williams

As we saw above, Delores Williams has provided a way to illuminate black women's struggle with oppression by recovering the forms of resistance black women have used to survive. She has also explored black women's experience of sin with the deep awareness that black women's experience and humanity has been disregarded and made invisible in black theology and feminist theology. Her theological discussions of black women's experience of sin and resistance are a critical part of her effort "to reconstruct and redeem from invisibility the life-world of African-American women."[301]

Although Williams mentions black women's individual sin briefly, her account of their experience of sin occurs mainly at a social level. Williams addresses the social aspect of sin by defining sin as devaluation and dehumanization of black women.[302] With the term "demonarchy," she describes black women's experience of sin in white-dominant society.[303] Specifically, term designates the forces by which white-dominant society brings "the retardation of the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, economic, and

[301] Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness.*
[302] Williams, "A Womanist Perspective on Sin"
[303] Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness,* 52.

physical growth of black women and the fruit of their wombs, male and female."[304] The historically accumulated stereotypes of black women, created and sustained by the demonarchy, have instilled in black women low self-esteem and sense of unworthiness. At the same time, Williams contends, black women are also not protected or encouraged to pursue their full humanity in black communities, where they have been the victims of violence and abuse. Williams points out how black women must navigate multiple experiences of social sin in their everyday life.

Williams proposes a womanist concept of sin based on an analysis of three sources of black communities' religious culture: spiritual songs, autobiographical statements of ex-slaves, and black theology.[305] According to Williams, the following four senses constitute what is distinctive about a womanist notion of sin: First, since the womanist notion of sin takes "the human body and its sexual resources" seriously, it names "the abuse and depletion of these resources" sin. Second, since black womanhood and black women's sexual being are in the image of God, devaluing their womanhood and sexuality is sin. Third, the womanist notion of sin takes black women's depleted self-esteem seriously and takes up the task of elevating their self-esteem as a critical matter of constituting salvation. Fourth, in the womanist concept of sin, the defilement of black women's bodies and the defilement of nature are in parallel.[306]

As Melanie Harris notes, Williams presents an "innovative constitution of salvation" in light of black women's experience.[307] That is, Williams

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[304] Delores S. Williams, "The Color of Feminism: Or Speaking the Black Woman's Tongue," *Journal of Religious Thought* 43, no. 1 (Spring–Summer 1986): 48–49.
[305] Williams, "A Womanist Perspective on Sin."
[306] Ibid., 146–147.
[307] Melanie Harris, "Saving the Womanist Self; Womanist Soteriology and the Gospel of Mary," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 58, nos. 3–4 (2004): 177–178.

> expands the classical doctrine of salvation to connote the saving of black women's bodies from abuse and objectification, the saving of black women's mental health from the weight of interrelated oppressions, and the saving of black women's inner "spirit" selves through the healing of self-esteem.[308]

As Harris points out, expanding the doctrine of salvation includes "saving the *whole* of black women's selves."[309] To gain a womanist understanding of self-love is "a salvific process of self-discovery, and self-knowledge."[310]

Williams's most valuable contribution to the construction of a theological anthropology is that is should pay attention to how social sin influences women's humanity. A theological anthropology for Korean American women would therefore address how negative stereotypes and social messages devaluing women's humanity lead them to low self-esteem and loss of hope.

Despite her focus on social sin, Williams does offer valuable insight on individual sin, defining it in her essay "A Womanist Perspective on Sin" as "participating in society's systems that devalue Black women's womanhood (humanity) through a process of invisibilization."[311] At first glance, this account of individual sin appears similar to the feminist notion of sloth as women's sin. Williams, however, does not address how her notion of self compares to the feminist notion of self presupposed in sloth. Were she to discuss to what extent the concept of sloth can capture black women's subjectivity, I think that we would gain a more textured account of the female student's criticism of the feminist notion of sloth in Thistlewaite's class. I regret that Williams does not engage more deeply in black women's individual struggles with dominant structures in terms of self-loss. Most importantly, if the way a black woman struggles with multi-level

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[308] Ibid.
[309] Ibid., 179. emphasis in the original.
[310] Ibid.
[311] Williams, "A Womanist Perspective on Sin," 146.

oppression is distinctive, is there a possibility that she might experience self-loss differently from what feminist theologians mean by the term?

In sum, Hess's and Williams's theological accounts of women's victimization and resistance are more nuanced than are Ruether's and Engel's. In spite of their acknowledgement of women's ambivalent subjectivity, however, it seems that the notion of women's subjectivity implied in their accounts of women's sloth is still under the influence of the narrow paradigm that defines women's subjectivity as product of power relations. Although they have certain images of true self in their mind, Williams and Hess do not provide them in their discussions of women's self-loss, leaving us with the unanswered question, To what extent does a woman give up being her true self when she participates in oppression?

In other words, these theologians' views of women's subjectivity, revealed in their accounts of resistance, are not extended to their concepts of women's experience of sin. If by sloth feminist and womanist theologians try to express the notion that women employ agency even when they lose self, then even in their experience of victimization, women create a certain spiritual space of negotiation and devastated struggle for survival with God's grace. Williams's term "wilderness" describes such a space for black women. Although exhausted and devastated from the constant devaluation and defilement of their humanity and sexuality, black women do not simply give up self but manage to survive. Hess discusses a similarly complicated form of resistance in the young women who become anorexic. Yet I propose that even though Williams and Hess describe women's self in terms of wilderness and survival, their language of accounting for women's experience of sin is caught in a liberation paradigm, which may not express women's

experience faithfully. While they move beyond the dichotomy of victimization and resistance in their accounts of women's diverse ways of engaging in resistance, their notions of women's self-loss seem to revive such dichotomy.

I believe that a feminist and womanist theology of sloth should express women's struggle to hold the tensions between victimization and resistance and draw insights from their own valorization of women's resistance. I am not arguing that there is no woman falling into despair or giving up hope, caught in the destructive power of oppression and dehumanization. I am arguing that, as different women embody different ways of resisting power relations, they witness to different ways of participating in oppression. And I suggest that women do not necessarily lose their self in their complicity with oppressive power structures. While a feminist theology of sin certainly works as a wake-up call for many women, I am suggesting that we have to remain aware of its potential to serve as another means of misrepresenting women's subjectivity and agency.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined two feminist accounts of women's subjectivity to evaluate their relevance for describing the interviewed women's ambivalent subjectivity. These observations provide a reason why one should take caution against emphasizing women's subordination or romanticizing women's resistance. Women engage in both submission and resistance. Their submission is often a helpful means of resistance, as well as a means of empowerment. At the same time, it is also true that this form of resistance often fails to challenge systems of oppression openly.

How can a theological anthropology adequately address both women's persistent desire for transcendence and their active participation in the oppressive structures? My

argument in this chapter is that liberative religious educators must pay attention to the complex ways women negotiate their identities, interests, pleasures, and their gains from participating in oppression. I also argue that women's struggle for survival and paradoxical engagement with resistance should be considered in theological accounts of sin.

A critical appropriation of feminist theological accounts of women's experience of sin can contribute to constructing a theological anthropology of women's subjectivity by drawing attention to the human predicament and the reality of power relations that women face every day. Although their contributions are significant, each approach discussed in this chapter also falls short of a full and nuanced account of women's subjectivity by dismissing women's subjectivity or failing to avoid modern notions of subject. This evaluation of feminist theologies leads me to affirm the need to discuss women's victimization and resistance in terms of their ambivalent subjectivity, which women employ in the third space of negotiation between submission and resistance. A theological anthropology of women's subjectivity appropriates a third space approach to discussing women's resistance and complicity. The Korean American women interviewees clearly reveal that they do not fully identify themselves as victims in their attitudes and everyday practices; nor do they identify purely as resistors. Their victimization and resistance almost always co-exist. Therefore, a feminist theology of women's resistance and sin should be developed together.

Chapter 4

Winnicott and Women's Subordination and Resistance

My goal in this chapter is to use the notion of third space to provide the theoretical grounding for a theological anthropology of ambivalent subjectivity and women's resistance. I begin by attempting to understand in psychological terms the subjectivity and resistance of the Korean American women I interviewed and claim that a theological anthropology of women's resistance demands an account of their psychological experience of power relations. From my analysis, I propose a concept of resistance as the creative capacity to hold the tensions in third space. Finally, I argue that an intersubjective notion of resistance based on the relational concept of third space is helpful for constructing a theological anthropology of resistance.

My critical conversation partners in this chapter include D. W. Winnicott, Jessica Benjamin, and Robert Kegan. I examine Winnicott's psychoanalytic theory of human self and its acceptance by feminist theorists and religious scholars. I engage with Winnicott believing that his concepts, especially his notion of a "potential space" beyond the objective and subjective aspects of human life, are relevant for understanding Korean American women's struggle with power relations. After introducing Winnicott's object relations theory, I discuss religious and theological implications of Winnicott's major concepts as many Korean American women's ambivalent subjectivity can and should be understood in terms of their religious belief and faith. I then engage with the claim of Maureen A. Mahoney and Barbara Yngvesson that Winnicott's theory sheds light on women's resistance and complicity. Drawing on Jessica Benjamin's interpretation of Winnicott and the notion of a "paradox of recognition," Mahoney and Yngvesson argue

that women's independence emerges from their experience of dependence and their resistance from the recognition of powerful others. While appreciating Mahoney and Yngvesson's argument, I contend that we need a theoretical model that describes how women develop in their abilities to negotiate power relations and to hold the tension between their desire for relatedness and their yearning for independence. I argue that this model would describe how women move to a more complex level of negotiation and to more creative ways of holding that tension. In support of this inquiry, I engage with developmental psychologist Robert Kegan, who draws on the concept of a "developmental era" or "truce of self-development" to discuss the way the self engages in the third space. Having laid the theoretical groundwork, I provide a psychological interpretation of the narratives of the interviewed women. The last section of the chapter addresses the contributions and limitations of the theories of Winnicott and Benjamin for constructing a theological anthropology of resistance.

The reader may wonder why I turn to Winnicott, having relied productively on Homi Bhabha's concept of interstitial third space in Chapter 2. And in fact, one can find remarkable similarity between Bhabha's notion of third space and Winnicott's concept of potential space.[312] For both, the interplay of subjective world and objective reality occurs in the third space. Bhabha's concept is especially insightful in terms of addressing ambivalent subjectivity from a postcolonial perspective where interactions by hybrid subjects result in shifting identifications and cultural boundaries and identities get blurred or lost. Bhabha's notion of hybridity is similar to Benjamin's concept of playfully holding the tensions. Also, Bhabha's notion of subversion resonates with Benjamin's

[312] Eric Runions, *Changing Subjects: Gender, Nation, and Future in Micah* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 90.

contention that creative agency emerges from the recognition of powerful other. Combined with the theories of Benjamin and Judith Butler, Bhabha's concept of postcolonial subjectivity presents the paradoxical possibility of subversion emerging from subordinated identities and categories.

While Bhabha's contributions are important, I contended in Chapter 2 that Bhabha fails to provide an account of what makes individual and collective resistance possible. In his view, both colonizers and the colonized are hybrid subjects. He does not provide a model for subalterns' political agency or the subject who participates in constructing subjectivity or actively making meaning from their negotiations with oppressive systems. Therefore, I have chosen Winnicott's theory of agency emerging from the subject's struggle with unequal relationships as a conceptual foundation for the motivation for women's resistance.

Donald W. Winnicott

Donald W. Winnicott is one of the object relations theorists, along with Otto Kernberg, Melanie Klein, Heinz Kohut, Ronald Fairbairn, Henry Guntrip, Margaret Mahler, and Harry Stack Sullivan. A brief introduction of object relations theory is helpful for understanding his work.

There are many theorists in object relations theory with diverse theoretical directions, but by and large they share the following points that distinguish object relations from Freudian psychoanalysis. First, what motivates the development of human self is not one's pursuit of satisfaction or internal drive but interpersonal relationship. For Freud, a complex of internal drives constitutes human personality and motivates human behavior; for object relations theorists, the motivating factor in human personality and

actions are relations with others. Second, whereas Freud views dependence as a symptom of immaturity in a person's early development, object relations theorists believe that human beings progress from absolute dependence to a relative and mature form of dependence. Third, while the pre-oedipal period is relatively insignificant in Freud's theory and is perceived as difficult to access, the infant-mother relationship in this period is regarded as a critical and central part of human development in object relations theory.

Winnicott was the first pediatrician trained as a psychoanalyst in England. At the time he entered the field, Melanie Klein and Anna Freud were pioneers in the psychoanalysis of children, and Winnicott trained under the former. Klein was the first psychoanalyst who paid attention to the infant's object relation with the mother instead of their separation. She engaged with the work of entering the children's internal world by working with children and interpreting the meaning of their play. Klein argued that play for children functions as the means of communication, of exploring and concurring the outer world, and of identifying and overcoming emotional states. In play, for example, a child engages in high-level fantasy and may thus overcome her anxiety. According to Klein, the emotional conflicts and destructive instincts that traditional psychoanalytic theory described in older children are also found in the pre-oedipal children.

Adam Phillips believes that Winnicott's work "cannot be understood without reference to Klein,"[313] pointing out that Winnicott inherited Klein's view of the importance of early development, especially "the importance of the internal world and its objects, the elaborate and pervasive power of fantasy, the central notion of primitive greed."[314] Klein, who believed in the child's internal world and ability to fantasize as a

[313] Adam Phillips, *Winnicott* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 9.
[314] Ibid.

source and context for psychoanalysis, regarded the child's instincts as key for development, but did not emphasize the role of the mother in early developmental stages. In contrast, Winnicott would come to argue that a child pursues contact or relationship with a person from the beginning; thus, the experience of dependence on primary caregivers and a caring environment matters to the child's development.

In Winnicott's view, human beings always live in the tension between subjective world and objective reality, and one creates a sense of self through relating paradoxically with others. One moves toward independence by acknowledging dependence; an infant proceeds from total dependence to relative independence. To explain the earliest stage of this development process, Winnicott identified three states: The infant's development begins in a state of absolute dependence where the infant cannot distinguish between "me" and "not-me." The second state is one of relative dependence, in which the infant begins to have awareness of objects and the separation of the me from the not-me. In the third state, the infant begins the process of separation and the critical task of maintaining an inner and subjective world and outer and objective reality both separate and interrelated at the same time.

Winnicott contends that the time of "primary maternal preoccupation" is critical for the emergence of an infant's self. In this state the mother attends to the infant's needs during the last few months of the pregnancy and the first few weeks after birth.[315] Once born, the infant lives in the illusion of omnipotence due to the mother's "almost complete adaptation to her infant's needs."[316] The presence of the mother's breast in response to the infant's hunger makes the infant believe that her breast is his own part and he is the

[315] Winnicott notes that the nurturing figure does not necessarily have to be the infant's own mother. Donald W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Basic Books, 1971), 10.
[316] Ibid., 10.

creator of his environment. In the "mirroring" eye contact with his mother, the infant sees himself when he looks at the mother's face,[317] and the infant develops the illusion that the mother is the projection of his fantasy. Winnicott argues that this experience of receiving mother's unfailing recognition is foundational for the later development of a sense of a true self.

However, Winnicott also believed that the infant's illusion of omnipotence should not last too long. It is important that the mother, who provides almost perfect response to the needs of the just-born infant, become what Winnicott describes as the "good-enough mother." Beginning with preoccupied adaptation to the infant's needs, she gradually decreases her adaptation "according to the infant's growing ability to account for failure of adaptation and to tolerate the results of frustration."[318] Between four and six months after birth, the mother helps the infant start preparing to confront objective reality. The infant should gradually come to the awareness that his sense of subjective omnipotence is just an illusion and that the mother and other objects are real and outside of his control. In Winnicott's view, the work of disillusioning the child is as important as providing the child with the first illusion, and the process of disillusionment can only be successful if the infant was earlier given a solid foundation in illusion: "The mother's eventual task is gradually to disillusion the infant, but she has no hope of success unless at first she has been able to give sufficient opportunity for illusion."[319] When the infant's self-development progresses normally, the self and the environment that were initially merged separate. The child with a healthy self, however, maintains a balanced sense of separation from and connection to others.

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[317] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*,112.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Ibid., 11.

What Winnicott calls "the holding environment" provided by the mother is critical for the development of the infant. He argues that the true self of the infant emerges from the experience of being held by the mother, a space that allows the infant's spontaneous and creative gestures. One's true or authentic sense of self is accompanied by what Winnicott calls feeling real. For the development of the child's true self, the mother's recognition of his creative and spontaneous gestures are critical. If the mother is unable to respond to her child's needs and creativity, the child's sense of self splits, and he develops a false self to manage the demands of the mother and to "preserve and to protect the true self."[320] With his false self, the infant engages in compliant behaviors to adapt to the apparent expectations of the environment, but the impingement of the environment too early results in the disruption of the infant's continuity of being.[321]

It is a mistake to oversimplify the true self as positive and the false self as negative. Both have positive and negative aspects. Although the false self can be a pathological symptom, it protects the true self and helps the person establish a social persona. The negative aspect of the true self is that "it cannot survive constant exposure to 'living in the world'."[322]According to Winnicott, every human life is always divided: "In some form or other or to some degree each of us is divided in this way, into a true self and a false self."[323] He notes that the false self dominates people's personality to different degrees, "ranging from the healthy polite aspect of the self to the truly split-off compliant

[320] Stephen Parker and Edward Davis, "The False Self in Christian Contexts: A Winnicottian Perspective," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 28, no. 4 (2009): 316.
[321] D. W. Winnicott, *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (London: The Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1965), 54.
[322] Winnicott, *The Maturational Processes*, 225.
[323] Winnicott, *Home is Where We Start From: Essays by a Psychoanalyst* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), 287.

False Self which is mistaken for the whole [person]."[324] When people find a safe holding environment in their relationships, they reveal their true self.

Winnicott calls the movement to a new sense of self a transitional phenomenon. What is critical in this progress is what he calls a transitional space or a potential space. It is an in-between space that belongs neither to objective nor subjective realm but holds some of both. Winnicott remarks, "It is useful . . . to think of a third area of human living, one neither inside the individual nor outside in the world of shared reality."[325] The in-between space originates from the mother-infant relationship: "[I]ts foundation is the baby's trust in the mother experienced over a long-enough period."[326] When sufficient trust is built through her good-enough mothering, the child gets ready to move beyond total subjectivity. Thus it can be said that the infant's dependence provides motivation for the child's eventual movement toward independence.

A child's play makes a good example of this experience of being in the intermediate area between the psyche and outer reality. According to Winnicott, play is critical in the process of transition. In a child's play, the child relates with transitional objects that mediate the child's world of fantasy and the external world of reality; they thus help the child to journey toward a new sense of self:

> This area of playing is not inner psychic reality. It is outside the individual, but it is not the external world . . . Into this play area the child gathers objects or phenomena from external reality and uses these in the service of some sample derived from inner or personal reality . . . .[327]

In playing, the child manipulates external phenomena in the service of the dream and invests chosen external phenomena with dream meaning and feeling.

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[324] Winnicott, *The Maturational Processes*, 150.
[325] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 110.
[326] Ibid.
[327] Ibid., 51.

According to Winnicott, transitional objects allow the infant's illusion to emerge.

> Transitional objects and transitional phenomena belong to the realm of illusion . . . which is at the basis of initiation of experience. This early stage in development is made possible by the mother's special capacity for making adaptation to the needs of her infant, thus allowing the infant the illusion that what the infant creates really exists.[328]

Whereas illusion is something negative in Freud's perspective, it is positive for Winnicott insofar as it allows the development of the child's creativity. For Freud, illusion is one's unprovable fantasy or neurotic perception of reality for the purpose of wish fulfillment.[329] Even if an illusion is not necessarily false, it hinders confrontation with the reality. For Freud, religion serves as a good example of illusion, and it is a sign of pathology or immature dependency. In contrast, illusion is essential for maturity and health for Winnicott:

> The transitional phenomena represent the early stages of the use of illusion, without which there is no meaning for the human being in the area of a relationship with an object that is perceived by others as external to that being.[330]

Illusion is necessary for genuine relationships as it makes it possible for one to employ creativity and imagination and connect to others.

This transitional third space is meaningful not only for one's early development but also for one's entire life. Although the experience of this space begins with play, the task of holding the tension between inner and outer world remains. The in-between space makes it possible for human beings to engage in "the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated."[331] This intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner and external (shared) reality, constitutes

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[328] Ibid., 18.
[329] Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (New York: Anchor, 1964), 3–56; William Rich, "Grace and Imagination: From Fear to Freedom," *Journal of Religion and Health* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 213-230.
[330] Winniccott, *Playing and Reality*, 11.
[331] Ibid., 2.

the greater part of the infant's experience, and Winnicott claims it is retained throughout life in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts, to religion, to imaginative living, and to creative scientific work.[332] Human beings' experiences of culture take place in this in-between space.[333]

For Winnicott, a genuine, healthy life is like the play in this space between objective reality and subjective fantasy. It is a life that is neither totally dependent on the outer reality nor on pre-occupation with the inner self. One finds or creates a healthy self in this space where the interplay of the two realms allows creativity and spontaneity. Winnicott notes, "It is here that the individual experiences creative living,"[334] and this transitional space, which is full of paradox, enriches life. In this space within a healthy person, paradox and ambivalence cannot, and should not, be easily resolved.

For Winnicott, the mother-child relationship works as the model for psychoanalytic practice. Effective treatment, Winnicott proposes, provides a holding environment for the patients. Psychoanalysis "is not just a matter of interpreting the repressed unconscious [but] . . . the provision of a professional setting for trust, in which such work may take place."[335] A good therapist should be able to hold the tension experienced by the patient rather than hurriedly trying to bring a resolution: The therapist must have "a capacity . . . to contain the conflicts of the patient, that is to say to contain them and to wait for their resolution in the patient instead of anxiously looking round for a cure."[336]

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[332] Ibid., 14.
[333] Ibid., 100.
[334] Ibid., 103.
[335] Winnicott, *Home is Where We Start From*, 114-115; Phillips, *Winnicott*, 11.
[336] Winnicott, *Therapeutic Consultations in Child Psychiatry* (London: Hogarth Press, 1971), 2; Phillips, *Winnicott*, 12.

Winnicott and Religion

As we saw in the previous chapters, the subjectivity of the women interviewed for this study is very much connected with their religious lives. It is, therefore, worthwhile to examine the religious significance of Winnicott's concepts in order to understand the women's subjectivity and to build a bridge between Winnicott and the theological anthropology proposed in the next chapter. Although I am certainly not the first to explore the implications of Winnicott's theory of transitional space for religious life, I find the following points (developed in depth by many scholars) helpful for linking his psychological concepts to Korean American women's experience of God and their religious practices.[337]

First, Winnicott's theory provides a refreshed understanding of what religion is and how it can and should function in human life. According to Winnicott, the origin of religion can be found in the transitional space, which "is retained in the intense experiencing that belongs to the arts and to religion, and to imaginative living and to creative scientific work."[338] William Rich further notes that Winnicott's image of transitional space is similar to religious life:

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[337] They include the following works: John McDargh, *Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion* (Washington, D.C: University Press of America, 1983); William W. Meissner, *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984); Ana-Maria Rizutto, *The Birth of the Living God* (Chicago: University Press, 1979); Randall Sorenson, *Minding Spirituality* (New York: The Analytic Press, 2004); Stephen Parker and Edward Davis, "The False Self in Christian Contexts: A Winnicottian Perspective," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 28, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 315-325; Stephen Parker, "Winnicott's Object Relations Theory and the Work of the Holy Spirit," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 36, no. 4 (Winter 2008); James W. Jones, "The Relational Self: Contemporary Psychoanalysis Reconsiders Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59, no. 1 (Spring 1991):119-135; William Rich, "Grace and Imagination," *Journal of Religion and Health* 40, no. 1 (Spring, 2001): 213-230; Diane Jonte-Pace, "Object Relations Theory, Mothering, and Religion: Toward a Feminist Psychology of Religion," *Horizons* 14, no. 2 (Fall, 1987): 310-327; Michael St. Clair, *Human Relationships and the Experience of God* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994).

[338] Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 34 (1953): 94.

> This transitional space is the realm not only of the imagination, but also of symbol, wherein as Winnicott implies, the emphasis is not so much on objects used, as it is on the process of using an object, a capacity, an ability. And as Winnicott sees so clearly, one's capacity to use transitional space will also determine whether one develops the ability to use symbols.[339]

Rich argues that the way in which one uses creativity and imagination in the transitional space is directly related to her use of symbols. Amy Belford Ulanov contends that, when conceptualized in terms of the space, our religion encourages us to ask how we experience God in our lives rather than whether there is a God:

> When we focus on the transitional space, our questions shift from being about the truth or the falsity of God to whether we experience God in a lively way that feels real to us or in a dead way that feels, for all its correct appearance, deadly, that is, as something pasted on what we feel forced to adopt lest something worse befall us . . . .Religion is relocated in this space in between subjectivity and objectivity, between our unconscious and conscious, between faith and fact.[340]

Following Ulanov, one's religious life is a space that facilitates creativity and imagination. Stephen Parker agrees, noting that Winnicott's concept of transitional phenomena helps one conceptualize religion as "a creative psychological process, part of the creative, adaptive responses humans can make to life and continues throughout life."[341] Similarly, Ana Maria Rizzuto emphasizes the significance of developing the capacity for creative imagination through religion and images of God. Our religious life can, therefore, not only provide us with capability to sustain tensions in the space between subjectivity and objectivity but also give us life-giving power. Treated as an opportunity for creativity and adaptability, it facilitates human beings' movement toward a healthier life.

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[339] Rich, "Grace and Imagination," 217.
[340] Ulanov, *Finding Space*, 18.
[341] Parker, "Winnicott's Object Relations Theory and the Work of the Holy Spirit," 290.

Second, Winnicott's concept of the transitional space also helps one redefine faith and human beings' relationship with God. William Meissner notes that faith "represents a realm in which the subjective and the objective interpenetrate."[342] Stephen Parker contends that faith can be "a genuinely creative response to life."[343] Winnicott's concepts bring such pictures of faith into sharper focus. For example, human relationship with God can be explained in terms of what Winnicott called "mirroring." Winnicott claims that infants' sense of self emerges from the "mirroring" eye contact between mother and infant. Parker notes that the Pentecostals' experience of "being gazed upon" is the parallel experience in the relationship between believers and God.[344] Likewise, Winnicott's theory that by "surviving the infant's destructive impulses"—that is, by surviving his illusion of omnipotence—the mother teaches the infant about reality outside the infant's subjective world can make a parallel with human beings coming to terms with God as wholly other. That is, God is truly God when God survives our fantasies about who God is. But just as the infant needs the holding space of illusion to develop the capacity to engage healthfully in objective reality, Parker points out that God cannot be real without our capacity for illusion and projection.[345]

Third, Winnicott's concept of the transitional space also influences our images of God. Rizzuto states that God is an imaginary transitional object. However, she contends that there is a fundamental difference between God and other transitional objects. While the child outgrows the significance of transitional objects, says Rizzuto, "God's meaning

[342] Meissner, *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience*,178.
[343] Parker, "Winnicott's Object Relations Theory and the Work of the Holy Spirit," 290.
[344] Ibid., 289.
[345] Ibid., 291.

becomes heightened" as one's self and capacity for imaginative creation develops.[346] Rizzuto contends that our notion of God should overcome the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity. God is, according to Rizzuto, "a psychically created object who is also 'found.'"[347]

Fourth, religious institutions and traditions can function as "the environment in which believers may discover the objects of the faith."[348] Rich argues that the ways and times in which objects of faith are introduced to believers determine whether they enjoy enriched symbolic life or get caught in a pattern of compliance.[349] Religious practices and traditions help one to experience the space of creativity and renewal. James William Jones notes:

> Encounters with the sacred allow entrance again and again into that transforming psychological space from which renewal and creativity emerge. Rituals,words, stories, and introspective disciplines, evoke those transitional psychological spaces, continually reverberating with the affects of past object relations, and pregnant with the possibility of future forms of intuition and transformation.[350]

Rich also contends that believers' individual experiences of using creativity and imagination in the transitional space influence the life of religious traditions.

Winnicott and Women's Resistance

Winnicott's view of motherhood receives mixed responses from different feminists. Some feminists critique him for taking an essentialist viewpoint toward women. For them, Winnicott's concept of mothering is "politically regressive; a myth used against women

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[346] Rizzuto, *The Birth of the Living God*, 179. Jones points out that Rizzuto fails to discuss how Winnicott emphasized human beings' continuing growth of holding the tension between subjectivity and objectivity beyond childhood. Jones, "The Relational Self,"127.
[347] Ibid., 87.
[348] Rich, "Grace and Imagination," 218.
[349] Ibid.
[350] James William Jones, "The Experience of the Holy: A Relational Psychoanalytic Analysis," *Pastoral Psychology* 50, no. 3 (January 2002): 153-164.

as both fantasy and blame" since it romanticizes motherhood and thus ignores the complexity of maternal desire.[351] Other feminists build their theoretical positions on the claim of women's relationality, which is supported by the object relations theories.[352] Diane Jonte-Pace argues that the implicit challenge of the object relations theories to the father-son relationship resonates with feminist celebration of women's experience of motherhood and relationality. Although I appreciate the feminist voices challenging or critically appropriating Winnicott's theory, my interest in the implications of his theory for the feminist account of women's experience is centered on the question of how his concepts aid or hinder one's understanding of women's resistance and complicity to oppressive power relations.

Maureen Mahoney and Barbara Yngvesson contend that feminist celebration of women's resistance should be accompanied by accounts of what motivates them to resist domination, and such accounts should be explained in terms of how the women experience power relations psychologically.[353] According to Mahoney and Yngvesson, any account of subordinates engaging with resistance is unsatisfying if it does not address how they experience power relations in their everyday life. In other words, a theory of women's motivation for resistance should explain how a subject's struggle with power

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[351] Anthony Elliot, *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 75. An example may be found in Nancy J. Chodorow and Susan Contratto, "The Fantasy of the Perfect Mother," in *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*, Nancy J. Chodorow (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 1989).
[352] Ruth Smith, "Feminism and the Moral Subject," in *Women's Consciousness, Women's Conscience: A Reader in Feminist Ethics*, eds. Barbara Hilkert Andolsen, Christine Gudorf, and Mary Pellauer (Minneapolis, MN: Winston, 1985); Jean Baker Miller, "Toward a New Psychology of Women," in *Women's Spirituality: Resources for Christian Development*, ed. Joann Wolski Conn (New York: Paulist, 1986); Carol Christ, "Why Women Need the Goddness," in *Womanspirit Rising: A Feminist Reader in Religion*, eds. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow (New York: Harper and Row, 1978); Coppelia Kahn, "The Hand that Rocks the Cradle: Recent Gender Theories and Their Implications," in *The [M]other Tongue: Essays in Feminist Psychoanalytic Interpretation*, eds. Shirley Garner, Claire Kahane, and Madelon Sprengnether (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).
[353] Maureen A. Mahoney and Barbara Yngvesson, "The Construction of Subjectivity and the Paradox of Resistance: Reintegrating Feminist Anthropology and Psychology," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 18, no. 1 (1992): 44-73.

relations "constructs her desires, thus enabling her active participation in either supporting or resisting relations of power."[354] In this sense, Mahoney and Yngvesson criticize the image of subject in Lacanian feminist accounts of subjectivity. As they articulate, Lacanian feminists share the following assumptions about subjectivity:

> (1) it is constructed by language; (2) language offers discourses of identity within which subjects may position themselves; (3) subjects are simultaneously positioned in multiple but intersecting discourses, so that identities are not unitary but rather contradictory and shifting; (4) there is no "true" self to which these identifications or subject positions correspond.[355]

According to Mahoney and Yngvesson, Judith Butler as a Lacanian feminist fails to provide a satisfying account of women's resistance due to her asocial conception of the subject. In other words, she does not address the relational basis for the constitution of contradictory identities.

Butler thus fails to explain why some people engage in playful subversion out of the awareness of contradictory identities while others engage only in reproducing conventional forms of identity. Butler's theoretical perspective does not provide an answer to the question, "If subordination is understood to be the condition of possibility for the subject, then how are agency and resistance to subordination possible?"[356] Mahoney and Yngvesson argue that Butler's perspective of the agents "who playfully manipulate the identities provided by discourse, moving between them, satirizing, and having fun in ways that are disruptive of conventional notions of fixed gender identity" cannot explain the construction of creative agency or motivation for change."[357] That is, Butler cannot help us describe how one's desire or preference is constructed, and

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[354] Ibid., 45.
[355] Ibid., 47.
[356] Amy Allen, "Dependency, Subordination, and Recognition: On Judith Butler's Theory of Subjection," *Continental Philosophy Review* 38, nos. 3–4 (2006): 202.
[357] Ibid.

Mahoney and Yngvesson argue that a theoretical account of women's resistance should address how women participate in the construction of their subjectivity rather than describing their agency as a product or effect of power relations. Thus they pursue a theoretical basis for describing an active subject making meaning in and through relational contexts. This framing of the subject positions them to criticize both the notion of subject as a free agent and as a product of discourses or power relations.

Mahoney and Yngvesson turn to Winnicott's theory because they believe that a theoretical account of one's motivation for change should be based on the account of how children construct their capacity for resistance by struggling with power in unequal relationships with parents. Mahoney and Yngvesson delineate the difference between a Lacanian view of subjectivity and the Winnicottian approach, both of which view subjectivity as constructed within a relational framework:

> Our relational analysis of the emergence of subjectivity departs from the Lacanian view in three ways: first, we see the infant as an active participant in the construction of her own subjectivity; second, we argue that desire and motivation are constructed in ongoing social relationships suffused by power relations (not just in language); and third, the negotiation of meaning in these relationships allows the ground for creativity as well as conformity, for accepting the traditional and for breaking away from it.[358]

Mahoney and Yngvesson first turn to Daniel Stern's developmental theory, focusing on their conception of the infant as "an active participant in the construction of her subjectivity."[359] In classical psychoanalytic theories, an infant begins her life in a state of fusion with her mother, and her developmental task is differentiation and individuation. This psychological separation from the caregiver is achieved through frustration or anxiety. Mahoney and Yngvesson pay attention to Stern's theory because

[358] Mahoney and Yngvesson, "Construction of Subjectivity," 49.
[359] Ibid., 46.

he presents infants as being "far more integrated (aware of their physical cohesion) and neurologically more sophisticated" than they are perceived in classical psychoanalytic theories.[360] An infant is also motivated to grasp her world both affectively and cognitively. Stern expands Jean Piaget's developmental theory by focusing on children's cognitive development and paying attention to the affective dimension of the interaction between child and care-giver. In Stern's theory, the developmental task of infants is not separation or individuation but engagement in relationship.[361] In Stern's approach, an infant first depends on her caregiver who "provides the semantic element, all by herself at first, and continues to bring the infant's behavior into her framework of created meanings" in the development of a relationship.[362] This phase is followed by a mutual process in which an infant "takes an active role in initiating and pursuing specific forms of exchange with the caregiving others."[363] That is, a child participates in the mutual creation of "the framework of meanings."[364] Mahoney and Yngvesson emphasize that, in Stern's theory, a child engages in active meaning-making in her relationships:

> This child is not simply a passive recipient of cultural meanings nor driven by "need-deficits" but becomes engaged in a particular system of cultural meanings because of an active proclivity to make sense of the world and because she is dependent in this quest on caregiving other(s) who are affectively engaged both with the child and with the cultural meaning system in which they live.[365]

Stern's view of an infant provides an account of how a subject makes meaning in relationships and participates in the cultural formation of her agency. Mahoney and

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[360] Ibid., 50.
[361] Ibid., 50.
[362] Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, 134; Mahoney and Yngvesson, "The Construction of Subjectivity," 52.
[363] Ibid.
[364] Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, 134; Ibid.
[365] Ibid.

Yngvesson argue that the desire and capacity to make more things happen emerge from the cultural construction of needs through the infant-caregiver relationships.

According to Mahoney and Yngvesson, this view of the child as an active meaning-maker, socially supported, provides an account of the social construction of agency but does not provide an account of why one engages with resistance. Mahoney and Yngvesson therefore turn to Winnicott's account of how a person's creative agency emerges as she struggles to maintain separate but interrelated subjective and objective realities. In Winnicott's theory, they discover a model of subjectivity that is beyond "the dichotomy of a determined or a determining subject."[366] Acknowledging the feminist critique of Winnicott's view of motherhood (that "women are instinctively attuned to their own biological offspring") as mystified and essentialist, Mahoney and Yngvesson contend it is nonetheless important to pay attention to Winnicott's view of the constitution of the self "as simultaneously separate and connected."[367] In Winnicott's notion of transitional space, Mahoney and Yngvesson find an intersubjective concept of creative agency. They focus on the in-between space, "the territory that derives neither from subject nor object but is at the same time 'me' and 'not me' and an 'intermediate area of experience, unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality.'" In Winnocott's view, relationships bring "the blurring and shifting of boundaries" and it is in such an ambiguous space of blurred boundaries that "play, creativity, and agency (understood as the invention of new meanings)" are found.[368] Like the child who invents a transitional object that is also there to be found, one's agency belongs neither to the self nor to society but to both simultaneously. Thus, in Winnicott's

[366] Ibid., 46.
[367] Ibid., 59.
[368] Ibid., 60.

theory, Mahoney and Yngvesson find "a theory of agency in which dependence is a condition of independence and inequality is a condition of resistance."[369] Jessica Benjamin emphasizes this aspect of Winnicott's theory: the infant's autonomy and creative agency emerge from the recognition of the powerful other. Engaging in Benjamin's expansion of Winnicott's work, Mahoney and Yngvesson highlight the significance of the paradox of recognition in their account of women's resistance.[370] In the second year of life, according to Benjamin, children develop a sense of autonomy when they receive the mother's recognition and approval for action. That is, the infant's desire for control and the development of her sense of self and agency emerge from another person's recognition: "It is in this recognition of agency by an other who is powerful (cannot be destroyed) that the intrapsychic experience of potency and desire is constituted."[371] Benjamin further explains her concept of the paradox of recognition:

> The paradox of recognition, the need for acknowledgement that turns us back to dependence on the other, brings about a struggle for control. This struggle can result in the realization that if we fully negate the other, that if we assume complete control over him and destroy his identity and will, then we have negated ourselves as well. For there is no one there to recognize us, no one there for us to desire.[372]

According to Benjamin, one's agency and desire for control do not emerge without the recognizing other. One cannot be autonomous without being related. At the same time, one cannot be connected to others without being autonomous.

Benjamin pays attention to how one may fail to hold such paradox of dependence and independence, and in that failure splits them, and falls into one or the other. She contends that such "defensive splitting"—thus idealizing one and devaluing the other—is

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[369] Ibid., 61.
[370] Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon, 1987).
[371] Mahoney and Yngvesson, "Construction of Subjectivity," 60.
[372] Benjamin, *Bonds of Love*, 39.

found in all forms of domination,[373] and she uses as an example how girls choose dependence in being the object of men's desire. She argues that Western ideologies of gender are based on such splitting, identifying the male with independence and domination and the female with dependence and submission. Benjamin also hints at the possibility of a mutual or equal relationship and the need to pursue a capacity for mutual recognition that overcomes complete autonomy or dependence.

Mahoney and Yngvesson believe that Benjamin needs to delineate more fully "the broader context of structural inequality in which interpersonal interactions inevitably take place."[374] They argue that in an equal relationship of mutual recognition, one can find not only "the psychological ground for the experience of empowerment" and the possibility for resistance in experiences of mutual relationship.[375] Borrowing Benjamin's concept of resistance based on her view of an agent who constructs her own subjectivity by actively negotiating (making meaning) in relationships, one can demonstrate how an intersubjective notion of subjectivity challenges Butler to include a vision of mutual recognition in her account of subjectivity, in order to discuss the subject's potential for resistance beyond accidental subversion.

In sum, Mahoney and Yngvesson's evaluation of Winnicott's contribution to the discussion of women's ambivalent subjectivity articulates the following helpful points: First, they show that women engage with active meaning-making in relationships. Second, they address the ways women relate to power relations by connecting Winnicott's notion of the third space to the ways in which women use creative agency. Third, they address the emergence of women's resistance from their psychological engagement with power

[373] Benjamin, *Bonds of Love*, 50; Mahoney and Yngvesson, "Construction of Subjectivity," 60.
[374] Mahoney and Yngvesson, "Construction of Subjectivity," 60.
[375] Ibid.

relations. Fourth, through Benjamin's concept of the paradox of recognition, they argue that women's resistance emerges from dependence on and the recognition of powerful others. They highlight that women's relationality and autonomy are interrelated. Along with Benjamin, they help redefine women's resistance as an act or orientation that emerges not from separation or disconnection but because of embeddedness. In this way, Mahoney and Yngvesson provide a paradoxical notion of resistance.

As far as it goes, this notion explains the interviewed women's ambivalent subjectivity well. The idea that the subject is not produced by power relations but is actively engaged in making meaning within complex relationships is significant for interpreting the women's resistance and complicity. It tells us that what is revealed by the complex ways women struggle with power relations should not be interpreted only in terms of internalized oppression or symptoms of victimization. Rather, women's desire and motivation for resistance against and complicity with given identities and roles are constructed in their struggle with their marginalized social and political status and with the tensions between their desire for independence and their yearning for relatedness. As Winnicott's metaphor of the seashore as a "simultaneously distinct but every-changing border" signifies, women's subjectivity constantly oscillates between me and not-me and between separateness and relatedness, negotiating meanings in social relationships.[376] These negotiations of meaning in relationships provide the ground for creative agency or conformity. Moving beyond the choice between agency and conformity, the process of negotiation and oscillation allows women to develop the capacity for mutual recognition. When women fail to hold the tensions that derive from the paradox of recognition, they not only lose that opportunity for mutual recognition but often choose complicity instead

[376] Ibid., 59.

of resistance. Although it is complicated to determine in what ways the individual women I interviewed are engaging with resistance or complicity, their narratives demonstrate the ways in which they negotiate identities and meanings dealing with the numerous tensions between self and others and among different expectations and responsibilities.

Now I move to Robert Kegan's developmental theory, which engages with Winnicott's theory along with others.[377] I choose to engage with Kegan because his theory can supplement Winnicott's concepts with his point of view that one needs to reach certain developmental maturity to respond to the demands of today's world for human life. In other words, he delineates the ways people engage with the transitional space in more complicated ways as they grow. Engaging with Kegan's theory, I argue that an adequate understanding of women's subjectivity demands an account of how they develop their ability to negotiate and creatively imagine. This is important for a religious educator since the task of education is not just encouraging the learners' autonomy and independence, but also helping them develop their capacity to hold tensions in the complex in-between spaces.

Robert Kegan

Drawing on Robert Kegan's developmental theory, I argue in this part of the chapter that people can develop their capacity for mutual recognition and for sustaining the space between separatedness and relatedness with growing levels of complexity. Under the influence of Jean Piaget, Kegan views human beings as active meaning-makers. He also

[377] In his book *The Evolving Self*, Kegan engages with several theories including Piaget's cognitive development theory, Erikson's psychosocial theory, Kohlberg's moral development theory, and Winnicott's concept of holding environment, and Perry's concept of adult meaning-making. Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

envisions persons as an ongoing movement or dance. For him, the environments that individuals encounter are dynamic, not static, and a person's self-evolution and social forces are not separate. Similarly to Winnicott, Kegan contends that human beings live in the tension between a need for autonomy and a need for relatedness. In other words, they negotiate meaning between their desire for inclusion and their need for differentiation. A significant difference between Winnicott and Kegan lies in their views of the importance of the early formative years. While Winnicott views the first few years of life as critical for the formation of the self, Kegan does not believe one's formation of object relations in early life is fundamentally different from the meaning-making activities of the rest of life:

> While early infancy has great importance from a neo-Piagetian view, it is not in its most fundamental respect qualitatively different from any other moment of the lifespan. What is taken as fundamental is the activity of meaning-constitutive evolution. It is true that infancy marks the beginning in the history of this activity . . . . [T]he distinctive features of infancy it is suggested, are to be understood in the context of that activity which is the person's fate throughout his or her life. The recurrence of these distinctive features in new forms later on in development are not understood as later manifestations of infancy issues but contemporary manifestations of meaning-making, just as the issues of infancy are, in their own time, contemporary manifestations of meaning-making.[378]

Human development is a lifelong process, with alternating periods of belonging and differentiation. This process is called "the evolution of self," which entails movement between "decentration" (the loss of an old center) and "recentration" (the recovery of a new center). For Kegan, decentration brings relatedness, not disconnectedness. A healthy development is achieved when a self balances both genuine independence or differentiation and genuine connection to others. Kegan notes, "I suggest that human

[378] Kegan, *Evolving Self*, 77–78.

development involves a succession of renegotiated balances, or 'biologics,' which come to organize the experience of the individual in qualitatively different ways."[379]

A person's self moves through different "evolutionary truces" in an effort to maintain "a balance between what is taken as subject or self and what is taken as object or other."[380] Kegan points out that the process of differentiation cannot occur if the self experiences inseparableness from objects at each phase of growth, an inseparableness he calls "embeddedness." Kegan states, "Growth always involves a process of differentiation, of emergence from embeddedness.[381] He also notes:

> There is never "just an individual"; the very word refers only to that side of the person that is individuated, the side of differentiation. There is always, as well, the side that is embedded; the person is more than an individual. "Individual" names a current state of evolution, a state, a maintained balance or defended diffentiation; "person" refers to the fundamental notion of evolution itself, and is as much about that side of the self embedded in the life-surrounded as that which is individuated from it. The person is an "individual" and an "embeddual."[382]

As the self achieves a qualitative differentiation from a state of embeddness and finds a more complex object of dependence, the development of meaning-making occurs.

Kegan extends Winnicott's concept of the holding environment for the infants to refer to the psychosocial environments that help us be embedded and separate throughout our lives:

> In Winnicott's view the "holding environment" is an idea intrinsic to infancy. In my view it is an idea intrinsic to evolution. There is not one holding environment early in life but a succession of holding environments, a life history of cultures of embeddedness. They are the psychosocial environments which hold us (with which we are fused) and which let go of us (from which we differentiate).[383]

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[379] Ibid., 81.
[380] Ibid.
[381] Ibid., 31.
[382] Ibid., 116.
[383] Ibid.

As a person develops, her holding environments and her experience of embeddenesss should change. Human development is not a movement from dependence to autonomy but to a more complex experience of dependency. As I mentioned above, Winnicott contends that the infant moves from absolute dependence to relative dependence. According to Kegan, one moves from a state of embeddedness to a more complex state of embeddedness through separation from lower-level embeddeness.

In Kegan's developmental scheme, six "truces of evolution" or stages of subject-object relation are found. All human beings begin with incorporative self, which is characterized by the illusory merger of the infant with his mother. The child moves to the impulsive stage, in which he begins realizing the separatedness of objects from his subjective world. However, the child cannot yet distinguish his own perceptions from reality. He is still embedded in his own impulses. As the child moves to the "imperial" stage, a sense of self emerges, but the child's needs and his self-concept are not distinguished. He faces the world saying: "Instead of seeing my needs I see through my needs."[384] During the teenage years and adulthood, people arrive at the "interpersonal" stage where one's self is not differentiated from one's relationship with others or others' expectations. Kegan notes that many people remain at this stage throughout their life, while some people move on to form an "institutional" self. This is a stage of self-authorship, self-dependence, and self-ownership. In the institutional balance, a person constructs her own sense of self apart from her relationships. Instead of being in her relationships, she has and regulates them. Here one's sense of self is established in terms of institutionalized values. While the interpersonal self experiences the ambivalence of relational conflicts "one side at a time," the institutional self can deal with both sides at

[384] Ibid., 91.

the same time. Kegan claims that most adults stop their development in this stage, while a small number of people reach the "inter-individual" stage, the most complex balance between subjectivity and objectivity. In inter-individuality, one respects the distinctiveness of individuals while maintaining relationships with others.

In his later book *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, Kegan focuses on the third, fourth, and fifth truces, which he calls "orders of consciousness."[385] He argues that the mental demands of contemporary culture are beyond the abilities of most people. That is, while the modern demand for the self-authorship with critical consciousness (stage 4) is already hard to meet, they are also under the demand of postmodern demand of inter-relational consciousness (stage 5). He contends that a majority of U.S. adults remain in stage 3, in which they rely on external authority in understanding the self and world. The desired normative stage of contemporary society is stage 4, which is reached by a notable minority of adults. The highest level, stage 5, is reached (or perhaps even only reached for) by a very small minority and is, according to Kegan, therefore quite "extra-curricular" and nearly irrelevant. Kegan's claim is that this quest for stage 5 is unnecessary and unhelpful to the majority of the population—and nearly all college students, who are mostly struggling to move beyond stage 3.

[385] Robert Kegan, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

Third Space and Women's Subordination and Resistance

I now return to the experience of subordination and resistance in the narratives of the women in my study. I interpret their narratives in light of Winnicott's concept of the third space and the theories of Benjamin and Kegan.

The interviewees constantly struggle with different kinds of tension. They engage with the tension between "me" and "not-me," trying to figure out their true identities as they respond to the identities imposed by the mainstream white culture, the Korean American community, their church communities, and their families. As I discussed in Chapter 1, Korean American women are treated in society with negative stereotypes and images of passivity and submissiveness. They constantly receive devaluing messages about who they are—marginalized, minority, and invisible women. Under the influence of neo-Confucian ideology, the women are expected to sacrifice for their family, and such expectation is intensified when combined with sexist theological teachings and interpretation of the Bible prevalent in their church communities. Such identities work for the women as an "ongoing psychological force" blurring the boundary between subjectivity and objectivity.[386] Very often, a woman finds it hard to distinguish which is her authentic self and which is self-imposed and internalized through different stereotypes of Korean American women.

The women in my study also struggle with the tension between being related and being apart. Their relationships with family and others in Korean American society and church communities are very important. As we saw in Chapter 1, the interviewed women described their identities as dependent on their relationships with spouses and family. At

[386] Mahoney and Yngvesson, "Construction of Subjectivity," 64.

the same time, they also need to secure their own psychological space apart from the relationships in order to find their identity. As Winnicott and Kegan both show in their theories, the women's task is to be dependent and independent simultaneously.

As we saw in Chapter 1, the women in my study constantly negotiate their identities. They realize that identity is fluid and ambiguous. They negotiate meanings and identity by engaging with the intersubjective space that Winnicott calls transitional space and that English and others call third:

> Third space is where we negotiate identity and become neither this nor that but our own. Third is used to denote the place where negotiation takes place, where identity is constructed and re-constructed, where life in all its ambiguity is played out."[387]

Women like Young-Ja and Mi-Young set up a third space between their husbands and themselves and hold the tension by interpreting their hardship in light of narratives that are sustaining. For the women in my study, and in accordance with Mahoney and Yngvesson's view, the third space as an intersubjective territory is essential for their sustenance and resistance.

However, the presence of third space in the women's narratives does not mean that women necessarily resist their cultural and domestic environments. We saw several moments in which the women appeared to show defensive splitting of the self. Young-Ja's anxious attempt to look good in front of her husband might be an example of such splitting. Here, the notion of self-splitting is helpful. Whereas the term "ambivalent subjectivity" is elsewhere appropriate for describing the women's creative holding of the tension, "fragmented subjectivity" is relevant to describe these instances of apparent complicity with oppressive forces.

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[387] Leona M. English, "Feminist Identities: Negotiations in the Third Space," *Feminist Theology* 13, no. 1 (2004): 100.

Winnicott's notion of "false self" is additionally helpful. With awareness that she would risk too much—her status and relationships—by overtly resisting patriarchal power, a woman may act from a false self in their relationships with others while hiding her true self. Some of the women's narratives show their developing compliant behaviors and attitudes in response to the demands of the environment and a "false self" that defends their true self. For example, Young-Ja shows a constant failure to hold the tension between herself and her husband. She also shows the blurring of boundaries between herself and the identity imposed upon her by the ideological and moral system. Although Winnicott would not say that the development of false self is equal to giving up on being one's true self, he believes that some people's use of the false self is pathological.

In Young-Ja's case, one could say that her use of false self is very similar to the feminist theological notion of sloth discussed in Chapter 3. It is, however, also her strategy for survival and protection of the true self. It is also part of a process that, by ensuring her survival, holds open the door for future independence. At the same time, her narrative reveals that she hardly finds chances or courage to find her true self.

While the interviewees showed several instances of fragmented selfhood, such failure of resistance should be distinguished from their strategic use of their subordinated positions, a tactic I would say is similar to what Winnicott means by playfulness. In other words, as we discussed in Chapter 1, some women gain certain material or symbolic rewards through reclaiming their subordination. In such cases, their seemingly fragmented self or submissive attitude becomes their means of using ambivalent subjectivity. The women in my study show that there can be a difference between

defensive and strategic splitting. That is, an act that looks like defensive splitting or fragmented subjectivity can actually be the sign of the women's ability for holding tension. Although it is not always possible for a researcher to discern what qualifies as resistance, I would argue that women's playful use of their status of subordination can be regarded as, in Mahoney and Yngvesson's terms, creative agency or resistance.

As is probably evident, I intend my reading of these women's subjectivity to be ambivalent. I have tried to catch moments that suggest both fragmented self and ambivalent subjectivity without in any way judging their worth or categorizing them with finality. In the example of Young-Ja, for example, I see both subordination and resisting acts. Although filled with failure of resistance, her narrative still shows not only her ability for overt resistance but also her potential to claim her true self and her desire for transcendence. In this sense, Young-Ja serves as a model for Winnicott's view that the self is always divided into true self and false self. I would further argue that Benjamin's notion of paradox of subordination and resistance, an expansion of Winnicott's theory, is more helpful for discussing the complicated and paradoxical dynamic that is the constant of Young-Ja's everyday experience .

In the interviewees' narratives, we see how women's religious belief and practice is used to sustain women's struggle with power relations and to help them resist oppressive forces. The interviewees like Young-Ja, Mi-Young, and Sun-Hee show what Stephen Parker means by religion as "a creative psychological process, part of the creative, adaptive responses human can make to life."[388] These women's religious belief and practice give them the strength to endure and the creative capability to elicit change. As William Rich and James William Jones indicated above, the interviewees'

[388] Parker, "Winnicott's Object Relations Theory," 290.

engagement with religious practices and institutions provide them with a transformative space of creativity and renewal.

Drawing on Kegan's theory, I argue that the way a woman engages with transitional space evolves. Although women like Young-Ja show their potential for holding the tensions in their life, they would benefit from developing their capacity for creative holding. Although the signs of such development may not be easy to catch, Kegan teaches us that one should develop the ability to playfully engage with the intersubjective space, leading to growing awareness of and greater complexity of one's relationships.

As we saw above, Mahoney and Yngvesson bring Stern's observation of the infant as active meaning-makers to account for the motivation of women's resistance. Women's resistance and complicity is their active meaning-making in relationships. The interviewed women particularly demonstrate their meaning-making capacities in their relationship with God. Winnicott's notion of the transitional space functions as a space between the self and God and between the self and others for these women. In this space, the women experience the numinous or the ultimate. Their relationship with God provides them with strong motivation to be related to others while critically distancing themselves from debilitating aspects of relationships. Their relationship with God also helps these women find the numinous in the space between themselves and others. By viewing her husband as the sacred image of God, for example, Young-Ja can survive her marriage.

In Winnocott's view, relationships bring "the blurring and shifting of boundaries" and from such territory one's creativity emerges. It is significant that Winnicott and Stern

conceptualize the developmental task of the infant not as separation or disconnection but as a growing ability to engage in relationship. As Carol Gilligan points out, women's developmental progress should not be measured by their ability for autonomy. In order not to confuse relationality as immersion in relationship, Winnicott's view that growth comes with the ability for holding one's subjective world and objective reality separate and interconnected at the same time is helpful. The women in my study show that such a task is essential in their struggle to construct their subjectivity.

As Benjamin points out, the power of recognition is critical for Korean American women's experience of submission and resistance. Their invisible and marginalized social status is paradoxically the product of the recognition of powerful others. In other words, the interviewed women remain in a marginalized and minority position through the stereotypes and propaganda of racism and ethnic hierarchy. Meanwhile, their church communities reinforce a gender identity produced by the neo-Confucianistic moral frame. Yet, paradoxically, from the recognition of the systems at work, women's agency emerges. From embeddedness in oppression, they find motivation for self-discovery. For example, religious teachings that enforce women's submission work as the means for their resistance against unequal marriage. The women in my study embody the paradox of subordination and resistance.

Yet the women in my study also show their yearning to gain positive recognition from their society, the church community, and their family. One notable observation is that the women in my study are more playful when they are with other women. Whereas they use some humor and wit in describing their struggles when in conversation with other women, the transcripts of their interviews are full of difficult struggles and

defensive splitting. Setting aside the tendency of interviewees to take a more serious tone while being recorded, the difference in how and what the women relate to others may underscore their need for other women who understand their circumstance and who can give them positive recognition.

Evaluating Psychological Accounts

In this section, I discuss the contributions and limitations of the theories of Winnicott and Benjamin as ground for a theological anthropology of women's resistance. I continue engaging in a multidisciplinary search for a theological anthropology of women's subjectivity. In light of the narratives of the interviewed women, the theories of Butler and Bhabha, and feminist theologians' perspectives, I find the psychological accounts of Winnicott and Benjamin helpful in the following ways.

First, Winnicott's theory is valuable primarily because it presents a helpful image of resistance in his concept of potential space. He argues that resistance is not made possible by separating from relationships or by ceasing to be embedded in relationality but by holding the tensions between separatedness and embeddedness in the in-between space. With this concept, I can discuss Korean American women's ambivalent subjectivity as a potential for resistance. As mentioned, interplay of connectedness and separatedness is an important aspect of the interviewed women's subjectivity. Using Winnicott's theoretical framework, I determined that the inconsistencies and contradictions the women show can be understood as a sign of their creative agency rather than mere confusion. Their subjectivity shows the complex interplay of relatedness and independence, and the concept of the third space captures such interplay. From Winnicott and Kegan, we have found that one's developmental task, especially in terms

of engaging with resistance, is not to achieve separation and autonomy per se but to complexify our capacity to hold the tension between separatedness and embeddedness.

Second, Winnicott provides a helpful account of human capability for transcendence. I argued earlier that a religious educator needs a language adequate to the task of describing human potential for transcendence while staying alert to the possibility of making essentializing claims about human nature. As discussed in Chapter 2, Butler and Bhabha would dispute any universalizing claim of human capability for transcendence. I, however, also argued that they do not deny the possibility of human transcendence. Feminist theologians' valorization of women's resistance is in fact based on their belief in women's potential for transcendence.

Winnicott opens up the possibility of discussing women's capability for transcendence with his theoretical account of in-between space. That is, his transitional, or third, space is a place of creative imagination and symbolizing, which makes it possible for persons to transcend their current situation. By engaging with the in-between space and liminal experience, one transcends the binaries between subjective world and objective reality. What is distinctive about Winnicott's view of human capability for transcendence is his emphasis on the role of a caring environment for the emergence of human capability for transcendence. In his view, one's relationship with others plays a critical role in the construction of one's subjectivity. Benjamin's discussion of role played by the recognition of powerful others intensifies Winnicott's importance. This relational framework, I think, is helpful for describing women's subjectivity.

Third, Mahoney and Yngvesson remind us that it is important to affirm the notion of the subject as an active meaning-maker in order to discuss the possibility of resistance.

I argued in previous chapters that the interviewed women do not just exist as the product of the power of social and discursive relations but participate in constructing their subjectivity. They construct their identities out of their constant negotiations with different cultural influences and expectations. Bhabha's concept of the interstitial third space describes a territory where such negotiations and identity construction can take place. However, Bhabha's passive image of the subject is not helpful for constructing a theological anthropology of resistance. As I argued earlier, we need an account of the subject as an active meaning-maker.

For a psychological account of women as active meaning-makers, I turned to Mahoney and Yngvesson's discussion. They argue that the infant develops creative agency out of its struggle with unequal relationship between itself and the mother. Drawing on Stern's developmental theory, they emphasize one's active meaning-making as the critical condition for resistance. By challenging poststructuralist and constructivist perspectives on human subjectivity, which view the human subject as a product or effect of power relations, Mahoney and Yngvesson help me affirm the importance of women's meaning-making.

Fourth, Mahoney and Yngvesson help me find a useable account of motivation for resistance, based on the theories of Winnicott and Benjamin. As we saw in Chapter 2, neither Butler's nor Bhabha's account is here sufficient. As Mahoney and Yngvesson point out, feminist theological accounts of women's subordination and resistance demand psychological theories for the motivation of women's resistance. Winnicott provides a foundational theoretical ground for this discussion, and Benjamin moves it forward by describing creative agency and resistance emerging from the recognition of powerful

others. One notes here again that intersubjectivity is an important motivation for resistance in the perspectives of both Winnicott and Benjamin.

Fifth, Winnicott helpfully sketches the relation between human transcendentality and historicity and between historical embeddedness and resistance. Given the paradoxical notion of subordination and resistance shared by Butler and Bhabha, in which the resistance of the marginalized and the subalterns arises from their situatedness, what does Winnicott add? In the theories of Winnicott and Benjamin, we find psychological accounts of a paradoxical notion of the relation between subordination and resistance in which the movement of the self is toward ever more complex relationality. This holding of tension between dependence and embeddedness holds true in the cases of the interviewed women.

Sixth, Winnicott and Benjamin provide a normative view of the authentic self. As I proposed in Chapter 2, religious educators need a normative vision of self to develop a theological anthropology that simultaneously attends to the issue of difference. I argued that the conception of the self suggested by Butler and Bhabha rejects the notion of authentic self as they believe that the authenticity of the self is contingent on discursive and historical contexts. In Chapter 3, we found that feminist theologians adhere to notion of true self, especially in their discussions of women's sin, and they remind us that a normative image of true self is essential for an account of women's resistance against sexism.

Here, I will point out that a normative image of true self is not found in Winnicott's term "true self" but in his notion of healthy living. For him, a healthy living is characterized by spontaneity, a sense of integrity, creativity, and the ability to

experience and express aliveness. One cannot consider Winnicott's notion of true self as a normative image for authentic self because he contends that it is not necessarily healthy to always reveal one's true self. Indeed, there is a need for one's false self to protect the true self, as the women in my study, who cannot reveal their true self often, plainly demonstrate. Yet the combination of true self and false self we find in their narratives should not lead us to believe that they are not showing authentic self. Here it is more helpful to discuss Winnicott's notion of healthy living, which refers to the women's capability for creatively holding the tensions in the interplay of connectedness and separatedness.

Seventh, Benjamin's psychological account of women's fragmented self and her notion of the defensive splitting of the self provides a helpful way to discuss women's failure to engage with resistance. From a slightly different angle, Winnicott's concept of false self helps one discuss women's strategic use of subordinated positions. I argue that women's seemingly fragmented self should be discussed in terms of two possibilities: self-loss and reliance on false self. In this sense, feminist theologies of sin should be complemented with Winnicott's notion of false self.

I also find some limitations in the theories of Winnicott and Benjamin. First, they lack attention to the societal dimension of resistance. As Mahoney and Yngvesson argue, a theory of resistance requires an account of how the subject builds a desire for resistance out of her struggle with power relations. Winnicott's account of the subject's encounter with unequal relationships does not attend to social systems, and his theory also fails to persuasively demonstrate how general social relations influence the constitution of the self and interpersonal relations. Anthony Elliott addresses this point too:

> Winnicott's theory refers to, but ultimately fails to theorize, the role of general social relations in the constitution of the self. That is to say, Winnicott's work lacks a critical account of social structure as shaping the self and interpersonal relations. In this connection, a number of questions can be raised. How is the mother/infant relation mediated by contemporary social conditions? In what ways have recent social, cultural, political and technological transformations affected self and self-identity? And how might the increasingly informationalized and globalized framework of modern social processes affect the transitional realm in which culture is embedded?[389]

Benjamin does provide insights into issues of power, but her theoretical viewpoint fails to pay sufficient attention to broad systemic issues or to provide a sociopolitical analysis of power relations, as Mahoney and Yngvesson point out. At this point, feminist theologies of sin and Butler's account of how a subject may be attached to sin are helpful in terms of considering the influence of social systems on a person's self.

The second significant limitation of Winnicott's theory—and this one is a strength as well as a limitation—is the opening he creates for discussing the religious dimension of resistance. As I mentioned above, his concepts of third space and transitional phenomena can provide a conceptual ground for religious and theological interpretations of human subjectivity. At the same time, however, he does not provide such languages. Two observations follow. First, the ineffable realm of human subjectivity emerging from the third space should be supplemented with some religious or theological languages of human beings as mystery. Although Winnicott discusses the paradox between historicity and transcendentality, a useable account of the paradox of submission and resistance, and of women's resistance, demands a theological language that he does not provide. Second, women's relationship with God is not explicitly discussed in Winnicott's theory. As we saw in Chapter 1, the submission and resistance exhibited by the women in my study are greatly influenced by their religious belief and faith. Although Winnicott's theory has

[389] Elliott, *Psychoanalytic Theory: An Introduction*, 75.

great theological implication, he himself does not discuss the theological dimension of women's resistance. My observations suggest that both the women in my study and religious educators at large would benefit from theories that consider spiritual experience and God's grace as important motivations for transcendence and resistance.

A third general limitation of Winnicott's work, and in this case of Benjamin's too, is the failure to provide helpful accounts of the unconscious passion found in women's subordination and resistance. I argued in the previous chapters that one significant aspect of women's subjectivity is their strong attachment to oppression. Although they do not employ the concept of unconscious passion, feminist theologies of sin do attend to how women participate in oppressive system with agency. I think powerful adherence to the system has unconscious dimension as well as conscious and strategic dimensions. While we can discuss the paradoxical emergence of resistance out of embeddedness based on Winnicott and Benjamin, their theories are inadequate to a full account of women's active participation in oppressive system.

Fourth, as I discussed above, Winnicott and Kegan do not provide an image of women's constant oscillation between historicity and transcendentality, even though their notion of human beings as beings of becoming is very helpful. But an image of oscillation is significant, even necessary, for understanding women's seemingly inconsistent or contradictory behaviors or attitudes. It also helps describe women's fluid self. Although Kegan's model provides ground for discussing ways women try to balance independence and dependence and his proposed stages of self-development are based on a dynamic vision of the self and are valuable, I argue that each stage still looks static. Carol Lakey Hess attempts to address this gap by attending to how women show agency

and self-sacrifice differently depending on whether they belong to Keegan's interpersonal stage or institutional stage.[390] Nonetheless, Kegan's model does not capture how women constantly negotiate meanings in their struggle to keep relationships separate and connected simultaneously. The following excerpt of Ai Ra Kim's interview of Ok-Hee, a forty-nine-year-old Korean American woman, is a good example of such constant negotiation of gender identity and the nature of her relationship:

> To tell you the truth, I make much more money than this man [pointing to her husband, who was sitting next to her during the interview—she had told him to come along]; therefore, I try hard to avoid any overtime in order to reduce my income. Sometimes, I am very sorry for my colleagues because I always avoid overtime work. You know, hospital work needs nurses all the time. There are lots of overtime opportunities. Often, overtime is mandatory because we are short-handed. My basic salary exceeds his. If I do overtime, my income will be too much—compared to his—and so, when overtime work falls on me, I just try so hard to find other nurses to cover my overtime assignments. You know, it is awfully hard to avoid the needs of the hospital, but by reducing my income, I think, my husband can keep his ego and male superiority. Gee, it is hard to make myself lower than my husband all the time. But, I still believe that women are much superior. I am sure God made women much superior to men. Don't you know that God made women out of Adam's rib? It means that God made men as tests or practice before He made women. God recognized His mistake, so in his next effort He made woman perfect. But I think God cares for order. In order to keep the world in order, God put women under men as God rules the whole world, but it is through women that God perfects men. I think women should be lower than men for the sake of peace and order in the family, even though they are much superior to men.[391]

Ok-Hee reveals her ambiguous feeling between her sense of responsibility as a good wife, who does not hurt her husband's male ego, and her refusal to wholly accept male superiority. Here we see a woman who looks constrained by her relationships, but who also shows that she has her own voice and the capacity to distance herself from those relationships, even perhaps to move between the interpersonal and institutional stages that Kegan treats separately.

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[390] Hess, *Caretakers of Our Common House*.
[391] Ai Ra Kim, *Women Struggling for a New Life*, 94.

One way of addressing the limitation of Kegan's stages is to point out the incongruence between cognitive developmental stages and personality developmental stages. Stephen Soldz notes, "[E]ven though some persons are capable of formal operational thinking in certain circumscribed areas, they may not have achieved the institutional level of personality functioning (autonomy, self-esteem, and identity) essential to functioning in other areas."[392] These points lead us to demand an account of human subjectivity that can capture all of the complexity in the subject's ongoing struggle between embeddedness and resistance.

Considering these strengths and limitations of the theories of Winnicott, Benjamin, and Kegan, I argue that a theological language is required to discuss the depth and nuance of women's experience of engaging with the third space. I thus turn to a theological anthropology as a conversation partner in next chapter.

[392] Stephen Soldz, "The Construction of Meaning: Kegan, Piaget, and Psychoanalysis," *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 56.

Chapter 5

Rahner and Third Space

My last conversation partner in this dissertation is Karl Rahner. Why Rahner? The reader might find it regressive to turn to a theologian deeply influenced by modern philosophical frameworks after examining the notions of subjectivity presented by poststructuralist and postcolonial discourses. For a while, I struggled, as a Protestant Asian woman deeply immersed in postmodern, postcolonial and feminist discourses, with the idea of engaging with this 20th-century Roman Catholic theologian. According to Rahner, the human being has the God-given capability for self-transcendence and freedom. This notion may sound too optimistic and universalizing, especially after earlier discussions about ambiguous dynamics in human relationships and complicated power relations. Rahner's theology does, in fact, give insufficient attention to issues of difference and alterity. Therefore, my discussion of Rahner's theology in this chapter will include the limitations of his theological anthropology in light of the interviewees' experience. As with Butler, Bhabha, Winnicott, and feminist theologians, I engage with Rahner through critical appropriation.

In spite of his limitations, Rahner's notion of a transcendental human being is very promising for the interviewed women and for many others who live in the complexities of a postmodern, postcolonial world. The theological anthropology of women's subjectivity I have tried to develop required a theological discussion of women's constant movement between historicity and transcendentality, aspects that had not been sufficiently addressed by Winnicott, Benjamin, or feminist theologians. I found such theological language in Karl Rahner's theology. I find his theological anthropology

helpful particularly in his discussions of the inherent transcendentality in all human beings, the ineffable and mysterious realm of human subjectivity, the emergence of human transcendence from one's everyday life, human relationship with God as impetus for resistance, human beings' constant oscillation between historicity and transcendentality, and the persistence of human transcendentality in spite of their turning away from God's grace. In this chapter, I argue that Rahner supplements the notions of third space suggested by Bhabha and Winnicott with his theological languages. I will also demonstrate in what ways Rahner's theology provides critical resources for my construction of a theological anthropology of resistance.

After introducing Karl Rahner's theology, I address some criticisms for him and his response to them. Then, I suggest that his theological anthropology offers an image of human beings engaged with the third space, as can be seen by interpreting the interviewees' narratives from his theological perspective. This Rahnerian reading of women's subjectivity finishes with an assessment of Rahner's contribution to a theological anthropology of third space.

Rahner's Theological Anthropology

Karl Rahner (March 5, 1904–March 30, 1984) is one of the most influential Roman Catholic theologians of the twentieth century, along with Bernard Lonergan and Hans Urs von Balthasar. His writings reveal his engagement with several interlocutors, including Immanuel Kant, Thomas Aquinas, Joseph Marechal, and Martin Heidegger. As a young student of philosophy, Rahner studied Kant and Marechal. Karen Kilby notes that what Rahner inherits from Kant is a search for human nature that makes our empirical knowing possible:

> It is clear that broadly speaking this is a Kantian aspect of Rahner's argumentation: Rahner follows Kant in asking after what must be true about us so that we can have empirical knowledge at all, about what are the conditions which must be present in us to get the business of knowing going in the first place.[393]

Considering the influence of Kant on Rahner's theology, Rahner's term transcendental is often misunderstood as Kantian. It is helpful, therefore, to clarify in what sense his theological method is called transcendental—as it is often called, just as his method is called transcendental method. Rahner's transcendental theological method is regarded as a revolutionary approach in Catholic theology and greatly affected the Second Vatican Council and theologians afterwards. In what sense is his method transcendental? Francis S. Fiorenza contends that it is wrong to understand Rahner's transcendental method solely in terms of the Kantian notion of the transcendental for the following reasons. First, Rahner's notion of transcendental experience explicitly refers to an experience of God, which Kant is not interested in. Second, although Rahner uses the term "a priori," what he talks about is "the historically conditioned human experience of grace."[394] Third, Rahner's repeated yet loose usage of the term "transcendental" in his writings indicates "the link between theology and anthropology" in his theology.[395] In other words, by the term transcendental, Rahner means human beings' incessant search for the meaning of their life and existence, a search that cannot be fully answered by any human knowledge. Therefore, he acknowledges that a transcendental theology inevitably recognizes its own limitations. In this sense, Geffrey Kelly contends that Rahner's term transcendental means "the human search for fulfillment with the restlessness implanted in

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[393] Karen Kilby, *Karl Rahner: Theology and Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 39.
[394] Francis S. Fiorenza, "Method in Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner*, eds. Declan Marmion and Mary E. Hines (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 77.
[395] Ibid.

the individual's heart by God."[396] Rahner's theological method is grounded in this image of a person as a being of becoming.

Through Marechal, Rahner was exposed to Transcendental Thomism and inherited the viewpoint that God's existence in the world leads human beings to an unceasing search for knowing and loving. In his doctoral study in Freiburg, Rahner also engaged with Heidegger and used Heidegger's notion of "a preliminary grasp or judgment (*Vorgriff*) of the world's horizon of being" to contend that "true knowledge of oneself and the meaning of one's experience demanded a preconceptual, pregrasp (*Vorgriff*) of *infinite* being or of God."[397] Drawing on this idea, Rahner explained how limited human knowing works with the help of an unlimited God.

While Rahner's early writings, *Spirit of the World* and *Hearers of the Word,* were philosophical, his later writings were intentionally theological, spiritual, and pastoral, motivated by his concern for historically conditioned human existence. He was exposed to Ignatian spirituality during his novitiate in the North German Province of the Jesuits, which deeply inspired and influenced his work throughout his life.[398] Given the scope of Rahner's work, any engagement with his work should thus take caution against claiming a Rahnerian scholarship.[399] Accordingly, my intention in this chapter is not to provide a comprehensive grasp of Rahner's theology. Rather, I pursue a severely partial reading of

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[396] Geffrey B. Kelly ed., *Karl Rahner: Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 1.
[397] Ibid., 7.
[398] Ibid., 2.
[399] Geffrey B. Kelly (*Karl Rahner, Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning*) reports that "[t]here are over four thousand entries in [Rahner's] bibliography" (1). Thomas Sheehan notes: "Rahner's published works run to over 3,500 titles in a dozen languages, including fourteen volumes of collected essays, a score of monographs, and a half-dozen or so dictionaries and encyclopedias. A former professor at Innsbruck, Munich, and Münster, he has written on virtually every topic in theology: Christology, the Trinity, atheism, death, evolution, gnosticism, ethics, to mention only a few topics on his list." Thomas Sheehan, "The Dream of Karl Rahner," *The New York Review of Books*, February 4, 1982.

his theological anthropology, based largely on selected parts of *Foundations of Christian Faith* and *Theological Investigations*. I focus primarily on Rahner's theological image of human beings as they engage with the third space, and I seek the potential in these ideas to illumine women's subordination and resistance. Before interpreting the interviewees' narratives with the help of third space as imagined in Rahner's theology, I first discuss the major concepts of his theological anthropology, particularly focusing on God's gracious self-offer, freedom, mystery and knowing, human beings' transcendentality, the relation between history and transcendence, human beings as mid-point, and human beings' turning away from God's grace.

God's Gracious Self-Offer

When Rahner took the faculty position at Innsbruck after World War II, he found himself in the midst of the serious debate between *Nouvelle Theologie* and Rome's rejection of the movement.[400] What was at stake in the controversy was how to view the relationship between nature and grace. Neo-scholastic theology, which Rahner regarded as "the standard view" of the time, was built on the distinction between "created grace," God's transformation of us, and "uncreated grace," God's self-communication.[401] In the traditional perspective, God's uncreated grace, God's indwelling in the human soul and relationship with the human, was supposed to follow the change of human beings through God's grace. In this view, created grace is central and important while uncreated grace is secondary. Therefore, it was actually an extrinsic view of grace, in which grace was "a reality which we know about from the teaching of the faith, but which is completely

[400] William V. Dych SJ, *Karl Rahner* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), 32-33.
[401] Rahner, "Nature and Grace"; Kelly, *Karl Rahner*, 97.

outside our experience and can never make its presence felt in our conscious personal life."[402]

Rahner's theological task was an effort to integrate nature and grace, and he began by criticizing the traditional and prevalent view of grace for regarding grace as "a mere structure, very fine in itself certainly, which is imposed upon nature by God's decree."[403] When grace is only a supernatural structure that is as extrinsic to humans as pure nature, human beings lose any ultimate meaning of their lives or vocation. Rahner contends that, in such a world, human beings "could always reject such a good without thereby having *inwardly* the experience of losing its end."[404] For Rahner, God's grace is meaningless if it is beyond human consciousness or experience. God's grace should instead be experienced—though not in the same way as are other kinds of experience. Regardless of human freedom, God's self-communication is really present and still God's gift.

> The mode in which God's self-communication is present with respect to human freedom does not nullify the real presence of this self-communication as something offered. For even an offer merely as antecedently given or as rejected by freedom must not be understood as a communication, which could exist, but does not. It must rather be understood as a communication which has really taken place, and as one by which freedom as transcendental is and remains always confronted really and inescapably.[405]

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[402] Ibid.
[403] Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace," in *Theological Investigations* (hereafter *TI*), vol. 1, *God, Christ, Mary and Grace*, trans. Cornelius Ernst (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1961), 298.
[404] Ibid.
[405] Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (hereafter *FCF*), trans. William V. Dych (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 128.

In Rahner's view, God's grace should be experienced in the realm of human nature and existence and yet transcendentally and supernaturally, too, since it is God's bestowal of God's self. God's grace should also be solely gratuitous and free and yet universal.[406]

Rahner reversed the traditional view of grace by moving God's self-communication or God's very self to the center. One experiences transformation because God already dwells in one's soul, not the other way round. To explain this image of human beings as transcendental beings in relationship with God, Rahner adapted Heidegger's term "existential" and proposed term "supernatural existential," by which he meant each person is "the event of God's absolute self-communication."[407] Human nature is determined by God's grace: "The supernatural existential is related to what we have called the personal nature of man, as a gratuitous gift of God, as grace. In this way man exists in nature and 'supernature.'"[408]

> [T]he person, as we have just outlined him, is called to direct personal communion with God in Christ, perennially and inescapably, whether he accepts the call in redemption and grace or whether he closes himself to it in guilt (by the guilt of original sin and of person sin). The person is addressed by the personal revelation of the Word of God in saving history which finds its climax in Jesus Christ the Word of the Father become flesh; the person is unquestionably situated within the offer of his interior, saving and divinizing grace; he is called to the community—forming visible manifestation of this personal state of "being directly called before God" which is the church.[409]

With the term supernatural existential, Rahner emphasizes that God's self-communication, which is the supernatural, is "offered" for "every free subject."[410] Human beings can accept the offer or refuse it with freedom.

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[406] Rahner, "Nature and Grace," *TI*, vol. 4, *More Recent Writings*, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1965), 181.
[407] *FCF*, 126.
[408] Rahner, "The Dignity and Freedom of Man," *TI*, vol. 2, *Man in the Church*, trans. Karl H. Kruger (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 240.
[409] Ibid.
[410] *FCF*, 126–128.

Freedom

For Rahner, freedom is not just choosing among different actions and objects. Rather, he contends that true freedom is "freedom before and toward God."[411] According to Rahner, every human is a being with ultimate responsibility and freedom to respond to God's gracious offer of self-communication and choose self-actualization, which is one's partnership with God. Rahner notes, "The entire life of the free subject is inevitably an answer to the question in which God offers himself to us as the source of transcendence."[412] Freedom with responsibility constitutes the human existential:

> This freedom . . . is rather a fundamental characteristic of a personal existent, who experiences himself in what he has already done and is still to do in time as self-possession, as one who is responsible and has to give an account.[413]

Human beings are thus given the capability to act on a fundamental option to accept God's grace and respond to God's gift of self-communication or to reject it.

This "freedom in its origin," according to Rahner, should be distinguished from "freedom in its categorical objectification."[414] Rahner argues that our everyday freedom with which we do something or not is only "the application and concretization of a transcendental experience of freedom," which makes it possible for us to experience "freedom in its incarnation in the world."[415] Our transcendental experience of freedom also allows us to develop awareness of our own freedom and responsibility.[416] Also, our experience of "categorical freedom" influences our "transcendental freedom" toward God.

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[411] Rahner, "On the Origins of Freedom" in *Karl Rahner: Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning*, ed. Kelly, 118.
[412] Rahner, "Theology of Freedom," *TI*, vol. 6, *Concerning Vatican Council II*, trans. Karl-Heinz and Boniface Kruger (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 101.
[413] *FCF*, 38.
[414] *FCF*, 37.
[415] *FCF*, 36, 37.
[416] *FCF*, 36.

> Freedom takes place as mediated by the concrete world which encounters us, and especially by the world of other persons, even when this freedom intends and wants to be freedom vis-à-vis God immediately and thematically. . . Since in every act of freedom which is concerned on the categorical level with a quite definite object, a quite definite person, there is always present, as the condition of possibility for such an act, transcendence towards the absolute terms and source of all our intellectual and spiritual acts, and hence towards God, there can and must be present in every such act an *unthematic "yes" or "no"* to this God of original, transcendental experience.[417]

Rahner notes that these two kinds of freedom are not separable but "two moments that form the single unity of freedom."[418]

Rahner further states that self-realization or salvation occurs in and through the transcendental experience of freedom.[419]

> It [the true theological notion of salvation] means . . . the final and definitive validity of a person's true self-understanding and true self-realization in freedom before God by the fact that he accepts his own self as it is disclosed and offered to him in the choice of transcendence as interpreted in freedom. [420]

Human beings are seen to be free to respond to and accept God's self-communication and God's invitation for personal relationship with God. Such freedom is itself God's grace, and it is God's grace that makes transcendental freedom possible. In human existence, according to Rahner, true freedom paradoxically emerges from dependence on God's grace.

Mystery and Knowing

According to Rahner, human beings can never figure out to what extent their actions are free. All categorical actions consist of freedom and necessity, and no amount of reflection will allow human beings to calculate the degree of freedom in their actions:

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[417] *FCF*, 98; emphasis in original.
[418] *FCF*, 37.
[419] *FCF*, 39.
[420] Ibid.

> With regard to individual free actions in his life, the subject never has an absolute certainty about the subjective and therefore moral quality of these individual actions because, as real and as objectified in knowledge, these actions are always a synthesis of original freedom and imposed necessity, a synthesis which cannot be resolved completely in reflection.[421]

While freedom is the core of our existence, it is also a mystery. Put another way, while freedom is always present in our categorical actions, it is not within the reach of objectification.

Rahner claims that human transcendentality is grounded in holy mystery because human beings cannot comprehend God without God's self-communication to the world. Human beings always live in the presence of the ineffable mystery, questioning and searching for the infinite realm without being able to fully grasp their own subject.

> Therefore insofar as reflection can never control or master or grasp the totality of the ground from out of which and towards which the subject is actualizing himself, man is the unknown not only in this or that area of his concrete reality, but he is the subject whose origin and end remain hidden from himself. He comes to the real truth about himself precisely by the fact that he patiently endures and accepts this knowledge that his own reality is not in his own hands.[422]

Human beings cannot dispose their own subjectivity; they are subject only as receivers and hearers of the being of mystery and transcendence. Therefore, notes Rahner, while human subjectivity is always a transcendence, transcendence is "a finite infinity."[423]

"Being situated . . . between the finite and the infinite," a human is an irreducible mystery,[424] one that resists any prediction of how she will grow as a person. Addressing the limit of science, including psychology, to capture the mystery of humanity,[425] Rahner contends that no scientific theories can account for the totality and mystery of human

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[421] *FCF*, 97.
[422] *FCF*, 43.
[423] *FCF*, 58.
[424] *FCF*, 42.
[425] Beste, *God and the Victim*, 19–20.

beings. In his perspective, human beings are "more than the sum of such analyzable components of [their] reality."[426]

This view of human existence is closely related to Rahner's conception of knowing. God's self-communication as the inner core of human beings means that God's presence is the essence of human knowing. Rahner contends that our knowledge of God is *a posteriori* since our transcendent experience and knowledge of God comes through our ordinary experience and knowing, which Rahner calls "categorical" experience.[427] In spite of the mediation of categorical experience, however, our knowledge of God is still transcendent because of the fundamental transcendence of human beings, which is their openness and dynamism toward God:

> The knowledge of God is, nevertheless, a *transcendental* knowledge because man's basic and original orientation towards absolute mystery, which constitutes his fundamental experience of God, is a permanent existential of man as a spiritual subject.[428]

As I mentioned above, Rahner uses Heidegger's term *Vorgriff* (pre-apprehension) to describe human transcendence based on awareness of the unlimited nature of God. Through the pre-apprehension of being (*Vorgriff auf esse*), one "reaches out toward what is nameless and by its very nature is infinite."[429] Rahner notes:

> Man is a transcendent being insofar as all of his knowledge and all of his conscious activity is grounded in a pre-apprehension (*Vorgriff*) of "being" as such, in an unthematic but ever-present knowledge of the infinity of reality (as we can put it provisionally and somewhat boldly).[430]

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[426] *FCF*, 29.
[427] *FCF*, 51.
[428] *FCF*, 52.
[429] *FCF*, 62.
[430] *FCF*, 33.

Pre-apprehension thus allows human beings to reach the infinite being, transcending themselves while being embedded in the world.[431] As "unthematic and ever-present experience," transcendental knowledge resists a complete apprehension or discovery.[432] While we can never grasp who God is from reflection, our knowledge of God is always present.

In short, although God dwells in us, we cannot capture God with our knowledge; although God's self-communication constitutes our existence, God is still mystery. Therefore, Rahner argues that our knowing should be conceived as an act of encountering mystery, which is the warp and woof of our existence whether we are aware of its presence or not:

> The concept of "God" is not a grasp of God by which a person masters the mystery, but it is letting oneself be grasped by the mystery which is present and yet ever distant. This mystery remains a mystery even though it reveals itself to man and thus continually grounds the possibility of man being a subject.[433]

> Man is he who is always confronted with the holy mystery, even where he is dealing with what is within hand's reach, comprehensible and amenable to a conceptual framework . . . the holy mystery is not something upon which man may 'also' stumble, if he is lucky and takes an interest in something else besides the definable objects within the horizon of his consciousness. Man always lives by the holy mystery, even where he is not conscious of it.[434]

Rahner emphasizes the presence of this constant awareness and ever-lasting knowledge of God in the ordinary acts of knowing. Because of pre-apprehension, our knowing of particular and finite objects is possible, Rahner contends. That is, one's confrontation with the mystery makes it possible to engage with the act of knowing the

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[431] While Heidegger's notion of *Dasein* or being-in-the-world designates the movement of the self toward nothing or death, Rahner modifies the concept so that "the *Vorgriff* attains to a 'more' rather than to a 'nothing.'" Anne Carr, *The Theological Method of Karl Rahner* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 75.
[432] *FCF*, 53.
[433] *FCF*, 54.
[434] Rahner, "The Concept of Mystery in Catholic Theology: Second Lecture," *TI*, vol. 4, *More Recent Writings*, 54.
[434] *FCF*, 126.

non-mysterious realms of the world. Without one's inner orientation toward the infinite transcending particular knowledge, her ordinary knowing would be impossible. *Vorgriff* is, therefore, the condition for making one's knowing possible. When one gets to know particular objects, argues Rahner, one also always has a sort of awareness of the infinite and of God. Not only believers but all human beings have this knowledge of God beyond limited objects.

According to Rahner, when one regards knowledge solely as grasping or comprehending—a view he says is held by many people, especially contemporary agnostics[435]—revelation, faith, and theology function only to fill the gaps that scientific, philosophical, or historical knowledge leave out. For the agnostics, faith and theology are supplemental kinds of knowledge. Rahner rejects the agnostics' presupposition "that the theoretical contents of knowledge and the certain possession of those contents . . . are what is constitutive of knowledge" because he believes that the human act of knowing always reaches beyond particular knowledge.[436] To replace the limited view, Rahner suggests that we regard knowledge of God as the experience of being grasped by God, rather than our grasping God.[437] Rahner contends that what makes a human being a person and subject is the transcendental experience, an openness to the infinite, and constant questioning. By his term subject, he does not mean "an *absolute* subject" but a subject both receiving grace and being grasped by grace.[438]

> By its very nature subjectivity is always a transcendence which listens, which does not control, which is overwhelmed by mystery and opened up by mystery. In the midst of its absolute infinity transcendence experiences itself as empty, as

[435] Dych, *Karl Rahner*, 19-20.
[436] Ibid., 20.
[437] *FCF*, 54; Rahner, "The Human Question of Meaning in Face of the Absolute Mystery of God." *TI*, vol. 18, *God and Revelation*, trans. Edward Quinn (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1983), 97.
[438] *FCF*, 34.

> merely formal, as necessarily mediated to itself by finiteness, and hence as a finite infinity. If it does not want to mistake itself for an absolute subject and divinize itself, it recognizes itself as a transcendence which has been bestowed upon it, which is grounded in mystery, and is not at its own disposal. For all its infinity it experiences itself as radically finite. It is precisely in and through the infinity of its transcendence that it is a transcendence which can grasp its own finiteness and must grasp it.[439]

Further, Rahner contends that this knowing, this being grasped by God as mystery, is an act of love. The mystery as the object of our knowledge is not the object of mastery. The goal of knowing is union with God.

> The act in which a person can face and accept the mystery of God (and therein the comprehensive meaning of his own existence), without being shattered by it and without fleeing from it into the banality of his clear and distinct ideas, the banality of looking for meaning based solely on such knowledge and what it can master and control, this act, I say, is the act of love in which a person surrenders and entrusts himself to this very mystery. In this love knowledge transcends itself to reach its own deepest nature, and truly becomes knowledge only by becoming love.[440]

When one loves a person, she surrenders herself to the relationship even when she still has not fully figured out many aspects of the other.[441] In such a loving relationship, one's knowing is love and surrender to mystery, and in Rahner's concept of knowledge as love, knowing is not an attempt to comprehend or master the object but the act of being grasped by it, which is to say grasped by mystery.

Transcendentality

If human beings did not have capability or dynamism to respond to God's call, the condition of being related to God would be impossible. Whether they are aware or not, all human beings are already related to God. In Rahner's perspective, being in relationship with God constitutes the core of human nature. Human beings have the transcendental

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[439] *FCF*, 58.
[440] Rahner, "Human Question of Meaning," 100.
[441] Ibid., 101.

orientation toward the divine and the fundamental capacity for personal relationship with God as the *a priori* condition of being. God's self-communication is, therefore, not only God's gift but also "the necessary condition which makes possible an acceptance of the gift."[442]

God's gift of indwelling in the human soul means that human beings are transcendental in existence, not just in pure nature. For Rahner, all human beings are transcendental beings for the simple reason that the transcendental experience of being related to God as grace forms the core of human nature. By transcendental experience, he means "the subjective, unthematic, necessary and unfailing consciousness of the knowing subject that is co-present in every spiritual act of knowledge, and the subject's openness to the unlimited expanse of all possible reality."[443] It is "a "basic mode of being which is prior to and permeates every objective experience."[444] Rahner emphasizes that this transcendental experience is not something that can be conceptualized, defined or objectively reflected. It is always in the background of human life.

Transcendence and History

While it is "the a priori openness of the subject to being as such," the transcendental experience is present only in the midst of human life.[445] Susan Abraham helpfully articulates Rahner's view of the relation between history and transcendence in the following:

> [H]istory is the event of transcendence from the perspective of a Rahnerian postcolonial theology. While history is, from the theological perspective, the history of God's salvation, it is also the history of revelation and its interpretation,

[442] *FCF*, 128.
[443] *FCF*, 20.
[444] *FCF*, 34.
[445] *FCF*, 35.

> which human beings undertake in their freedom. Thus, salvation, revelation, and interpretation, all of which are infused with both the human being's and God's freedom, form a unity of history in Christianity.[446]

According to Rahner, our transcendental experience is "mediated by a categorical encounter with concrete reality in our world, both the world of things and the world of persons."[447] This is why one may easily fail to pay attention to this experience. Rahner further argues that our awareness of finitude leads us to the yearning for the infinite and mystery. He argues that human beings' historicity is not just given to us "accidentally" but mediates us to the infinite and thus to self-realization, as well as constitutes our existence.

> As subject man has not entered accidentally into this material and temporal world as into something which is ultimately foreign to him as subject and contradictory to his spiritual nature. Rather the subject's self-alienation in world is precisely the way in which the subject discovers himself and affirms himself in a definitive way. Time, world and history mediate the subject to himself and to that immediate and free self-possession towards which a personal subject is oriented and towards which he is always striving.[448]

Through material experience and encounter with others and creation, human beings proceed to self-actualization. Human beings are therefore "spirits in the world."

In Rahner's notion of the relation between transcendentality and historicity, one can find an image of paradoxical and ambivalent subjectivity. Human beings experience transcendentality only through their historicity. Love of neighbor for Rahner is what fundamentally defines human beings as moral beings. He claims that love of neighbor is "the one moral basic act in which man comes to himself and

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[446] Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence*, 169.
[447] *FCF*, 52.
[448] *FCF*, 41.

decides basically about himself."[449] By her involvement with the world and love of neighbor, one experiences one's relationship with God:

> The relationship to God in its directness is necessarily mediated by intramundane communication . . . The original relationship to God is . . . love of neighbor. If man becomes himself only by the exercise of love towards God and must achieve this self-mastery by a categorical action, then it holds good . . . that the act of love of neighbor is the only categorical and original act in which man attains the whole of the concretely given reality.[450]

Rahner claims the unity between love of God and love of neighbor. This does not mean that one's love of neighbor can be same as love of God. One's love of neighbor is an expression of her response to God's invitation to realize her God-given transcendentality.

As Rahner clarifies in *Hearer of the Word*, human beings experience historicity only through their own transcendentality.

> But what is human history? We must not merely set down a definition of it. The meaning of human history should become clear to us from an examination of our historicity in the midst of our transcendence. We must establish our historicity not merely through empirical observation, nor through the simple accumulation of concrete facts. We must understand historicity as belonging to our basic nature. As long as this had been done, we might always imagine that, because of our spiritual nature, we might believe that we can try to put ourselves, as spirit, above our history, to emancipate ourselves from it, and thus to exclude history from the start as the possible place of a revelation. As spirit we possess the absolute possibility of attempting this, not of succeeding in it. Thus we must show that turning toward our history is an inner moment of our spiritual nature.[451]

History is the realm of transcendence. This means that, in Rahner's perspective, women's temporal experiences in everyday life always hold transcendental dimension.

Human Beings as Mid-Point

From Rahner's perspective, human subjectivity should be understood not in terms of

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[449] Rahner, "Reflections on the Unity of the Love of Neighbor and the Love of God," *TI*, vol. 3, *The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, trans. Karl-Heinz and Boniface Kruger (Baltimore: Helicon, 1967), 244.
[450] Rahner, "Theology of Freedom," 189–190.
[451] Karl Rahner, *Hearer of the Word*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Continuum, 1994), 95.

an absolute subject but in the unceasing movement between disclosure and concealment.

In *Spirit of the World*, Rahner calls human beings a "mid-point" [*schwebende Mitte*]. About this concept, Patrick Burke notes, "The being of the sentient knower is present-to-itself, but this being is precisely the oscillating undivided midpoint (*die schwebende ungeschiedene Mitte*) between a total abandonment to the other and an intrinsic independence over against this other."[452] This notion is very similar to the transitional space between me and not-me in Winnicott's theory. However, Rahner's concept of human beings as mid-point also designates their locatedness at the boundary between transcendentality and historicity, oscillating between the two realms of their existence.

> Thus man is the mid-point suspended between the world and God, between time and eternity, and this boundary line is the point of his definition and his destiny: "as a certain horizon and border between the corporeal and incorporeal."[453]

Situated at the border between the finite and the infinite, human beings are constantly reaching out into the mystery and coming back to themselves in the middle of historical experience. Therefore, a human is "always still on the way," a being of becoming.[454]

Turning Away from God's Grace

Rahner's belief in human transcendence and freedom should not lead one to believe that he dismisses the issue of power completely. He contends that external forces may hinder one's decision to respond freely to God.

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[452] Patrick Burke, *Reinterpreting Rahner: A Critical Study of His Major Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 10.
[453] Rahner, *Spirit in the World*, trans. Johanness B. Metz (New York: Continuum, 1994), 407.
[454] *FCF*, 32.

> Man, on account of uninvited influences exerted on him from without, is not simply and from the very start in lordly possession of complete control over his personal power of decision. He can be swept away involuntarily (before any action of his freedom takes place) to do actions which either lack freedom and responsibility completely or possess them only to a diminished degree, and which then become an obstacle to and restriction of the possibilities of his freedom for good. He can be corrupted in advance of his decision.[455]

Human beings' experience of the holy mystery is ambiguous because of the radical threat of sin and guilt. With freedom given by God, one can turn away from God's self-communication and thus deny the opportunity to be the true self. The capacity of the human subject to say no to God, according to Rahner, is a "permanent existential."[456] He notes, "[T]he possibility of sin is an existential which belongs to the whole of a person's earthly life and cannot be eradicated."[457] This notion of sin as a permanent existential is well revealed in his account of original sin. Refusing the traditional account of original sin as biological inheritance of guilt, Rahner refers to the universality and ineradicability of guilt: "[T]he situation of our own freedom bears the stamp of the guilt of others in a way which cannot be eradicated."[458] Thus one's freedom to be herself by responding to God's grace can be diminished by other people's sin.

Rahner emphasizes how radical human freedom to refuse God's grace is. He regretfully points out that the contemporary society does not take this problem of sin seriously enough. However, he also claims that sin and guilt do not destroy human freedom to respond to God.

> If, on the one hand, freedom considered simply in itself, i.e. freedom of exercise and not merely freedom in what is done, belongs to the absolute dignity of the person and if, on the other hand, it is dependent for its exercise in the concrete on conditions of an external and internal kind, then the concession of these

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[455] Rahner, "The Dignity and Freedom of Man," 242; Beste, *God and the Victim*, 32.
[456] *FCF*, 104–105.
[457] *FCF*, 104.
[458] *FCF*, 111.

> possibilities of the exercise of freedom to a sufficiently large extent is demanded by the dignity of the person. To deprive the person totally of the scope for freedom would, therefore, still be a degradation of the person even when the thing to be done [effect a fundamental option] would still be capable without this concession of scope for freedom.[459]

Human beings are given an essential structure—who they really are and should be—and responsibility. The power of sin and guilt, although real in human existence throughout history, does not remove the fundamental freedom to say yes or no to God.

Critiques of Rahner

This introduction prepares the way to interpret the interviewees' experiences of subordination and resistance in dialogue with Rahner's theological terms. Based on this interpretation, I will argue that Rahner's theological anthropology includes the notion of third space, and enriches and expands Bhabha's and Winnicott's notions of third space. I suggest that one can find an image of the third space in the interviewees' struggle between historicity and transcendentality and their relationships with God and others. I further contend that such space is found in women's everyday life.

Before claiming the presence of third space in Rahner, however, it is necessary to address criticism that Rahner paid insufficient attention to concrete historical contexts, to the influence of social and political structures on the construction of human subjectivity, and to contingency and difference found in human experience. These points are important as the interviewed women's experience of subordination and resistance require serious consideration of just these aspects of human experience.

First, Rahner's concept of social freedom is challenged for not being grounded in concrete historical contexts. Susan Abraham contends that Rahner's notion of social

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[459] Rahner, "Dignity and Freedom of Man," 248.

freedom is spiritualized and overridden by religious freedom and therefore fails to help one to imagine freedom in a concrete historical context:

> To recapitulate, Rahner's presentation of freedom in its metaphysical, mystical, and social aspects demonstrates key inconsistencies. Freedom in its metaphysical and mystical aspects is historicized to align it more closely with modern understanding of experience, but freedom in its social aspect is rather spiritualized even as he asserts it to have historical reality. It can be that Rahner contradicts himself because the nature of social freedom escapes him. Or else, it can be that Rahner does not go as far as he can to historicize freedom, as his Christian theological framework simply does not have the capacity to imagine concrete freedom in the manner of liberation philosophies and theologies. Adequate attention to the social and cultural contexts in which freedom is enacted is not evident in Rahner and such a lack needs to be immediately addressed.[460]

This problem derives from Rahner's failure to ground his starting point for theology in history, a well-known criticism raised by Johannes Baptist Metz, one of Rahner's students.[461] As Paul Crowley articulates, "Rahner's philosophical grounding embraces history as the necessary mediation of the transcendental, and as the place where the infinite being is both disclosed and hidden, but history does not play a foundational role in the shaping of theological questions or arriving at a theological vision."[462] Therefore, Rahner's concept of freedom should be made more relevant for Korean American women with an increased attention to the concrete manifestations of freedom in different historical contexts.

Second, scholars also challenge Rahner for his failure to address the social and political dimension of human experience given the debilitating power of oppressive systems to influence women's agency and self-conception. According to Jennifer Beste, although Rahner acknowledges human beings' biological, psychological, and social

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[460] Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence*, 28.
[461] Johannes B. Metz, "An Identity Crisis in Christianity? Transcendental Land Political Responses," in *Theology and Discovery: Essays in Honor of Karl Rahner, S.J.*, ed. William J. Kelly (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University, 1980),169–178.
[462] Paul Crowley, "Encountering the Religious Other: Challenges to Rahner's Transcendental Project," *Theological Studies* 71, no. 3 (September 2010): 578.

conditionings, he does not regard such conditionings as factors compromising or contradicting their subjectivity.[463] The absence of this perspective in Rahner's work is mitigated by Butler and feminist theologians who highlight the debilitating power of sin and evil and the destructive influence of discursive and power relations, and violence, on women's ability to freely respond to God's grace and to access authentic self-realization. Butler in particular teaches us how oppressive discursive relations may result in fragmented self.

Feminist theologies of sin also challenge Rahner to attend to the unconscious and irrational passion with which some women actively participate in oppressive structures. Womanist theologians like Delores Williams might be expected to ask whether Rahner's transcendental theology pays due attention to the power of external influences on human agency, in spite of his discussion of it. Metz contends that Rahner's theology remained individualized and privatized with insufficient concern about the social dimension of Christianity: "The categories most prominent in [his] theology are the categories of the intimate, the private, the apolitical sphere."[464] Robert Lassalle-Klein also points out the "individual starting point" of Rahner's theology.[465] It is safe to say that these scholars would agree that Rahner's theological anthropology should be complemented with a societal dimension if it is to be useful in accounting for Korean American women's subordination and resistance.

Third, Rahner's transcendental notion of subjectivity is challenged for making universalizing and essentializing claims about human transcendentality and therefore

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[463] Beste, *God and the Victim*, 19.
[464] Johanness B. Metz, *Theology of the World* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 109.
[465] Robert Lassalle-Klein, "Rethinking Rahner on Grace and Symbol: New Proposals from the Americas," in *Rahner beyond Rahner: A Great Theologian Encounters the Pacific Rim*, ed. Paul G. Crowley SJ (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 88–89.

failing to attend to the contingency, difference, and inequality found in human experience. As I discussed above in terms of Rahner's notion of freedom and transcendence, Rahner contends that all human beings have fundamental capability for self-reflection and self-transcendence. In response to such a universalizing claim, one may question whether he addresses the issue of difference. Butler might well argue that Rahner's ontological claim of human capability is universalizing and essentializing, and his contention that human beings own pre-determined existentials would be especially problematic. From Butler's perspective, Rahner fails to suggest any notion of contingency. She would likely say that his view of the human self is based on the wrongheaded assumption that subjectivity can be constructed outside discursive and social relations.

Jennifer Beste problematizes Rahner's contention that *every human being* is given capacity for freedom and openness to God's grace. She questions to what extent Rahner can help those who have less intellectual capacity and argues that Rahner does not help one address the "fragmentation of the self and compromised categorical freedom" experienced by people like victims of traumatic violence. Susan Abraham points out that Rahner's concept of the supernatural existential, based on the notion of unified subjectivity, fails to address "the problem of difference and the disciplining effects of power on difference."[466] She argues that although Rahner presents an ethical responsibility of including the "other," his view is not as helpful as the postcolonial notion of alterity,[467] and it is true that Rahner does not help one discuss those who have less accessibility to freedom and transcendence due to systemic inequality or experience of violence.

[466] Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence*, 71.
[467] Ibid., 13.

I find these criticisms helpful. If Rahner's theology is supplemented, as his critics say it must be, by more serious attention to difference and to women's historical, social, and political conditions, the paradox of women's submission and resistance can be discussed without romanticizing women's suffering and sacrifice. Further, Rahner's notion of fundamental freedom opens the discussion by suggesting that one can find true freedom through submission to God. With Rahner's theories in place, a theological anthropology of women's resistance would address not only women's paradoxical relationship with submission and resistance within human discourses but also the paradoxical aspect of the human relationship with God. In response to the criticisms laid out above, it may be pointed out that history and intersubjectivity are important for Rahner's notion of subjectivity. For Rahner, they are fundamental and intrinsic in the nature of human beings:

> Historicity means that characteristic and fundamental determination of man by which he is placed in time precisely as a free subject, and through which a unique world is at his disposal, a world which he must create and suffer in freedom, and for which in both instances he must take responsibility. Man's being-in-the-world, his permanent dispersion in the other of a world which he finds and which is imposed upon him, a world of things and a world of persons, is an intrinsic element of the subject himself, an element which he must understand and live out in freedom, but which thereby becomes something of eternal validity for him.[468]

Envisioning human subjectivity as the movement between transcendentality and historicity, Rahner claims outright that human transcendence emerges only from history, or from everyday life. He says:

> Man is not merely *also* a biological and social organism who exists in time with these characteristics. Rather, his subjectivity and his free, personal self-interpretation take place precisely in and through his being in the world, in time, in history, or better, in and through world, time, and history. The question of

[468] *FCF*, 41.

> salvation cannot be answered by bypassing man's historicity and his social nature. Transcendentality and freedom are realized in history.[469]

As Marmion notes, "[Rahner] increasingly sought to complement his transcendental approach with an incorporation of a more historical perspective."[470] Marmion further claims that Rahner's attention to the "political dimension of Christianity" was already revealed in his notion of the unity of love of neighbour and love of God. In fact, Rahner did not disregard the issue of history or the sociopolitical dimension of human subjectivity in his theological method as can be seen in here, in a response to Metz's criticism:

> [I]t has always been clear in my theology that a "transcendental experience" (of God and of grace) is always mediated through a categorical experience in history, in interpersonal relationships, and in society. If one not only sees and takes seriously these necessary mediations of transcendental experience but also fills it out in a concrete way, then one already practices in an authentic way political theology, or in other words, a practical fundamental theology. On the other hand, such a political theology is, if it truly wishes to concern itself with God, not possible without reflection on those essential characteristics of humankind which a transcendental theology discloses. Therefore, I believe that my theology and that of Metz are not necessarily contradictory.[471]

Although not explicitly emphasized as the central point of his theology, claims Rahner, his consideration of human beings' concrete situations and actions is a critical element.

Along with his concern for historicity and social situatedness of human beings, Rahner also had a deep interest in intersubjectivity. In Rahner's view, human beings are relational beings. He notes, "It is rather the *a priori* openness of the subject to being as such, which is present precisely when a person experiences himself as involved in the

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[469] *FCF*, 40.
[470] Declan Marmion, "Rahner and His Critics: Revisiting the Dialogue," http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/research/theology/ejournal/aejt_4/marmion.htm (accessed October 1, 2010).
[471] Rahner, "Introduction" to James J. Bacik, *Apologetics and the Eclipse of Mystery: Mystagogy According to Karl Rahner* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980), x.; Marmion, "Rahner and His Critics."

multiplicity of cares and concerns and fears and hopes of his everyday world."[472] Rahner contends that one's construction and reflection of self is dependent on her relationships with others: "Thus the concrete relationship of the subject to him or herself is inextricably dependent upon the factor of how a subject encounters his fellow human beings."[473] Rahner further affirms that one's relationship with other subjects mediates transcendence to her:

> The only way in which human beings achieve self-realization is through encounters with their fellow human beings, persons who are rendered present to their experience in knowledge and love in the course of their personal lives, persons, therefore, who are not things or matter, but human beings.[474]
>
> Our experience of ourselves occurs in unity with the experience of others. If we have the latter, then we have the former. . . . [But] whoever does not find the neighbor is also not truly present to himself, is not a true and concrete subject who can identify himself with himself, but at best an abstract philosophical subject and a human being who has lost himself.[475]

For Rahner, the subject is not autonomous or isolated but is always in relationship, and the construction of subjectivity depends on the relational nature of human beings.

Despite these counterarguments, I argue that Rahner needs to emphasize the interplay of human relationship with God and intersubjectivity more. Winnicott, Benjamin, and Rahner all discuss the relational nature of human beings, though their views of the influence of relationality on the construction of subjectivity differ. While intersubjectivity is central for the emergence of creative agency in the viewpoints of Winnicott and Benjamin, transcendence is made possible because of human relationship with God, not necessarily because of intersubjectivity. As Susan Abraham says, "[G]race

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[472] *FCF*, 35.
[473] Rahner, "Experience of Self," 128; Kelly, *Karl Rahner*, 212.
[474] Rahner, "Experience of Self and Experience of God," *TI*, vol. 13, *Theology, Anthropology, Christology*, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury, 1975), 126.
[475] Rahner, "Experience of Self and Experience of God," 127–128; Leo J. O'Donovan, "Karl Rahner, SJ: A Theologian for the Twenty-First Century, *Theology Today* 62 (2005): 356.

in the matrix of divine/human intersubjectivity engenders human intersubjectivity and ethical relations. Love or the highest ethical achievement is a result of Grace."[476] With Winnicott and Benjamin, Rahner privileges the importance of intersubjectivity, though one can credibly claim that individuality and freedom in front of God take primary place in Rahner's work.

Rahner's point that spirituality is meaningful only in historical context illuminates the fact that the interviewed women's faith in God and their religious meaning-making are important to them because of their struggle with relationships in their life. While women's relationship with God and transcendentality and their intersubjectivity should be both counted, the mutual influence of transcendentality and intersubjectivity should be considered also. Therefore, the framing of the importance of relationship found in the theories of Winnicott and Benjamin is as helpful as Rahner's.

The most important reason I try to retrieve Rahner's voice for a theological anthropology of resistance is his claim of the persistence of God's grace and human transcendentality in spite of the debilitating influence of sinful structures. The interviewed women often fail to act on their awareness of their finite reality in spite of the ever-present transcendentality in their existence. Threatened by the challenge of the infinite or falling into despair, they may ignore the inquisitive side of self and focus on their categorical experiences of everyday life. They may refuse to grow into the greater possibility through self-realization. As Butler and feminist theologians argue, the negative influence of sinful social structures on women's subjectivity is huge. However, while the women's capability for relationship with God and others may be diminished by their experience of victimization and oppression, they do not lose the capacity for

[476] Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence*, 124.

transcendentality and freedom completely. Even when they choose complicity, their ability for transcendence and awareness of the presence of divine grace remains and is available to lead them to self-reflection. I argue that such transcendence emerges from the third space of a creative struggle between historicity and transcendence. Thus Rahner's claim that sin disrupts human freedom but does not eradicate human potential to respond to God's grace is a critical element of a theological account of Korean American women's subjectivity.

Third Space in Rahner's Theology and Women's Subjectivity

Having critically appropriated Rahner's theology, I suggest the following interpretation of women's subjectivity from Rahner's perspective. Particularly, I argue that one can find images of third space in Rahner's theological anthropology and that the interviewed women's narratives reveal third space in their relationship with God and others and in their struggle between their historicity and transcendentality. I also argue that women's everyday life creates this third space and that it is there that one finds the paradoxical dynamics of women's subordination and resistance.

In Rahner's perspective, human beings are aware of their capability for transcendence while being aware of their limitedness. From Rahner's perspective, the interviewed women are ontologically oriented to God's gift of self-communication. They know they are the subjects who can ask beyond their limits in time and space. They are, Rahner would say, all transcendental. Rahner notes that human beings always pursue deeper and bigger horizon:

> The movement of the spirit and of freedom, and the horizon of this movement, are boundless. Every object of our conscious mind which we encounter in our world

> and environment is merely a stage, a constantly new starting-point in the movement which reaches into the everlasting.[477]

In Rahner's view, the interviewed women have freedom to choose to accept God's grace and live in totality. They live at the boundary between the finite and the infinite, and such boundary, I would say, is a third space. They are the mid-point between the transcendental and historical realms of their experience. As I discussed in chapter 1, they show keen sense of their position in family, in Korean communities, and in American society. They are well aware of their marginalized position and the reality of dealing with patriarchy at home and in Korean American society. At the same time, they reflect on their situatedness critically. They are aware that the thriving of their family and church life depends on them to a great extent, which makes them consciously and unconsciously measure the implication of their attitudes to oppressive forces.

One can see this image of women as mid-point between historicity and transcendentality in their descriptions of the meaning of work in their lives. As I indicated in Chapter 1, five among eleven interviewees worked at the time of the interviews as business owners or restaurant cooks. These five believed that they were expected to work until the later years in life, like many other Korean American women. Their awareness of the need to work reminded me of my encounter with a Korean American woman, a sandwich shop owner, who uttered, "Work, Work, Work! This life in America is always about work . . . You have to work every day to pay for everything!" This woman was sharply aware that she was stuck in a consumption-and-earning pattern that left her no option other than working long hours each day to pay for bills. In her interview, Bok-Ja told me that she had worked from early morning to late at night for five

[477] Rahner, *The Spirit in the Church*, 13; Thomas F. O'Meara, *God in the World: A Guide to Karl Rahner's Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 42.

straight days. On top of the difficulty of the work itself, often menial, the interviewed women were aware that their work was not highly valued either in Korean American communities or in American society.

However, instead of expressing resentment about their reality, the interviewees developed the meaning of work to address aspects of their life beyond survival. Yoon-Hee, a single mom, says, "[I[t is normal for a human to work and to support family." By "normal," she means that work should not be considered a burden by her but rather her responsibility as a parent. Bok-Ja's positive outlook on the work in her life is more extensive despite having lived many dramatic ups and downs as a business woman. She tells me that work is at the center of her identity:

> I will never retire. I hope to work until I die. Other people tell me that I am a kind of person who chooses a tough life when I can relax and rest more. But I am happy with my life as it is now. When people appreciate my work and service, I feel empowered and encouraged.

Although these women share a keen sense of their socioeconomic situatedness and limitedness, they also know how to find empowerment by developing their own interpretation of the reality.

The image of a third space between historicity and transcendence helps me to account for the interviewees' constant movement between concerns about their family issues and their search for a bigger horizon. In fact, the women showed constant oscillation between their struggle for daily survival and maintenance of their own families and their consideration of others and the Korean American community as a whole. In the midst of narrating their domestic hardships, they might share a genuine concern for the next generation. They point out the fact that many Korean American children are not entering the mainstream of society even after good education. They

resent that many second-generation young people are coming back home to their family businesses after an education in prestigious colleges. Several interviewed women agreed that the second- and third-generation Korean Americans should pursue more professional education so that they can "succeed" in the wider U.S. society. They also share the thought that the Korean American community is responsible for providing networks for the next generation. Clearly, the women are well aware of how their everyday life is deeply connected with many social issues, especially those in Korean American communities.

The interviewed women's narratives also reveal that the women's capability to ask questions about their lives and to develop a larger life vision is often deeply related to their faith and biblical knowledge. Yet the influence of their religion is not entirely benign. As indicated in Chapter 1, the influence of religious belief and practice in these women's negotiation of their place in patriarchy is ambivalent. On one hand, women's victimization is reinforced by their belief and religious practice. Their submission to God justifies their submissive attitude to their spouses. Yet more distressing, other women urge their submission in the name of faith, equating it with submission to God.

Nevertheless, the interviewed women also show that their relationship with God is not thoroughgoing dependence or absolute submission. They employ their faith and biblical and theological knowledge as a strategy to maneuver within their relationships with spouses or other churchmembers. As we saw in the cases of Young-Ja, Mi-Young, and Sun-Hee, their faith and religious practice are crucial for their self-empowerment, resistance against patriarchy, and basic survival.

A Rahnerian reading of the interviewed women's narratives show that they move constantly between their relatedness to and separation from God—characteristic of third space. Their relationship with God cannot be characterized either as total submission or utter defiance. The narratives of Mi-Young and Sun-Hee show a complex mixture of submission to God and a claim of agency, as is revealed in the following comment by Mi-Young:

> I told God in my prayer. "It is your loss if you take me now. What is it that I cannot do well? I am a good cook, good singer, etc. It is to your disadvantage (smile). It is better I live and work hard for you." I also told God, "Should you make me learn how to receive radiation treatment so that I can be a good witness? I think God led me to different kinds of tough experience so that I can be of good help for people.

Here Mi-Young is struggling to find the meaning of her suffering in terms of her relationship with God. Standing in a third space of uncertainty, she is constantly moving between submission to God's will and a strong appeal to God.

The interviewees' narratives also show their negotiations with their Korean American churches and church teachings. As Jung Ha Kim suggests, although Korean American churches are oppressive, they are liberating for Korean American women because they also give the women a space in which their ethnic and racial identity is affirmed and help them build the spiritual power they need to cope with difficult domestic situations. The cases of Young-Ja, Mi-Young, and Sun-Hee show that women gain power for resistance from the church's teachings, which give them a way to interpret the realities they face productively and to survive patriarchy with strength and optimism. Notably, the interviewed women used their biblical and theological knowledge flexibly, depending on the situations and persons they encountered.

The interviewed women are neither fully transcendent nor fully historicized. They are neither fully corporeal nor fully incorporeal. They are both transcendental and historically embedded. They hold the tension between despair and positive meaning-making. They move between complicity and resistance. The interviewed women occupy the third space by constant negotiating and questioning. As Rahner says, the ways they pursue freedom and responsibility are never static. They constantly oscillate between transcendentality and historicity and between God and the mundane. They are inconsistent, contradictory, ambivalent, dynamic.

A third space is also found in the mysterious realm of the interviewed women's desire and capacity for freedom and transcendence. According to Rahner, human beings always actively search for deeper meaning. Their quest for a connection with a more fundamental reality moves them beyond knowing only particular objects and their temporal and spatial limitedness. Rahner describes this aspect of human knowing as mystery and claims that although human beings have capability for transcendental knowing, they cannot perfectly grasp God. Our knowing is an act of constantly encountering mystery, being grasped by God, and it helps confirm that the interviewees, active meaning-makers all, operate from third space.

According to Rahner, human transcendence is not outward; it emerges from their embeddedness in everyday life. The women in this study are undeniably temporally and spatially limited and historically embedded, and they transcend their historicity by constantly questioning their situations, opening themselves to the infinite realm, transcending their current reality, and actualizing their potentialities. Their everyday life is not just a space of subordination and victimization. It is a third space, mediating their

relationship with God and others. There they apply their biblical and theological knowledge to their domestic life and relationship with family. There their knowing of God and openness toward God emerges.

Rahner's concept of "spirit in the world" complements other theories' accounts of the relation between history and transcendence by making it clear that transcendence emerges from historicity and history does not exist without a transcendental dimension. By claiming that the interviewed women show capability for transcendence, I do not deny that their resistance—their questioning, their meaning-making—may also demonstrate self-deception, false-consciousness, or a narrow perspective. As Rahner claims, no one asks questions completely free of their situatedness. The women's paradoxical resistance amid subordination resonates with Rahner's paradox of transcendence and history, confirming that women's everyday life and cultural and historical embeddedness holds a transcendent dimension.

A third space is an opening for further development that has as its goal self-actualization and genuine relationship with God. The task in that opening is not separation from openness and uncertainty but a more creative engagement with it. The opportunity given is to develop capability to engage with an undetermined state, to learn how to relate to God and oneself as mystery, to develop knowledge as being grasped by God. The creation of this space is the goal of the liberative religious education I would wish for the women who participated in this study.

Conclusion

In providing a theological dimension, Rahner's theology complements the accounts of third space and the paradox of women's subordination and resistance suggested by

Bhabha and Winnicott. As we saw in Chapter 2, Homi Bhabha developed concepts of third space and hybridity to challenge the unified notion of colonial power and the binary perception of oppression and domination. A third space for Bhabha mediates the polarities of postcolonial relations. The clear boundaries and categories supporting the colonial power are disrupted by a third space of negotiation and complex interactions between subjects. In Chapter 4, I discussed how Winnicott developed the notion of transitional space to describe the struggle between me (authentic self) and not-me (imposed self) in one's search for a true identity. I also mentioned that Winnicott saw this struggle as a struggle between relatedness to and separatedness from others.

In this chapter, I engaged with a Rahnerian reading of the third space and the ambivalence found in Korean American women's narratives to challenge the binary distinction between women's subordination and resistance and between submission to God and true freedom in God's presence. With such a reading, I argued that women's subordination and resistance can and should be discussed with more nuance and complexity by considering the spiritual and transcendental aspects of their experience. And I conclude that, given a Rahnerian image of a third space, a theological anthropology of resistance can capture both women's subordination and their capability for playful negotiation and transcendence that includes not only their move away from self-defeating complicity in oppressive structures but also a deeper, more powerful relationship to God and authentic self.

From this Rahnerian reading of third space in the interviewees' narratives, I have also proposed a new concept of resistance as the creative holding of tensions in third space between historicity and transcendence. I have addressed how bringing a theological

and spiritual dimension to bear upon interpretations of women's experience enriches and deepens the analysis. In the next chapter, I present elements of a theological anthropology of third space, images of resistance, and implications for liberative religious education.

Chapter 6

Theological Anthropology of Third Space and Religious Education for Resistance

How should a religious educator conceptualize the learners' capacity for resistance, given their ambivalent subjectivity and constant negotiations of identity and agency in their struggle with oppressive forces? What must a theological anthropology of resistance take into account? My main argument in this study is that the ways in which the eleven Korean American women I interviewed negotiate their agency and identity challenge a religious educator to complicate her theological anthropology of resistance, and this dissertation has been an effort to search for a concept of resistance that can address women's creative agency *and* the constraints of the oppressive systems that form their contexts.

My goal in this chapter is to build the conceptual grounds of what I call "a theological anthropology of third space" based on the mutual conversations held in previous chapters with relevant theorists and in light of my interviews. Constructing a theological system is beyond the scope of this project, and I do not propose my theological anthropology as a totalizing vision for universal application. Rather, this chapter lays out those conceptual elements for a theological anthropology that is relevant for the interviewees in this study.

Taken together, these elements form a picture of the women's subjectivity adequate to the needs of a religious educator. Taking a further step, I propose a concept and images of resistance that would help a religious educator develop liberative goals and teaching methods appropriate to this population of women. Last, I discuss the broader implications of such a theological understanding of the learners for liberative religious

education itself. Specifically, I discuss how a theological anthropology of third space influences educators' epistemology, the definition of religious education, and church communities as places for education.

A Theological Anthropology of Third Space

In Chapter 1, I suggested that a theological anthropology of resistance should pay attention to the complex and paradoxical dynamics between subordination and resistance, between the power of oppressive environments and women's capacity for transcendentality, and between relationality and desire for independence. Mutually critical conversations between Rahner and other conversation partners not only confirmed the significance of such an approach but enriched it. That is, I argue in this section of the chapter that a theological anthropology of third space, as the basis of a liberative religious education, takes the following elements seriously: simultaneously considering the power of oppressive systems and human capability for transcendence; carefully observing women's struggle between their subjective world and objective reality and between historicity and transcendence; valuing both the contingent self and normative/dynamic visions of self; and paying attention to the paradoxical relation between subordination and resistance.

Between Constraint and Freedom

A theological anthropology of third space simultaneously considers both the debilitating power of oppressive systems and learners' capacity for transcendence. From the interviewees' narratives and different theoretical perspectives on women's subjectivity, one realizes the need to grapple with both factors when accounting for women's struggle against power relations. As a way to maintain such a both-and perspective, a religious

educator as a theologian is expected to engage with a sociocultural and socioeconomic analysis of the learners' situatedness and an exploration of their active meaning-making as an act of transcendence. As demonstrated in Chapter 1, it was critical for me to build my interpretation of the interviewees' narratives upon sociocultural and socioeconomic analyses of their situatedness.

Drawing on the contention of Judith Butler, Tom Beaudoin, and feminist theologians that people cannot easily remove themselves from their network of power relations, a theological anthropology must attend closely to the ways oppression debilitates women's capability for transcendence and resistance. As seen in Butler and Bhabha in Chapter 2, one's subjectivity is itself contingent upon discursive relations of different sociocultural contexts. Feminist theologians and Rahner further assert that human freedom and transcendentality is given to all human beings but can be significantly diminished by their experience of sin and evil. A theological anthropology of women's resistance should therefore begin by understanding women's diminished ability to claim their voice.

Such an approach, however, should not regard socioeconomic and sociocultural mechanisms as determining factors. As I have discussed throughout this project, women engage oppressive contexts with active meaning-making and constant questioning. When a religious educator pays attention to how the learners negotiate different power relations with creative agency, she will gain a more comprehensive understanding of their subjectivity. In other words, women's potential for resistance and transcendentality is not necessarily destroyed by their embeddedness in oppressive power relations or social sin.

Butler, as we saw in Chapter 2, takes a cautious position, with her notion of performativity, on the determining influence of power relations on human subjectivity. Although she refuses to engage in a prescriptive agenda for intentional resistance, she acknowledges that there is always a possibility of subverting oppressive forces. Bhabha addresses the need to maintain the notion of hybrid subjectivities capable of disrupting categories and identities. Although neither theorist engages a religious interpretation of subversion, I contend that it is crucial to understand women's resilience and sustenance in their experience of marginalization and gender inequality in religious and theological terms.

I also contend that, while Winnicott's theory does not directly engage the theological dimension of human subjectivity, it is rich with theological implications. The sustaining power of human transcendentality is what feminist theologians try to assert in their valorization of women's resistance. As Rahner's theological anthropology teaches us, God's grace transcends the specific human experience of compromised freedom. It is therefore important to bring Rahner's theology to the table, particularly because the narratives of the interviewees clearly reveal their capability to ask questions transcending their own embeddedness. The tragic vision of human beings presented by Butler and feminist theologians is, in this sense, complemented by Rahner's view of the persistent work of God's grace, a view that some of the interviewees would likely recognize and accept. Rahner's notion of human transcendentality concretizes and expands notions of transcendence implied by Bhabha, Winnicott, and feminist theologians by adding the theological dimension—human relationship with God and God's grace—as the key aspect of self-transcendence. Feminist theologians and Rahner also support liberative

religious educators' political vision and the tasks of reclaiming women's agency and resisting the invisibility and silence of marginalized women.

A theological anthropology of third space must consider it important to see women's ambivalent subjectivity as a sign of their active meaning-making. I have argued that women's different forms of submission should not be understood simply as a sign of internal oppression but also as their active negotiation of status and identity. The interviewed women participate in constructing their subjectivity, and are not just products of social and discursive power relations. As discussed in Chapter 4, Mahoney and Yngvesson point out the absence of this point in Butler's theory. According to them, Butler fails to describe how women participate in the construction of subjectivity through active meaning-making in relational context. I add that, although the interviewees' negotiations and identity construction can be described with Bhabha's notion of interstitial third space, his image of the subject is also passive.

As is supported by Robert Kegan and Daniel Stern, women clearly engage in active meaning-making in relationships and social support. Rahner's notion of human beings as constantly questioning their current existence adds a significant theological dimension to this act of meaning-making. As addressed in Chapter 5, such ability to question constitutes the core of human transcendence according to Rahner.

Between Subjective and Objective Realities, Historicity and Transcendence

A theological anthropology of third space carefully observes women's constant movement between their subjective world and objective reality and between historicity and transcendence. Stern's view of the subject as an active meaning-maker, discussed in Chapter 4, helps one discuss social construction of agency but does not explain what

motivates a person to resistance. Mahoney and Yngvesson, therefore, turn to Winnicott's theory in their effort to articulate the motivation for resisting from a subordinated position. Arguing for the need to overcome a binary perception of a self either as determined or as determining, they borrow Winnicott's insight that creative agency emerges from people's struggle to create a stasis in which their subjective world and objective reality are separate yet interrelated. This notion of a self simultaneously related and separated helps one describe the interviewees' subjectivity.

Among the interviewed women, a relational dimension was critical to their experience of resistance. As I argued in Chapter 1, the biggest influence on the interviewed women's choices about behavior and attitude was their commitment to relationships. In the end, both women's relationship with other people and with God must be considered, as must the interrelatedness of the two dimensions of women's relationality. Such a consideration of intersubjectivity should include attention to others' social positions and living conditions and their visions for solidarity and empowerment, all of which are implied in Benjamin's notion of mutual recognition.

Alongside their desire to belong, however, the interviewed women also try to be independent. Their narratives are as full of their conscious and unconscious participation in patriarchy as they are full of their struggles to maintain their own agency and voices. Likewise, they actively develop their own ways of thinking theologically while remaining under the deep influence of the teachings of the churches. All the while, as Chapter 1 clarified, they are sharply aware of their embeddedness in the dominant structures inside and outside their homes. As Mahoney and Yngvesson demonstrate, Winnicott's notion of transitional space is helpful here. In an in-between space, women's agency belongs

neither to the self nor to society but to both simultaneously. Their creative agency emerges from their struggle to be both related and separated at the same time. This perspective allows one to approach the interviewees' contradictory self-conceptions as a place of potential rather than merely as a sign of confusion or victimization.

As a way of describing women's simultaneous relationality and effort for independence, a theological anthropology of third space takes seriously Rahner's notion of human beings as a mid-point constantly oscillating between historicity and transcendence. This concept expands Winnicott's concept of the self in the space between subjective world and objective reality. By incorporating a theological dimension into human subjectivity, Winnicott's perspective of intersubjectivity is enriched. In Chapter 5, I described the interviewees' movement between historicity and transcendence using examples of their attitudes toward work and their concern for the future of Korean American communities. In other words, many Korean American women, including some of my interviewees, struggle between their everyday commitment to the thriving of their families through their labor and their desire to participate in and meaningfully contribute to larger communities.

Rahner's view of human beings as mid-point teaches one that the women of this study are neither fully transcendent nor fully historicized. At the same time, they are both transcendental and historically embedded. They stand in the space between embeddedness in dominant structures and critique of the systems. They also constantly move between God and the world in their everyday life. Such a dynamic image of women is critical in a theological anthropology of third space.

Both Contingent and Normative/Dynamic

A theological anthropology of third space values images of a fluid and contingent self, alongside normative visions of self. As discussed in Chapter 2, post-critical pedagogies challenge a liberative educator to ask how one can design liberative education for women without resorting to a totalizing or essentializing vision. They urge religious educators to remain sensitively aware of learners' multiple positions and locations in various social contexts to avoid allowing their own positions and power to separate them from the learners' realities, especially those who are marginalized. Post-critical pedagogy also tasks religious educators with attending to differences among learners instead of grouping them homogeneously, and urges educators to critically reflect on their views of community by constantly checking their commitment to "the concrete other."[478]

While staying alert to the danger of totalizing or essentializing claims, religious educators need some form of normative language to be able to envision human potential for transcendence. Winnicott's concept of healthy living is useful here, presenting as it does a dynamic self as a normative view of self. The dynamic self can transcend the binaries between me and not-me by acting from the in-between space with creative agency. For religious educators, this vision of self helpfully focuses on one's capability for creatively holding tensions in the interplay of connectedness and separatedness.

Rahner takes this dynamic view of the human subject a step further by providing a theologically developed normative view of true self. As mentioned above, Rahner argues that human beings are given the capability and responsibility to pursue self-realization. We have freedom to choose transcendence in the midst of contradictory discourses. For Rahner, one's authentic self-realization is determined by God. In other words, our

[478] Teevan, "Challenges to the Role of Theological Anthropology," 592.

freedom is given so that we can realize who we truly are in front of God. Rahner's emphasis on the significance of human responsibility also aids religious educators' endeavor to craft a theological anthropology of resistance. He claims it is our responsibility to act on our potential for transcendence. In other words, potential for resistance is innate in human nature, and fulfilling our human responsibility to act is impetus for resistance against forces that would hinder that transcendence. Rahner adds a theological and ethical dimension to the concept of freedom and responsibility, which is not explicitly found in Winnicott or Benjamin. From Rahner's perspective, while the women in this study are capable and free to respond to their transcendentality, they are also called to engagement with resistance.

A religious educator benefits from this both-and approach of taking seriously the images of contingent self and dynamic/normative self. Concern for the contingency of the subject does not make a search for a normative view of self impossible. Both images of self are fruitfully kept in mind.

Between Subordination and Resistance

As a key element of a useable resistance, a theological anthropology of third space should accept the paradox between subordination and resistance and between historicity and transcendentality. As we saw in Chapter 1, the interviewees' everyday life is marked by a paradoxical relation between subordination and resistance. In other words, the women's resistance paradoxically emerges from their everyday life and their historical and social embeddedness. Put another way, one's creative agency and resistance emerge from her struggle with her status as subordinate. This notion of resistance within ordinary

experience is more relevant for understanding the interviewed women than the image of resistance as separation or disconnection.

Paradox has been present in the theories of all my conversation partners. Butler's and Bhabha's insight that subversion is present in all situations of subordination provides an important clue for understanding Korean American women's ambivalent subjectivity. Feminist and womanist theologians contribute helpful theological language to discuss the paradox found in women's submission and resistance. In Winnicott's theory, Mahoney and Yngvesson find a theoretical ground to account for how women develop creative agency in their struggle with unequal relationships. Benjamin's notion of the paradox of recognition captures the way one's resistance is motivated by the recognition of powerful others. Finally, Rahner enriches the image of paradoxical resistance with his assertion that human beings pursue transcendence from a place of embeddedness in everyday life. As I argued in Chapter 5, Rahner's notion of "spirit in the world" captures the paradox between historicity and transcendence: it is not possible to question one's own situation completely free of situatedness. Rahner asserts that human transcendence always derives from a person's unique historicity. Therefore, the interviewees' everyday life and historical, social, and cultural embeddedness holds a transcendent dimension.

Further, and as stated elsewhere many times, women's experience of subordination and resistance should not be understood using a binary distinction between subordination/victimization and resistance/agency. As I discussed in Chapter 1, one cannot easily claim that the interviewed women are passive victims of patriarchy. They show agency both in resisting and in acting complicitly with the system. While they persistently overcome the hardships in their life, some of which are direct results of their

oppressive sociocultural contexts, they also reveal powerful attachment to the value systems that oppress them. Thus, the women's inconsistent and contradictory behaviors should be understood not just as a sign of victimization but as the result of their constant negotiation and active meaning-making. Such a conceptual framework appropriately addresses the often fuzzy areas of women's acts, and helps observers pay attention to the complexity of women's agency. As Patricia Hill Collins notes, "Oppression and resistance remain intricately linked such that the shape of one influences that of the other. At the same time, this relationship is far more complex than a simple model of permanent oppressors and perpetual victims."[479] In light of women's lived experience, a binary perception of subordination and resistance is irrelevant to analyzing women's response to multi-layered oppression.

Resistance as Creatively Holding Tension in the Third Space

From the foregoing discussions and mutual conversations, we have come up with a concept of resistance: a creative holding of tensions in the space between oppressors and the oppressed, self and others, suffering and love, and the divine and the world. This notion of resistance emerges from an active affirmation of the ambivalence and paradox of human subjectivity we observed in women's narratives. Based on the conceptions discussed so far, one can say that the third space becomes a realm of resistance in the following sense.

Resistance is about disrupting boundaries and categories with a counter-gaze. In a third space, all of the boundaries and categories of women's identity get re-situated and re-inscribed. Bhabha's concept of third space describes the dynamics of postcolonial

[479] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*: *Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 274.

resistance wherein one finds a paradoxical emergence of agency and resistance through "unpredictable presence" and subversions of power relations between the colonizers and the colonized.[480] Korean feminist theologian Namsoon Kang addresses the potential of the third space this way:

> The monolithic categories of gender, class, race, or ethnicity are re-situated in terms of borderline-crossings and in-between spaces—the Third Space of hybridity. The Third Space as an extended concept of hybridity, and as "the chosen marginality," is a space of resistance in the postcolonial world and a strategy that will re-inscribe the past culture and other neighboring cultures.[481]

With the notions of an "impossible object" and "counter-gaze," Bhabha explains such possibility of resistance:

> The subject cannot be apprehended without the absence or invisibility that constitutes it . . . and the migrant woman can subvert the perverse satisfaction of the racist, masculinist gaze that disavowed her presence, by presenting it with an anxious absence, a counter-gaze that turns the discriminatory look, which denies her cultural and sexual difference, back on itself.

That is, women's mirroring back of oppressive representation is not controllable by the oppressor.

Resistance is an active search for deeper meaning. One begins resistance by questioning. As discussed above, women resist with active meaning-making and, as Rahner contends, human beings have a fundamental capability to question their reality. From constant questioning, new meanings emerge. According to Winnicott, children and adults try to become their true self by engaging in the intersubjective space between subjective realm and objective reality. In Rahner's theology also, one starts a search for true self in the space between historicity and transcendence. From his perspective, one's true self forms amid the constant oscillation between immediate everyday concerns and

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[480] Bhabha, *Locations of Culture*, 114.
[481] Joerg Rieger, "Liberating God-Talk: Postcolonialism and the Challenge of the Margins," in *Postcolonial Theologies*, eds. Keller et al., 217.

desire for transcendence. Thus resistance may be said to be a search for true self in third space.

When all these theorists' notions are seen together, the primary motivation for women's resistance may be said to be love and compassion. Mahoney and Yngvesson provide a compelling account of what motivates women to engage with resistance, arguing that one's struggle with unequal relations is an important motivation for creative agency. They find further motivation for resistance in Benjamin's notion of mutual recognition, which implicitly mentions love. Rahner provides a more powerful way of discussing motivation for resistance: love for God, which is striving for authentic self-realization, and love for others engendered by God's grace.

In Wendy Farley's view, compassion is a significant motivation for resistance against evil and radical suffering. She contends that resistance arising out of compassion functions in two ways: "to resist the causes of suffering" and "to resist the power of suffering to dominate sufferers."[482]

> Compassion becomes the norm for the *trustworthy* exercise of power with those who suffer from the results of coercive and dehumanizing power. Compassion is clearly not simply consolation or pity. Compassion arises through our courage to stand beside the one who suffers, recognizing here too is one whom God loves and one in whom we see our own vulnerability. Compassion is the exercise of love that honors the integrity and dignity of each life. Therefore it fiercely resists the forces of evil that seek to deform or destroy human life. To the victim who experienced helplessness and betrayal, compassion offers love's empowerment and courage to resist the dehumanizing consequences of victimization.[483]

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[482] Wendy Farley, *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion: A Contemporary Theodicy* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 116.

[483] Nancy J. Ramsay, "Compassionate Resistance: An Ethic for Pastoral Care and Counseling, *Journal of Pastoral Care* 52, no. 3 (Fall 1998): 219.

Resistance rising out of compassion does not pursue interruption or radical alteration of a situation but is an effort to restore "wholeness and freedom" to those who are suffering.[484]

Resistance is an act of finding one's true self in the midst of everyday experience, as Rahner contends. In this sense, Farley claims that compassionate resistance is "incarnational, interactive." She notes:

> It is present to sufferers as the power to resist their suffering in whatever ways are possible within the confines of a particular situation. Compassion cannot magically alter the course of geological history in order to save a village from a natural disaster; such a response to suffering and its causes is not contained within the parameters of the event. Compassion is a power to redeem from suffering, but one made determinate by the specific possibilities contained in any actual situation.[485]

The concept of resistance developed by Mahoney and Yngvesson in conversation with Winnicott and Benjamin also addresses reaching authentic self-realization from the position of social embeddedness. Russell R. Reno reflects this notion of resistance in the following interpretation of Rahner, and focuses on the potential to transcend by virtue of being aware of ordinary experience:

> Rahner's position is that the human person is capable of the "more" of transcendence without coming untethered from ordinary life. We are more than particular participants in the natural order; we are not simply "at home" in our part of the world. . . . Rahner does not regard the extraordinary "more" of human existence as a derogation of our particular place in the world. Instead, for Rahner, the "more" is built into the particularity of our lives. The more we are ourselves, the more we attend to the particular "facts" of our ordinary lives, the greater our sense of the whole. The extraordinary is to be found in and through the ordinary. In short, our sense of ourselves is shaped in the form of the Christian view of transcendence.[486]

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[484] Farley, *Tragic Vision and Divine Compassion*, 116.
[485] Ibid.
[486] Russell R. Reno, *The Ordinary Transformed: Karl Rahner and the Christian Vision of Transcendence* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 178–179.

This image of resistance reflects those presented by the feminist theorists and theologians we saw in Chapter 3. One of the most important tasks of feminist theologians is to claim women's divine transcendentality in the midst of their everyday struggles. A theological anthropology of women's resistance affirms such endeavor.

Although resistance is often equated only with autonomy, resistance is in fact a movement into relationality. Struggling between connectedness and separatedness, one moves into a more solid and profound relationship with others and God. This dynamic is similar to Marjorie Suchocki's horizontal notion of self-transcendence through memory, empathy, and imagination.[487] One's empathetic encounter with others makes resistance possible when a relationship that is mutually enriching exists between the subjects.[488] Put simply, resistance transforms relationships. In the third space of resistance, the distinction between self and others becomes blurred and unstable, yet in its relationality it is paradoxically a place of solidarity. Resistance also envisions "infinite possibilities" of the future through imagination.[489]

However, such space does not eschew autonomy and independence, and feminist emphases on relationality should not lead subaltern women to abandon their need for autonomy. It is important that a theological anthropology for Korean American women emphasize the women's need for independence and autonomy even as it takes into account feminist discussions of women as relational beings. As Marianne Janack argues, "[C]laims to autonomy and an authentic self" are necessary for those who are assigned their identities by others.[490] As Winnicott, Kegan, and Rahner all would agree, the third

[487] Suchocki, *The Fall to Violence*.
[488] Ibid., 40.
[489] Ibid., 41.
[490] Marianne Janack, "Feminists Rethink the Self," *Social Theory and Practice* 25, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 3.

space of resistance is for creatively coping with the dynamic tension between independence and dependence.

Resistance is a journey filled with constant negotiations of ambiguities and uncertainties, not a separation or disconnection from repressive relations. Bhabha notes, "The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation."[491] Through repeated questioning and negotiations, the third space opens up new meanings and representations. One resists by constantly engaging with the third space of interplay between historicity and transcendentality, not by cutting out the oppressive elements. Wonhee Anne Joh argues that resistance as disconnection "tends to occlude the complexity of oppression, for it relies on modern dichotomies of self/Other, oppressor/oppressed, male/female."[492] She contends that the complicated experience of women, immigrants, and those who are marginalized makes such a solution irrelevant. The interviewed women's effort to resist is a pilgrimage that includes not only numerous failures and difficulties but also the powerful sustenance of relationality and transcendence.

Resistance is a willingness to engage with and be grasped by the mysterious dimension of human life. It is about one's openness and surrender to God as mystery and holy other. Resistance brings the experience of the divine. It is similar to what Susan Abraham calls mysticism:

> Mysticism is the courage to enter into a relationship with God who is a personal, holy, loving mystery and whom we address in the acknowledgement of an essential difference between creator and creature as a "Thou." It is therefore an

[491] Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration,* (London: Routledge, 1990), 211.
[492] Wonhee Anne Joh, "The Transgressive Power of Jeong," in *Postcolonial Theologies,* eds. Keller et al., 152.

> experience of openness, otherness, and transcendence in the attempt to grasp the wholly other. [493]

As Abraham suggests about mysticism, one needs to continue engaging with third space as it is the space of "being grasped by God" in Rahner's words.

Here, it is worth discussing Rahner's notion of the mysticism of the everyday. Rahner argues that human experiences of transcendental realm should be revealed in their ordinary lives. Rita Nakashima Brock notes that "the sacred is embedded in life's ambiguities, and the human task is to discern its power, for good and ill. Human goodness is found in the capacity to be wise and negotiate relationships that maintain life and harmony."[494] As women's transcendence paradoxically emerges from their historicity, full of ambiguity and uncertainty, such everyday mysticism is not easily perceived or represented. The destructive power of sin and evil on women's capability for resistance makes it more difficult to witness such encounters with the divine. I argue in this dissertation that a religious educator should endeavor to discover and reveal women's everyday mysticism.

Third Space and Liberative Religious Education

The above elements of a theological anthropology of third space and a new concept of resistance sketch the potential to develop theories and practices of liberative religious education. Most fundamentally, a theological perspective on resistance constitutes a liberative religious educator's basic understanding of students and herself as a teacher. This section discusses some implications of that understanding for religious education,

[493] Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence*, 167.
[494] Brock, "Interstitial Integrity," 188.

particularly for educators' epistemology and their approaches to teaching and learning, and the roles of church communities as educational settings.

An Expanded Definition of Knowing

A theological understanding of resistance raises pointed questions for religious educators: How does Korean American women's experience in the third space influence an educator's understanding of human knowing? How does the proposed theological anthropology of third space challenge a religious educator's concept of knowing? How should an educator conceptualize knowing in order to understand the learners' experience of constantly moving between historicity and transcendence and between subjective and objective reality?

A liberative religious educator acknowledges the situatedness and contingency of human knowing. As poststructuralist and postcolonial theorists argue, knowledge is always "situated, historicized, limited, fractured, and always under change" for women living in the third space.[495] Due to the contingent nature of human knowing, one's knowledge is partial and incomplete. This means that no theological and educational propositions can be treated as absolute or universal. For example, my theological proposition and its implications for religious education in this project is an attempt to find a relevant approach specifically for the interviewed women, not a prescription for all Korean American women.

The situated and contingent nature of knowing is effectively approached with the framework that Theodore Brelsford calls "politicized knowing." [496] As Brelsford points out, knowing has been viewed as a "political enterprise" by Paulo Freire, black liberation

[495] Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross*, xv.
[496] Theodore Brelsford, "Politicized Knowing."

theologians, feminist theorists, and philosophers such as Derrida and Foucault. These theorists have in turn pointed out how traditional methods of knowing were often used to suppress other approaches, such as those employed by women and black people. In taking up a political form of knowing, a religious educator should ask who is served by the knowledge being taught and how it is produced, reproduced, and transformed. They also should explore how knowledge can be used as critique.

Liberative religious education with a goal of empowering women refuses an epistemology based on dichotomy and hierarchy. When a teacher takes into serious consideration the complex dynamics of women's submission and resistance, any hierarchy of knowledge should be challenged. Avoiding the conceptual dichotomy between public knowledge and private knowledge, a religious educator should actively affirm women's everyday knowledge as a source of education. As Courtney Goto contends along with Madeleine R. Grumet, women's wisdom and domestic knowledge, which have been regarded as the opposite of knowledge in public settings, should be reclaimed in education.[497]

A tendency to absolutize and prioritize objective knowledge and knowledge derived from reason in education should also be challenged. Mary Elizabeth Moore points out "the myth of objectivity" that reigns in U.S. public education. She particularly challenges how teaching religion has been relegated to the private sphere of life under the modernist dichotomy of private/subjective and public/objective knowledge.[498] Moore suggests that the teachers of religion replace the myth of objectivity with an

[497] Courtney T. Goto, "Pretending to Be Japanese: Artistic Play in a Japanese-American Church and Family," *Religious Education* 103, no. 4 (2008): 441; Madeleine R. Grumet, "Curriculum and the Art of Daily Life," *Reflections from the Heart of Educational Inquiry: Understanding Curriculum and Teaching through the Arts*, ed. George Willis and William Henry Schubert (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991), 74–89.
[498] Apart from Moore's thesis, it may be noted that the U.S. constitutional guarantee of separation of church and state makes teaching religion in public schools extremely difficult.

intersubjective approach, in which teachers and students acknowledge each other as subjects with awareness, openness, and respect for their different perspectives and social positions.[499] Kate Siejk, focusing on religious education itself, challenges the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity and between reason and emotion that she finds there. She argues that these dichotomies, based on the denial of human relatedness and interdependence, represent a limited approach to religious education.[500]

Aware of the partial and contingent nature of human knowing, a religious educator also recognizes the transcendent nature of human knowing. As Rahner teaches us, human knowledge of God is transcendental because God's self-communication constitutes the core of human beings. For Rahner, human knowing and human loving always take place against the backdrop of the absolute holy mystery of God. All human acts of knowing and all human acts of loving take place in an at-least-implicit awareness of God as their ultimate background and goal. As human being cannot help but question their situations and seek deeper dimensions of their experience, an epistemology for liberative religious education for the women in third space affirms our "enduring drive to know and to love in an unlimited way."[501]

Following Rahner, knowledge is not about grasping but about being grasped by God. Knowing is an act of love and surrender to mystery. Human beings' yearning to connect with a more fundamental reality moves them beyond categorical knowing. Yet although human beings are given the capability for transcendental knowing, they cannot grasp God perfectly. Therefore, knowing is constant act of encountering mystery. As

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[499] Mary Elizabeth Mullino Moore, "The Myth of Objectivity in Public Education: Toward the Intersubjective Teaching of Religion" *Religious Education* 90, no. 2 (1995): 207-225.
[500] Kate Siejk, "Toward a Holistic Religious Education: Reflections and Pedagogical Possibilities," *Religious Education* 89, no. 2 (1994): 271-292.
[501] Kelly, *Karl Rahner: Theologian of the Graced Search for Meaning*, 4.

Rahner contends, human beings question and reach out into the mystery by coming back to themselves. In other words, women's search for transcendental knowing is a journey toward true self.

Rahner's view of human knowing characterized by openness to God and the mysterious dimension of human beings as epistemic beings complements Mahoney and Yngvesson's view of human beings as active meaning-makers with a transcendental vision. Such a view helps one address the interviewed women's potential for transcendental knowing. For Rahner, transcendental knowing and everyday knowing (what he calls categorical knowing) are not two different realms but two sides of one experience. This viewpoint of human knowing challenges the hierarchical conception of knowledge prevalent in women's life.

Tasks and Methods of Religious Education

Judith Butler and Tom Beaudoin remind us that a religious educator cannot expect learners easily to escape power dynamics and the influence of oppressive forces. Therefore, the primary goal of education is not just freedom in the sense of transcending the oppressive forces in power relations, although such a goal should be always in a liberative educator's vision. What also matters is how creatively learners can hold tension in the third space. But how does this realization shape the tasks of religious education? How can a religious educator help the learners develop such creative agency? I contend the alternative notion of resistance given above reshapes the goals and methods of religious education. It adds to, rather than replacing, previous approaches to liberative religious education.

Borrowing Winnicott's idea, I conceptualize a practice of religious education as play. For Winnicott, a child's play is not just about the child's exploration of an object. It is also about the child's attempt to become a self. The child plays in the transitional space between inner life and outer world. As mentioned in Chapter 4, for Winnicott, a genuine life (for adults and children alike) is similar to play between subjective fantasy and objective reality, and life is like play in the intersubjective space. Winnicott also conceptualized psychotherapy as a form of playing, characterizing it as "two people playing together."[502] In the space of play, one employs and develops creativity and spontaneity, which Winnicott regarded as crucial for a healthy life. In adults' life, according to Winnicott, religious practice, art, or any cultural activity can reintroduce play.

Inspired by Winnicott and others who have explored the multi-layered and multi-formed manifestations of play, I suggest that a practice of liberative religious education is an invitation to play. Play brings learners to unconstrained moments of recognizing the creative and imaginative potential of the third space in everyday life. Theologically speaking, it is our invitation of the Holy Spirit into the classroom or any learning space. Through a pedagogy of play, teachers and students discover and celebrate renewed meanings and dimensions in their struggles and relationships with God and others in the in-between spaces. So how does religious education as play unfold in a concrete educational setting? The following characteristics can be found in a practice of religious education when it is approached as play.

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[502] D. W. Winnicott, "Playing: A Theoretical Statement," *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock, 1971), 65.

First, one of the most important tasks of liberative religious education is fostering imagination, as imagination is critical for empowerment. Therefore, nurturing the students' ability to imagine is essential. I suggest here that such a task can be accomplished by attending to learners' movement in third space. Without imagination, one cannot sustain herself in the in-between space because the sense of belonging fully to no category, identity, or statute may bring deep pain, even despair. A practice of liberative religious education should be work to evoke learners' transcendentality by promoting the value of imagination.

Imagination is critical for play. As Christine Wenderoth notes, play is about engaging with "two worlds" in a space that is neither world.[503] Maria Harris contends that "teaching is an act not only of the imagination, but of the *religious* imagination."[504] Religious teaching, according to Harris, helps one value "*mystery*, the *numinous*, and the *mystical*."[505] Theodore Brelsford proposes that fostering imaginative faith should be a goal of religious education, having posed himself the following important questions: "How can we honor and preserve the ongoing relevance of our traditions with clear consciousness of [learners'] historical contingency? How can we assess the political dynamics of our own beliefs without undermining the possibility of belief?"[506] These are relevant questions also for a religious educator for the interviewed women, who struggle between the need to value the contingency of the subject, knowing, and tradition, and the need to hold onto normative views of self, knowing, and belief. If expanding one's

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[503] Christine Wenderoth, "Play and Apologetics," Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1982, Available online at http://proxy.library.emory.edu; Goto, "Pretending to Be Japanese," 448.
[504] Maria Harris, *Teaching and the Religious Imagination: An Essay in the Theology of Teaching* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987), 10; emphasis in the original, here and following quotation.
[505] Harris, *Teaching and the Religious Imagination*, 13.
[506] Brelsford, "Politicized Knowledge," 69.

capacity for imagining through play can help develop a capability for creatively holding tensions in third space, play should be welcomed in religious education.

A second important task of religious educational practice as play is connection-making. Those who are at the margin struggling in the third space often experience a severe sense of being lost, and, without gaining the sense of being connected to God, others, and the world, they remain lost. Liberation is a process of claiming our connection to authentic self and to others through God's grace. An important task of a religious educator is to help the learners recover and reclaim these connections through play. Based on Winnicott's notion of the space between the subjective world and objective reality, Guy Allen argues that a successful class is one in which students make connections—"between inner world and outer world, between self and other, between past and present."[507] Liberative religious education can help women develop their creative agency and wisdom to make connections between themselves and others and between their historicity and their capacity for transcendence. At the same time, Winnicott and Kegan have taught us that an authentic state of connectedness is possible when it is balanced with separatedness. Making connections between these two realms means sustaining the tensions between them, maintaining relatedess and separatedness simultaneously.

Third, a practice of religious education can be like play without prescription. As we saw in chapter 2, if an educator's liberative agenda is prescribed with many rules and formulas about conceptualizing freedom, autonomy, and emancipation, it may prevent her effort from being genuinely liberating. Therefore, an important task of an educator is

[507] Guy Allen, "The 'Good-Enough' Teacher and the Authentic Student," in *A Pedagogy of Becoming*, ed. Jon Mills (New York: Rodopi, 2002), 150.

to constantly explore the contextual relevance of her approaches. In his description of play, Winnicott emphasizes the importance of "open-ended games" without "agreed-upon rules."[508] In the "reciprocal free-association" common in children's play, Winnicott found an important insight for psychoanalysis: much of the value of play for therapists is its incalculability. He notes, "Playing is inherently exciting and precarious."[509] Similarly, a religious educator should take the openness of play seriously in her educational endeavor. In Rahnerian language, a practice of religious education as play is an adventure leading in the direction of the mystery of God and the learners themselves.

Fourth, where such openness is valued, educators and learners do not regard any knowledge or values as absolute. As mentioned above, religious education as play rejects male-centered hierarchical notions of knowing. Instead, it encourages the learners to reclaim and celebrate their knowledge gained from their domestic and private sphere. Education as play is not about "acquisition of knowledge" or "accumulation of information considered as absolutes."[510] Instead, as Winnicott says, "in playing, and perhaps only in playing, the child or adult is free to be creative."[511] Education steeped in play encourages students to develop and present new ideas. It also encourages them to take risks.[512]

Fifth, students are active participants in a practice of religious education as play. Play cannot be play when the players do not actively engage with it. A critical task of a religious educator is, therefore, to make it possible for the students to be interested in and

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[508] Phillips, *Winnicott*, 15.
[509] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 52.
[510] David Elkind, "The Role of Play in Religious Education," *Religious Education* 75, no. 3 (May–June 1980): 289.
[511] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 53.
[512] Diane J. Hymans, "Let's Play: The Contribution of the Pretend Play of Children to Religious Education in a Pluralistic Context," *Religious Education* 91, no. 3 (Summer 1996): 380.

find meaning in the learning activities. Further, her task is to help the learners to remind themselves of their being subjects in history, as the works of Rahner and Freire state. John Hull points out the problem of a "spirituality of passivity" in many people who attend church.[513] When the relationship between teachers and students is presented as "unilateral rather than as reciprocal," the result is knowledge banking, according to Freire.[514] Play, however, is impossible without participants as active agents. As David Elkind notes, the child at play "is actively transforming his or her experience rather than passively digesting it." Elkind further says:

> The value of play in education . . . is that it teaches children not about the world and themselves per se, but rather about their own *capacity for changing* the world and themselves: When children present orally, write about their experiences, paint or sculpt their impressions or express their feeling through movement, they are learning not about the world but about their own capacity to transform and to re-present it.[515]

Religious education through play encourages students' active participation in their own learning and inspires and nourishes them to transform themselves and the world.

Finally, a practice of religious education as play facilitates spiritual awakening and growth.[516] Play as an educational act is a journey to finding one's authentic self. According to Winnicott, creative play is crucial for self-discovery: "It is in playing and only in playing that the individual child or adult is able to be creative and to use the whole personality, and it is only in being creative that the individual discovers the self."[517] Through playing, one finds what interests her and freely explores her own

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[513] John M. Hull, *What Prevents Christian Adults from Learning* (London: SCM Press, 1985), 141; Diane J. Hymans, "Let's Play," 379.
[514] Elkind, "The Role of Play," 288.
[515] Ibid., 290. Emphasis in Original.
[516] Ibid., 292–293.
[517] Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, 54.

spontaneity and creativity. Courtney Goto notes that "one opens oneself to unexpected transcendence, delight, or discovery," through what she calls "artistic play."[518]

A general goal of religious education is helping learners find self-actualization through their knowledge of God. An educators' teaching methods must, however, be developed in reaction to the needs of each time, space, and group of learners. The educational objectives of developing learners' playfulness, creative agency, and ability to relate to others will facilitate their search for true self in the third space.

In terms of the relationship and interaction between teacher and learner, religious education as play in the third space refuses both teacher-centered and student-centered approaches to education. This is resonant with Barbara Shapiro's question:

> Is it possible to conceive of a pedagogy that is neither teacher-centered nor student-centered, nor even one that seesaws between the two? Is there a third space outside the binary of teacher and student that yet allows for the full subjectivity of both? Could such a space, moreover, not only allow for but productively use the teacher's deeply personal fears and fantasies as well as those of the students?[519]

Drawing on Jessica Benjamin's concept of intersubjectivity, Shapiro explores the possibility of imagining a classroom in which the teacher and the students can maintain the tension of paradox between their relatedness and separatedness. In this way of conceptualizing the relationship between teacher and students, a religious educator can address the concerns raised by post-critical pedagogies in chapter 2, namely the possibility of a teacher's exploiting the students' freedom in spite of her intention to empower them. In other words, a religious educator's practice of self-reflexivity should include constantly reflecting not only on the power dynamics in the classroom but also on

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[518] Goto, "Pretending to be Japanese," 443.
[519] Barbara Schapiro, "Negotiating a Third Space in the Classroom," *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture* 9, no. 3 (2009): 422–423.

ongoing possibilities of reformulating and redefining mutual relationships of all the participants.

Interrelationship of Church Life and Everyday Struggle

How could the interviewed women develop their creative agency in positive ways? A religious educator can help by providing what Winnicott calls a "holding environment" or "facilitating environment," as discussed in Chapter 4. A child's experience of being held by its mother is crucial for the child's development—insofar as the child is also encouraged there to explore its creativity and spontaneity and the mother recognizes the child's creative gestures. Similarly, when a teacher provides such a holding environment, the learners feel encouraged to be in touch with their true identity and their capacity for transcendence. Guy Allen contends that students engage with connection-making when a safe setting is provided.[520] In this sense, church communities as educational settings should be holding environments for the learners, environments that can creatively embrace their constant oscillation between historicity and transcendentality.

Church communities as holding environments also should be places of mutual recognition. From Winnicott and Benjamin, we learned how important mutual recognition is for one's growth and resistance. From Winnicott's perspective, a mother's recognition of her infant's gestures and one's relationship with others play a critical role in the construction of subjectivity. Benjamin's discussion of mutual recognition intensifies Winnicott's point: religious educators seeking to help learners develop a Christian self are responsible for facilitating the practice of mutual recognition.

[520] Ibid.

Church communities as educational settings should be perceived as deeply interconnected to the learners' everyday life. As active meaning-makers, learners constantly negotiate the biblical and theological teachings they receive in light of their own identities and their relations with the church. The everyday negotiations that learners engage in are directly and indirectly related to the behaviors and attitudes they bring to religious educational settings in their religious communities. The ways in which they engage in the complex dynamics of submission and resistance in their everyday life are deeply connected to the diverse ways they engage in the power dynamics of a classroom.

Some Final Words

How should a religious educator conceptualize resistance as a goal and method of religious education given women's ambivalent ways of engaging with power relations? What kind of theological approach should a religious educator take to reshape her understanding of her learners, the goals and methods of religious education, and church communities as educational settings? Drawing on insights from the mutually critical conversations of previous chapters, I have proposed some elements of a theological anthropology of third space, suggested useable images of resistance, and discussed the implications of my theological anthropology for liberative religious education.

By re-conceptualizing subordination and resistance, especially in women's experience, this project has expanded and enriched the previous approaches to liberative religious education. It has, I hope, also introduced liveliness and nuance to the representation of Korean American women's experience. And it has held out a promise: given the opportunity to engage with the theological anthropology and religious educational practice described here, the women interviewed for this project could be

offered the opportunity to engage their own resistance and subjectivity as they seek to become their true and realistic Christian selves.

In spite of its contributions, this work is only a beginning; other projects should follow. First, although I have proposed this theological anthropology of third space for Korean American women, I believe the conceptual grounds that underlie this theological anthropology can help other women, for one finds women's ambivalent subjectivity everywhere, everyday. Liberative religious education takes as its starting point the valuing of diversity in learners' contexts, which can include many learners in many different contexts. Therefore, a useful follow-up project might be the development of a theological anthropology of third space for a different group of learners.

Second, a mutually critical conversation between a different approach to liberative religious education and the approach suggested here would be useful. As just one example, a subsequent project might explore how a practice of education based on a theological anthropology of third space appreciates and challenges Thomas Groome's model of Christian religious education as a shared Christian praxis.[521]

Most importantly, the approaches described here should be implemented in an actual educational context and the results described and evaluated. Doing so would advance theories of human subjectivity, resistance, and transcendence, and would illumine the role of faith and religious practice on self-actualization. It would also engage a group of real people in the work (and play) of becoming. This work (and play) of becoming is at the heart of liberative education.

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[521] Thomas H. Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco,1980).

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