

**WHO CARES? -  
A POST-COLONIAL FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF  
CARING-SELF AND MULTICULTURALISM**

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**I. Introduction**

Understanding who human beings are is a foundational question for education, not just because it is the ultimate question of humankind, but also because it determines every aspect of education. Depending on what educators think of the nature of the human person, the goal, the contents, teaching methods, and even the physical environment of their classes will greatly vary. For instance, if teachers regard their students as people whose minds are waiting to be filled with knowledge by teachers, their classes will look like what Jerome Bruner calls a “computational device” (Bruner, 1996, 1-8). In such a class, knowledge is taken as something already settled in relation to some preexisting, rule-bound code that socializes people into the current state of the world. In contrast, in a classroom where the human person is viewed as the creator and the creation of culture, the class will focus on the construction of knowledge in particular historical and sociological contexts: Research and discussion of and among students will be encouraged. Acknowledging this critical role of anthropology, Thomas Groome says that, “Anthropology is the horizon that shapes every curriculum choice, the goal that evaluates all the means taken, the hope that permeates the entire [educational] enterprise” (Groome 1998, 72).

Historically, scant attention was given to gender and religious education. Notwithstanding that, gender is central: The content, teaching methods, and even the physical environment of classes vary according to teachers’ philosophical anthropology. For example, the research of Carol Gilligan spawned new ways of educating women. Based on Gilligan’s theories about womankind’s caring/relational personhood, feminist educators have challenged male-centered educational theories and pedagogical models, and suggested different ways of education for women. In religious education circles, one also can easily find literature on and/or by women, such as Blenky’s *Women’s Ways of Knowing*, as well as Gilligan’s writings. Even in parish contexts, it is not difficult to find study classes for and about women (e.g., Women in the Bible classes).

In this paper, I critically examine whether notions of caring-self are applicable cross-culturally. Here I focus on Korean women’s self-esteem. First, I review American self-esteem literature whose research suggests that women are socialized into low self-esteem in patriarchal societies where the ethic of justice is esteemed to the detriment of care and interdependency. Second, I review Korean self-esteem literature. Particularly, I ask why women living in a society that values care, interdependency and community, still exhibit low self-esteem. Moreover, I address whether American literature adequately accounts for the

fact that Korean men exhibit interdependency that is kith and kin to that idealized in Gilligan's research, among others. Finally, I argue that religious education needs to review its understanding of women's personhood, and move toward multifaceted views, ones that couple gender and culture. Here I make specific suggestions for religious education. This includes discussion about how to utilize social science literature, and the implications for religious multiculturalism and interreligious studies.

## **II. Women's Caring Personhood and Self-Esteem**

### Carol Gilligan's Research and Women's Education

The research of Carol Gilligan stimulated the study of an ethic of care as a "different voice" from Kohlberg's ethic of justice. Kohlberg's theory considers a mature person to be autonomous and capable of abstract reasoning, and therefore accentuates a voice of justice, the "masculine voice" (Gilligan, 1982, 163). In extending Piaget's description of children's moral judgment to the moral judgment of adolescents and adults, Kohlberg distinguishes three perspectives on moral conflict and choice: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional. Preconventional judgment is egocentric and derives moral constructs from individual needs; conventional judgment is based on the shared norms and values that sustain relationships, groups, communities, and societies; postconventional judgment adopts a reflective perspective on societal values and constructs moral principles that are universal in application. From a perspective outside of one's own and of one's society, Kohlberg claims that a mature person identifies maturity with justice (fairness, rights, the Golden Rule); to wit, with recognition of the rights of others. For Kohlberg, the highest stages of moral development derive from a reflective understanding of human rights: "The humans' being right to do as he pleases without interfering with somebody else's rights is a formula defining rights prior to social legislation" (Kohlberg, 1973, 30)

However, Gilligan argues that Kohlberg's theory is not applicable to women. According to her research, women show different moral development (Gilligan, 60-61). In the first stage of their moral development, females are overly concerned with survival of the self to the exclusion of others. Moral considerations emerge only when their own needs are in conflict. However, women become peculiarly selfless in their second stage. Putting others' needs as primary, they become unwilling to make independent judgments, and are afraid to hurt others or to risk breaking important connections. One's own voice at this stage necessarily becomes "confused," and the female self seems to disappear mysteriously (Gilligan, 51 & 61). This second stage of female development, Gilligan says, sounds very close to a traditional concept of femininity - women as nurturing, self-sacrificing, expressive, and motherly. However, when women reach the third, full stage of moral maturity, the problems with this feminine role are resolved. Women simply disregard the negative aspects of "femininity" but retain all of the positive traits. Women then realize that "responsiveness to self and responsiveness to others are connected rather than opposed" (Gilligan, 61). A moral equality between self and other is achieved by equally applying an injunction against hurting. In sum, whereas Kohlberg's ethic of justice revolves around rights and justice, the ethic of care emerges from issues of responsibility and relationships.

One of the areas that greatly resonate with and are influenced by Gilligan's research is women's self-esteem. After questioning why studies of women have repeatedly shown

disturbing patterns, such as lack of self-esteem, an inability to feel powerful or in control of one's life, a vulnerability to depression, a tendency to see oneself as less talented, less able than one really is (Linda T. Sanford and Mary E. Donovan, 1984, p.xiii), women's self-esteem researchers conclude that women -- those who are socialized to develop feminine characteristics -- are imagined to have low self-esteem in a patriarchal society that values masculinity.

### A Review of the Western Psychological Literature of Women's Self-Esteem

Historically, the acquisition of appropriate sex-typed behaviors and characteristics, resulting in a masculine identity in males and feminine identity in females, has been considered a prerequisite to mental health (Long, 1986, 323). That is, mental health was fostered only when one's sex-role orientation was consistent with one's gender: People who internalized a "gender-appropriate sex-role" were surmised better adjusted than those who did not. Herewith psychologically healthy people were regarded as, say, men with high masculinity and low femininity, and women were supposed to have low masculinity and high femininity. Masculinity and femininity were treated as end points of a single bipolar continuum, most men falling at one extreme and women at the end (Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp, 1975). Therefore, one must have either a masculine or a feminine sex role orientation because these orientations were mutually exclusive and incompatible.

However, in contemporary studies, masculinity and femininity are no longer viewed as mutually exclusive dimensions. Rather, they are two dimensions which vary independently so that an individual may have any combination of scores for masculinity and femininity -- high on both, low on both, or high on one and low on the other (Bem, 1974; Spence and Helmreich, 1978). Sandra Bem, for instance, employed a four-category classification scheme (BSRI: Bem Sex Role Inventory, 1974; Masculine sex-role orientation, feminine sex-role orientation, androgynous in sex-role orientation, and undifferentiated in sex-role orientation) based jointly on individuals' masculinity and femininity scores. Thence there have been widespread research on the relationship between sex role orientation and self-esteem (Long, 1986).

Among those four categories of sex-role orientation, masculinity and androgyny are viewed as the core elements related to self-esteem (Willemsen, 1987). Masculine and androgynous individuals have generally better self-concepts than feminine and undifferentiated individuals. Femininity is regarded either as irrelevant or slightly negative when correlated with self-esteem.

For example, women who are high in masculinity (and subsequently have either a masculine or androgynous sex role orientation) are more likely to have a better self-concept, including more inner-directed support, self-regard, self-acceptance, self-esteem, and internal locus of control, than are their feminine counterparts who reflect low masculinity (Long, 1991). S. Lynnette Jones and Leanne K. Lamke (1985), who studied the relationship between sex-role orientation, self-esteem, and sex-typed occupational choice of college women, report similar findings. According to them, in both masculine and feminine occupational groups, the androgynous and masculine women had higher levels of self-esteem than did feminine and undifferentiated women.

Esther Ngan-Ling Chow (1987), who studied the influence of sex-role identity on the psychological well-being of Asian-American women, makes a similar conclusion: That

androgynous and masculine Asian American women are likely to have high self-esteem. She observes that androgynous women have higher self-esteem than masculine women because the presence of both masculine and feminine capabilities allows individuals to be flexible and to effectively adapt their behavior to changing situations. Thus, she observes, androgynous Asian-American women easily adjust themselves to new circumstances and have positive self-evaluations, and that both feminine and undifferentiated women have low self-esteem. In sum, it is a consistent finding that masculinity and androgyny, rather than femininity and undifferentiation, have a positive relationship with mental health and individuals' self-esteem.

Ironically, it is not clear whether the decisive element in individuals' self-esteem is masculinity or androgyny, or both. Some researchers regard both androgyny and masculinity as significant elements associated with self-esteem (Jones and Lamke, 1985; Chow, 1987; Willemsen, 1987), whereas others conclude that masculinity more than androgyny is significantly related to the self-esteem (Whitley, 1988; Sing Lau, 1989; Kimlicka, Cross, and Tarnai, 1983; Long, 1986, 1991; James, 1993). For instance, Vonda O. Long and Sing Lau assert that although androgyny influences mental health in women, it is the masculine dimension of androgyny that is the predictor of positive self-esteem (Lau, 1989; Long, 1986, 1991). It is competency-oriented masculine attributes that correlate with high self-esteem and mental health in both men and women (Long, 1986). In short, it is inconclusive whether masculinity or androgyny or both is most likely related to positive self-esteem; however, research agrees that femininity does not play a major role relative to positive self-esteem.

Why is femininity then not a positive element in forming high self-esteem? Why do women develop femininity more than other components? Robert Josephs, Romin Tafarodi, and Hazel Markus suggest that it is because women and men adhere to culturally mandating, gender appropriate norms (Josephs, Tafarodi, and Markus, 1992): Men and women develop different self-concepts to fit into the norms of their society.

In most societies that have conventional gender roles and labour division, women typically develop feminine characteristics and men develop masculine characteristics. However, in a male-centered society where masculinity is the norm, women are actually conditioned to develop poor self concepts (Long, 1991) and thus found to have lower self-esteem than men. Michael Schwalbe and Clifford Staples (1991) present a similar finding: That men and women learn to embrace different criteria for self-evaluation and different opportunities to experience self-enhancement, and that different gender-orienting media may be distributed unequally between men and women. Josephs, Tafarodi, and Markus observe that men's self-esteem is linked to an individuation process by which one's personal achievements are emphasized. On the contrary, women's self-esteem is linked to a process in which attachment to others is emphasized (Josephs, Tafarodi, and Markus, 1992). In other words, men are conditioned to develop "agency" characteristics and behaviors: Independence, activeness, rationality, individualism, competitiveness, aggressiveness, autonomy and self-validation are esteemed. Women, on the other hand, are conditioned to develop types of "communion". They are supposed to be soft, emotional, oriented toward others, expressive, and compromising (Bakan, 1966; Spence and Helmreich, 1980). However, contemporary competitive and individualistic societies adopt masculinity and agency as its standards of desirable self-concept rather than femininity and communion (Kimlicka, Cross, and Tarnai, 1983).

This research resonates with the findings of Carol Gilligan. Those who have the tendency toward individualism, self-assertion, and self-expression show higher self-esteem

than those characterized by communion, interdependence, and the suppression of self-interest in favor of the welfare of the group. Femininity, which corresponds to the communion type of characteristics and behaviors that are typically found in women, is not a significant component in self-esteem in a society where masculinity or masculine components of androgyny are norms for mental health and positive personhood. However, it is very problematic to adopt these research findings to the understanding of Korean women's low self-esteem. Korean society values community and interdependence more than individualism and independence. According to the categories of sex-role orientation, these features of Korean society fit into the femininity sex-role orientation type. Does this mean that Korean society's self-esteem is lower than that of American society simply because Americans value individualism rather than community? And despite the fact that Korean society values feminine types of characteristics and behaviors more than masculine types, why do Korean women still show lower self-esteem than men (Young Ae Kim, 94)?

The development of self-esteem occurs within a particular historical and cultural context. Thus the development of self-concepts of Korean women is not the same as the process of American women. Albeit Korean women and American women are socialized into lower self-esteem than their male counterparts, the social, cultural, psychological, philosophical, and religious contexts, which influence their formation of self, are not the same. Therefore, to understand Korean women's low self-esteem, it is necessary to understand their particular gender role socialization: The process through which they are conditioned to have low self-esteem.

### **III. Korean Women's Personhood and Self-Esteem**

#### Korean Communal Culture

According to Hofstede, who measured the extent of individualism and communalism in 66 countries, Korea, along with other East Asian countries like China, Taiwan, Japan, and Singapore, is one of the most communal societies. Koreans show typical characteristics of communalists, such as the tendency to identify themselves with groups to which they belong, and esteeming consensus rather than libertarianism. The most important value for Koreans is to exist without interfering with the natural order, which includes relationships between others (Young Ae Kim, 90).

Korean scholars suggest that through the combined system of immediate and extended family strictly based on Confucianism, Koreans develop communal personhood and practice their communal values. The immediate family which consists of husband, wife, and children is a basic Korean family unit. However, traditionally the extended family, which is composed of husband, wife, child(ren), daughter(s)-in-law, and grandchild(ren), has been the Korean family's real form. Thus several generations live together in a house and its attached buildings, all of which fall under the hegemony of the head of house.

The family of the oldest son is called *jongka* (the head family) or *bonka* (the stem family). The family of his younger brother, which family can break away form a new family unit, is called *bunka* (the branch family) (Man Poong Kim, 1988, 59). However, all branch families, regardless of the distance from the head family, cooperate in family-related work and participate in many kinds of ceremonial occasions. On ancestor worship days, wedding days, birthdays, or other ceremonial and festive days such as New Year's Day and August Full

Moon Day, whole extended family members gather at the house of the head family. Such family gatherings are natural opportunities for members to strengthen their family consciousness as they retell family history, memorialize the lives of ancestors and recall honors the departed brought to the family name. By remembering family stories Koreans remind themselves that their primary existence is for the community called family, not for themselves as individuals. Moreover, Koreans extend such family consciousness to others and develop family-knit communities. Since the family relationship is considered the most ideal of all the human relations, Koreans emphasize a family-like social atmosphere in every relationship they have (Han and Choe, 213.). Therefore, one often hears such expressions as, "Let's get along well as if we are a family!" Good fundamentals of human relations are an expansion of immediate family solidarity. As a family, the community members share their work and concerns, take care of one another, and even sacrifice oneself on behalf of others.

### Korean Communal Personhood

Based on the above family-centered communalism, the Korean people have developed communal personhood. Unlike individualism, which values each person's individuality and independence, the value of the individual in Korean society depends on how well a person adopts communal norms and functions to promote social harmony. Attachments, relatedness, connectedness, oneness and dependency among people are much more important than independence and individuality in Korean society. According to Jae Un Kim, Koreans find themselves adrift when they fail to adjust to the community they belong to. Since everyone needs one another, this need forces people to be vulnerable when facing separation from a nexus of emotional ties and the loss of relationship (Jae Un Kim, 1991, 115). Interpersonal tensions or conflicts of interest are attributed to the failure of human relations.

Most Korean social scientists find the essential example of Korean communal anthropology in its We-ness language. Anyone who has paid attention to Korean linguistics, can easily find that Koreans hardly use the I-ness words such as I, my, and mine. They instead like to use the word uri meaning We. Almost everything is called our something, instead of my something. For example, when one refers to one's wife, one does not say my wife but OUR wife.

We-ness language is a source of comfort for Koreans. They are ill-at-ease with I-ness language (Choi and Choi, 1993). In their family-centered community, Koreans venture that "our family" means all the I's in the family melted into one We. Here, We does not mean the coexistence of I and You as independent individual units; rather it indicates that, say, You and You and You and I are the same reality. "I and you exist not as separate units but as a unified one. At the moment when two individuals abandon their own perspective and put themselves in their partner's shoes, they become one, not a separate two" (Soo-Won Lee, 1991, 92-94).

Korean social scientist Sunmok Chung asserts that Koreans use of We as oneness and the use of personal pronouns generally are due to the tendency to undifferentiate the self and others (Chung, 1980, 20-23). The boundary between I as an individual, and family as a community, disappears since family is an essential part of person. The expression of We and Our is more welcomed than I and My, and one's family name is more important than one's individual uniqueness in Korean human relations. Those who pursue only their own benefits are easily expelled from Korean human relations. In order to create harmony in community life, each member is expected to suppress her/his own desires and emotions and to give heed

to other's desires and emotions at the same time. If an individual attempts to do things in an idiosyncratic way, or is too ambitious, he/she is alienated from the community. Therefore, even though a Korean is very proud of her or himself, she or he is not supposed to show it, saying only moderate things about her or himself. Despite planning and doing their own works, Koreans constantly consider others' opinions, needs, and desires, and are sensitive to others' evaluation. Among Koreans there is always a ready identification with others.

To maintain smooth family and family-like relationships, it is very important for the members of the community to act appropriately. For that purpose the Korean people have strictly followed Confucian relational values such as *Oryu* (Five Virtues). In the relationship between father and son, a son is obliged to be filial to his father who gives him life, care, and upbringing. As expressions of genuine love for parents, children are obliged to serve, support, and obey. In the relationship between sovereign and subject, a subject is supposed to be loyal to his sovereign who is devoted to the welfare of his subjects. In the same manner, young people are supposed to respect and listen to their elders who are regarded as wise. Moreover, in the relationship between husband and wife, a wife should obey her husband because the husband has societally-conferred hegemony. In the nature of these relationships, conflicts are sidestepped because the father rules without intervention from the mother. The father as the family head holds absolute authority and power over his family members and household, and so he is the sovereign over young and old. The hierarchy of superior and inferior maintains the orderliness and harmony of relationship (Lee-Park and Park, 1994, 148). In other words, harmony is based on the sacrifice of the weak and powerless.

The overall principle for women was and is the principle called *namjonyobi*, "Men should be respected; women should be lowered," which is derived from the Confucian belief in hierarchy. Based on this principle, the head of the family should teach the women and girls in the family to become obedient and selfless service persons for the sake of family harmony (Young Jung Kim, 1976, 83). Women in Korean families are educated by the principles of *samjongjiui* (Women's Three Virtues of Obedience) and *chilchuchiach* (Seven Eligible Grounds for Divorce). According to the principle of *samjongjiui*, a woman should acquiesce to her father when she is young; to her husband when she is married; to her son when she is widowed. This rule requires of women absolute obedience to men throughout their lives thus to maintain family harmony. If she violates this rule, punishment is severe. For example, if a married woman violated one of following rules, her husband could divorce her: 1) If she behaves disobediently to her parents-in-law. 2) If she fails to give birth to a son. 3) If she is talkative. 4) If she commits adultery. 5) If she is jealous of her husband's concubine. 6) If she carries a malignant disease. 7) If she commits theft (Young Jung Kim, 52-53). Based on this Confucian-based inequality, women are sacrificed to family harmony.

Even though Korea has undergone major changes due to westernization and industrialization, Confucian family rules are still very influential in the Korean family. The virtue of filial piety is still regarded as the cardinal rule for children, emphasized and taught by parents and teachers at home and school. Moreover, Confucian social relations are also found in ordinary human relationships, business, and politics. According to Korean psychologist Nam-Guk Cho (Cho, 1991, 209-232), communalism is still a salient feature of contemporary Korean society. Korean organization members still value communal good and self-sacrifice and often conceal their own views, following the majority's view even when they disagree.

Although Korean women's social status has greatly improved regarding employment, according to the 2001 Report of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Korea has the largest wage gap between men and women among member countries (OECD, 2001, 139). Another example of discrimination against women is the unbalanced birth rate between boys and girls. According to the 2001 Korea Census, there are 109.5 boys for every one hundred girls (Korea National Statistical Office, 2001).<sup>1</sup> This unbalance is mostly due to commonly practiced sex-selective abortion which clearly demonstrates favoritism for boys influenced by Confucian *namjonyobi* (Anderson, 2003).

In sum, although Korean society promotes and emphasizes family-knit fellowship and the value of relatedness and harmony, it is based on a hierarchy and patriarchy that forces less powerful members of the group to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the larger community. The superior partners have rights and duties over the inferior partners, and the inferior partners have only obligations and no rights. In other words, this hierarchy is seen as necessary lest the cosmos go out-of-whack. In these hierarchical relationships, the inferior ones are forced to sacrifice for the value of harmony. Without their sacrifice, harmony is not possible.

### Korean Personhood and Women's Self-Esteem

Young Ae Kim, a feminist pastoral psychologist contends that communalism based on hierarchy tends to create low self-esteem among many Korean people, especially women (Young Ae Kim, 94). Korean communal sense of connectedness has provided less rigid ego boundaries, so that identification and projection of one person on to another occurs easily. When a person's ego faces another, there is a ready identification with the other by taking on similarities or transforming differences through strong psychological power. This tendency toward the identification with others, especially with the powerful, forces people to identify themselves with the powerful and higher status person. Thus, while the culture respects others, it perpetuates strong dependency and lack of self-identity, and it forces Korean women to uphold male-centered despotism lest women lose their role. Overvaluing relatedness deprives Korean women of the power to know themselves and contributes to repressed feelings, diffused boundaries, low self-esteem, dependency on others, sacrificing their needs for others, feelings of shame, deprivation of the right to communicate, ambiguity about themselves and the world, and lack of centeredness.

Korean society in general highly regards a person who is not very expressive, one who is calm and reserved. This virtue and patriarchal social norms force women to be silent about social injustice. When a person is forced to be silent, there is no communication with the outside world or even with oneself, which also prevents intellectual growth. Moreover, silence blocks people from hearing their own voices so that they quash inner wisdom in deference to outside authority (Young Ae Kim, 98). They become totally dependent on others. If they hear their inner voices, they feel guilty toward persons in authority, as though they are depriving them of their power. Through this process, people in powerless situations not only lose their voices but also the power to claim their own existence. In other words, they are socialized into dependence and powerlessness. Once people internalize feelings of

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<sup>1</sup> Korea National Statistical Office, 2001. Since 1970, there has not been any year that has balanced birth rate. The highest unbalanced year was 1990 with 116.5 and the lowest was 1973 with 104.6.

powerlessness, they then avoid conflict at all costs. As Jean Baker Miller notes that while the powerful define the powerless as inferior, even the powerless cannot believe in their abilities. Their goal is survival through maintenance of the status quo (Miller, 1976, 7-10).

In sum, Korean women's low self-esteem has been formed by patriarchal power dynamics. Although Korean society itself is a feminine type of society which emphasizes community, interdependence, and relationships rather than individualism, independence, and autonomy, patriarchy still employs a double standard for men and women, whether in America or Korea.

Korean women live in a psychological DMZ. Because Korean women are not allowed fully to develop their communal personhood, they develop an inferior self-concept. But unlike the psychological findings about American women's self-esteem (to wit, that women's femininity characteristics are not valued in a masculinity-centered society), Korean women still develop low self-esteem because they cannot maximize their femininity.

#### **IV. Toward a Wholistic Understanding of Women's Low Self-Esteem**

Considering the above analysis of the process of Korean women's low self-esteem development, I now turn back to American psychological self-esteem research and raise several concerns.

First of all, American psychological research of women's role self-esteem is ahistorical and acontextual. People shape their personhood in a particular context. Through interaction with others who share their values and ideology, people internalize those values and try to be a desirable person, one that society values. When they feel that they are accepted and valued by the society, they have a positive self-concept. However, if they feel that they do not fit into the norms of the society and are not valued, their self-concept becomes negative. Simply put, people's personhood is a product of situations in which they live.

Responding to the culture and history of their particular contexts, individuals develop positive or negative self-concepts and learn socially desirable self-other relationships (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Because all standards and values of the society are those of the powerful, the powerless develop inferiority complex and low self-esteem. However, American self-esteem research does not reckon with power dynamics, and the historical, cultural, and socio-political situations of women and men of different cultures and classes. Without considering people's different socio-cultural locations, the research focuses solipsistically on sex-typed characteristics and behaviors, primarily of middle class America.

Secondly, American self-esteem research is based on Western individualistic view of the person, excluding the view of the person shared by the majority of the world (Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans). A "healthy" adult in the individualistic culture is described as an autonomous, competitive, independent, achievement and freedom-oriented individual (M. Brinton Lykes, 1985, 336). Accordingly, autonomy, separation, and independence are emphasized as positive characteristics. Development means moving toward independence from dependence. Maturity is understood as self-reliance and autonomy from others. Mature and healthy people are expected to be in charge of themselves, in control of their own behavior, and beholden to no one or nothing. This is the opposite world-view of mental health in communal societies. Even though the autonomous self is solely the standard for a small segment of society, it has become the psychological standard (Lykes, 1984, 17). Thus

emphases of autonomy, independence, self-assertion, self-expression, aggressiveness should not be applied to men and women from communal culture without caution.

Moreover, such individualistic views of the person are not the universal view of the person even within western societies. According to Edward Sampson, individualistic views of the person originated in the Enlightenment message which sought to find a fundamental universality and a deep structure that all share (Sampson, 77-93). In the name of the same universal standard, otherness, differences, and diversity are denied. Even though the Enlightenment pursues equality, Sampson insists that it ironically made equality nothing but Western sameness. Unless one shares this sameness, one's position cannot be meritorious. Thus because only the dominant group's understanding of the person is held to be normative, other perspectives are neglected. To sustain their domination, the powerful of society suppress all differences and otherness. The views of women and people of subordinate social class are excluded. Accordingly, Sampson argues that the peculiarity of the Western individualistic view of the person maintains the interests of the dominant group. Sampson also criticizes American psychology for supporting white male ideals and perspectives, whereby these views are conferred academic hegemony.

Thirdly, American self-esteem research has methodological problems. Although one's self-esteem is shaped in a concrete context through the interaction with others, participants' self-esteem typically is tested by the "standardized research paradigm" (Bruner, 1990, 107), the "pencil and paper" quantitative method. To measure participants' sex-role orientation and self-esteem, most research uses BSRI (Bem Sex Role Inventory: Bem, 1974), PAQ (Personal Attributes Questionnaire: Spence, 1975), or Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). These measures are composed of a series of questions. In these questionnaires, there are no questions that ask participants to describe their personal, social, and cultural situations. Thus the sex-role orientation and self-esteem of participants are measured in "neutral context." The research assumes that participants' fundamental identity structure can be measured without considering their contexts (Slugoski & Ginsburg, 1989). Accordingly, the questionnaires reflect the stereotypes of society concerning appropriate sex-roles. Thus they distort self-concepts and produce false stereotypes.

In sum, self-esteem research is deeply rooted in Western individualistic universalism. Although Gilligan and other similar scholars are correct to suggest that, on average, women and men approach moral problems differently, they exaggerate the gender differentiation, describing this difference dichotomously (Friedman, 258-273; Brabeck, 1996, 145-65). Mary Brabeck opines that Gilligan's dichotomous claims limits possibilities of similarity between men and women, and puts herself in essentialist an category, one that Brabeck criticizes because it minimizes diversity among women (Brabeck, 1996, 149-50). The relational self that Gilligan presents as women's moral self is only based on her research of American white middle class women. It does not reflect the personhood and morality of men and women of other classes, cultures, races, and ethnic groups (Joan Toronto, 1992, 240-257). The caring self as emerged from the life experiences of particular women is a problematic view that cannot be generalized to womankind.

### Suggestions for Religious Education

The above review also suggests how religious education should approach social sciences in general, and women's education in particular. Historically, religious education as

interdisciplinary scholarship has heavily relied on the social sciences. Based on social science research, we religious educators have developed different pedagogical models, teaching methods, and curricula. However, the above review suggests that we religious educator must examine the underlying assumptions of those social sciences, and whether they serve interests of a certain privileged group or God's creation. For example, when we try to build a communal religious education model, one based on western individualism, the wholistic sense of community that encompasses people from both communal and individualist cultures will never be accomplished. Maybe that is why we prattle on about building community when really we are peddling lifestyle enclaves (Robert Bellah, 1985, 72).

This review also suggests the necessity of developing cultural approaches in religious education specifically for women. Both American women and Korean women arguably have lower self-esteem than women generally. Although their symptoms are similar, their aetiologies and processes are different. Analyzing Korean women's formation of personhood based on assumption of American psychology, and vice versa, is pointless. Women's self-esteem is not developed in a vacuum but in their concrete everyday life contexts.

Religious education for women also should be based on liberation approaches, which I call, "An approach from a margin within the margin." Challenges to the apolitical and ahistorical claim of Western universalism and the hegemonic notion that Eurocentric culture is superior to other cultures control academic discourse. By problematizing the dominant notion of Western tradition postmodern criticism, including Western communalists, assists the longtime silenced other to reclaim their own voices (Henry Giroux, 1991, 22-28). By focusing on gender, racial, and cultural difference and otherness, feminism and cultural politics have revealed the ethnocentricity of Western tradition. In spite of these contributions to celebrating the other, postmodern criticism makes similar mistakes to other Euro-centered movements: That of claiming our age to be the "postmodern age" while most of the world's population are still living in pre- or modern ages. Thus the hubris of speaking for everyone rather than letting others speak for themselves. It is to homogenize the world as though its social, political, economic, and religious contexts (bell hooks, 1990, 125) are flummeries.

Within the other, there also are many selves and others, along with new centers and margins. However, often in Western literature, these others are portrayed as oppressed victims who desperately need the salvation of the center. For instance, Kwok Pui-lan, a post-colonial Asian theologian, notes that Chinese women as described by Mary Daly are passive victims, ones who are oppressed by Chinese men footbinding preoccupation. Since those Chinese women cannot even speak for themselves, the western feminists should save them from the Chinese men (Kwok Pul-lan, 2002, 69-75). Kwok points out that Daly's description of Chinese women is still based on a Western colonial mentality whereby she misappropriates Chinese women thus to posit universal patriarchy's existence. Daly thus overlooks the resistance and active role Chinese women played in their own history.

Herewith religious education can make far-reaching contributions. For instance, religious educators should challenge academia's colonialization of others' personhood by Western psychological theory. This then would have the twofold promise of bolstering religious education's methodological integrity by definitively contributing to what heretofore has been Western dominated ideology, one that is rarely scrutinized by religious practitioners. And second, it would also be one more step along that long road whereby Paul's vision of soteriological oneness is realized (Galatians 3:28).

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