

# **Acculturation among Korean Immigrants in the United States:** A Study on the role of church considering ethnic community and hospitality

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• ABSTRACT •

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The immigration experiences include the immediate and long-term impact of Korean Immigrants in the United States. Acculturation refers to the process by which foreign-born individuals and their families learn and adopt language, values, beliefs, and the behaviors of the new socio-cultural environment. This study introduced three models of acculturation process: unidimensional, bidimensional, and multidimensional to address the acculturation experience of Korean immigrants. This study illustrates, when Korean Immigrants faced challenges inherent in acculturation process, Korean churches have played crucial roles based on two interdisciplinary concepts, hospitality and ethnic community. First, Korean immigrant churches, based on social perspectives, have established their ethnic community where they could find their social, cultural, and material needs and affirm ethnic affiliations and identities. Second, this study showed the feature that the reciprocal hospitality opened the opportunity for Korean immigrants to outreach from ethnic community to mainstream society. This study highlighted both social and ethical role of ethnic church in the acculturation process among Korean immigrants.

**Key Words** : Acculturation, Church, Korean Immigrants, Ethical Hospitality, Ethnic Community

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Korean Americans compose one of the largest Asian American populations in the United States. After the Immigration Reform Act of 1965, the majority of Korean Americans who came to the U.S. were well educated and had established successful businesses before immigrating.<sup>1)</sup> Overall, Korean Americans are voluntary immigrants who come to the United States seeking not only more social and political security, but better educational opportunities for the next generation.<sup>2)</sup> Korean immigrants are typically located in Korean-resident areas in large cities (i.e., New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles) and they have a tendency to sustain their own ethnic identity.<sup>3)</sup>

Korean immigrants have a clear racial and cultural distinction from the dominant group in the United States. However, a vast majority of Korean immigrant share the identical religion with most native-born Americans - Christian faith. For the post 1965 immigrants, church is found to play a prominent role in Korean immigrants' daily lives<sup>4)</sup> as well as in the Korean American ethnic community. The great majority of Korean immi-

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1) Won Moo Hurh & Kwang Chung Kim, *Korean Immigrants in America*. Rutherford, (NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), 39~42.

2) Kyung Rim Shin, & Chol Shin, "The lived experience of Korean Immigrant Women Acculturating into the United States." *Health Care for Women International* 20, 1999, 603-617.

3) Won Moo Hurh & Kwang Chung Kim, *Korean Immigrants in America*. Rutherford, (NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), 61~72.

4) Sheba George, "Caroling with the Keralites: The Negotiation of Gendered Space in an Indian Immigrant Church," In R. Stephen Warner and Judith G. Wittner, ed. *Gatherings in Diaspora: Religious Communities and the New Immigration*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 264~294.

grants attend ethnic church from the beginning and throughout their immigrant life in the United States. Keeping this in mind, what proportions of Korean immigrants identify Christianity as their religion? Estimates vary slightly, but between 60 to 65 percent identify themselves as Protestant and 10 to 15 percent as Roman Catholic.<sup>5)</sup> Regardless of their protestant or Catholic identity, 70 to 80 percent of Korean immigrants are affiliated with Korean ethnic church. As Hurh and Kim reveal, ethnic “church involvement is indeed a way of life” for the vast majority of Korean immigrants.<sup>6)</sup>

Given the knowledge of religion in the United States, religious institutions are considered one of the major types of ethnic association to which immigrants have access.<sup>7)</sup> Therefore, the position of the ethnic church in acculturation processes should be imperative to mention when discussing Korean immigrants in the U.S. Acculturation is considered as a manner in which individuals negotiate two or more cultures with the underlying assumption that one culture is dominant and the other is perceived as having less cultural value.<sup>8)</sup> Most individuals experience chal-

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5) Kwang Chung Kim & Shin Kim, “*The Ethnic Role of Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States*,” In Ho-youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner, ed. *Korean Americans and Their Religions*. (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 71~94.

6) Won Moo Hurh & Kwang Chung Kim, *Korean Immigrants in America*. (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984), 129~137.

7) R. Stephen Warner, “*Work in Progress Toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States*,” *American Journal of Sociology* 98, (1993): 1044~1093.

8) John Berry, “*Psychology of Acculturation*,” In N. R. Goldberger & J. B. Veroff, ed. *The Culture and Psychology Reader*. (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 457~488. ; Teresa LaFromboise, Hardin Goleman, & Jennifer Gerton, “*Psychological Impact of Biculturalism: Evidence and Theory*.” *Psychological*

lenges during this process although some achieve acculturation easily.<sup>9)</sup> Although no one would question the importance of church for this population, very few studies have offered a sustained and nuanced analysis of church and acculturation among Korean immigrant in the U.S. Korean churches appear to be a significant ethnic community that provides cultural support for many Korean immigrants. However, because they tended to be reluctant to involve the outside of their ethnic community, Korean churches have less focused to ensure the reciprocal hospitality to Korean immigrants although they have tried to deliver the concept of the reciprocal hospitality. Therefore, the objective of the present study is to examine, among Korean immigrants in the United States, the role of Christian church in the acculturation process by stressing ethnic community and ethical hospitality.

## II. ACCULTURATION PROCESS

### 1. The concept of acculturation

Acculturation was first defined as a sociological process in which cultural change resulted from contact between two independent cultural groups. From the original concept of acculturation, Berry (1980) derived three features of acculturation that apply to its contemporary use: the nature of acculturation, the phases of acculturation, and the level of

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*Bulletin* 114 (1993), 395~412.

9) Schwebel, David C. and Carl M. Brezausek, "Language Acculturation and Pediatric Injury Risk." *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* 11 no 3 (2008): 168~173.

acculturation.<sup>10)</sup> First, the nature of acculturation requires the contact of at least two autonomous cultures. Originally, it involves rather complex and conflicting process because one group is usually dominated by the other group (e.g., relationship between Spanish explorers the Aztecs and the Incas in Central and South American in the 16<sup>th</sup> century).

Second, acculturation has three phases: contact, conflict, and adaptation. In the process of acculturation, contact is absolutely necessary and conflict occurs because groups tend to resist giving up their own ethnic values and patterns of behaviors. Finally, adaptation occurs in an attempt to reduce or stabilize conflicts.

Third, all three phases of acculturation will be both experienced at individual level and a group level. Graves (1967) noted that at the individual level of acculturation an individual experiences psychological changes due to a contact with another culture. Graves also reveals how at the group level of acculturation changes in the political process, economic relationships, demographics, and culture can occur.<sup>11)</sup>

Acculturation has been conceptualized somewhat differently from discipline to discipline. From a sociological perspective, Gordon (1964) conceptualized acculturation as a “group process” of assimilation into the host culture,<sup>12)</sup> whereas psychologists and psychiatrists viewed acculturation as a major psychological change for an individual. Psychologist and psychia-

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10) John Berry, “*Acculturation as Varieties of Adaptation*,” 9–25. In Amado Padilla, ed. *Acculturation: Theory, models, and some new findings*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press), 1980.

11) T. D. Graves, “*Psychological Acculturation in a Tri-ethnic Community*”, *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 23 (1967): 337~350.

12) Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*. (New York: Oxford university press, 1964), 60~83.

trists have conceptualized acculturation as an “intra-psychic phenomenon” which involves changes in one’s perceptions, attitudes, and cognitions. This current study considers acculturation from both psychological and sociological perspectives. Because society is composed of an individual and individuals’ function as members of that society, they each exert a force on each other. Therefore, society’s impact on the individual and the individual’s reactions to the society cannot be separated.

## **2. Models of acculturation**

An examination of the extensive literature on acculturation shows three predominant types of acculturation model: unidimensional, bidimensional, and multidimensional models.

### **1) Unidimensional model of acculturation**

In early studies, acculturation was perceived as a unidimensional process. This model views assimilation into the host society as the optimal adaptation. Those who fail to assimilate into the host society are assumed to suffer from alienation, anxiety, and stress.<sup>13)</sup> This model defines assimilation as economic, political, and social integration of the ethnic group into the host society.

A unidimensional model of acculturation was first conceptualized by Gordon (1964), who proposed a model in which assimilating into the mainstream culture is accompanied by “the disappearance of the ethnic group as separate entity and the evaporation of its distinctive values”.<sup>14)</sup>

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13) Ibid.,

A unidimensional model assumes that acculturation involves a linear process which moves from the cultural origin to the host culture.<sup>15)</sup> The ethnic cultures and the host culture are viewed as mutually exclusive; therefore, acculturation refers to the loss of the traditional culture and acceptance of the host culture. Consequently, acculturation results in a loss or weakening of ethnic identity.

## 2) Bidimensional model of acculturation

A bidimensional model of acculturation is multifaceted phenomenon. If one can incorporate his or her traditional culture and a new culture and develop a healthy sense of identity without giving up their own sense of self and identity, one can reach the most ideal mental health status.<sup>16)</sup> A bidimensional model assumes that acculturation involves both an accommodation to the host culture and retention of the ethnic culture. Therefore, individuals can participate in two cultural contexts, the use of language and socialization with both cultural groups.<sup>17)</sup> Rogler, Corters, and Malgady (1991) assert that it is possible for individuals to accept and retain two independent cultures without necessarily experiencing conflict

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14) Ibid.,

15) Jose Szapocznik, & William Kurtines, "Acculturation, Biculturalism and Adjustment among Cuban Americans," In Amado Padilla, ed, *Acculturation: Theory, Models, and Some New Findings*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 139~157.

16) John Berry, "Acculturation as Varieties of Adaptation," In Amado Padilla, ed. *Acculturation: Theory, models, and some new findings*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 9-25. ; Teresa LaFromboise, Hardin Goleman, & Jennifer Gerton, "Psychological Impact of Biculturalism: Evidence and Theory." *Psychological Bulletin* 114 (1993): 395~412.

17) Jose Szapocznik, & William Kurtines, op.cit., 139~157.

or loss of ethnic identity.<sup>18)</sup>

### 3) Multidimensional model of acculturation

Padilla (1980) developed a multidimensional model from his work with Mexican-Americans. As indicated earlier, this model views cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty as fundamental components in understanding acculturation. Cultural awareness denotes the knowledge of specific cultural materials such as language, values, and art. Ethnic loyalty refers to individuals' preference of one culture to the other. Therefore, ethnic loyalty includes one's ethnic identification, ethnicity of one's spouse, and ethnicity of one's friends.

Padilla's multidimensional approach to acculturation encompasses five dimensions. Language use and familiarity with ethnic culture represent the first dimension. Padilla argues that being able to use an ethnic language with family members or friends is a critical component in his model. In contrast to Berry (1989) and LaFromboise, Coleman & Gerton (1993), Padilla's model does not emphasize learning English or being bilingual. Padilla, working with Mexican Americans in the United States, emphasizes maintaining the Spanish language, and seems to take English proficiency as a given.<sup>19)</sup> The second dimension pertains to the cultural heritage that includes knowledge of cultural material and ethnic loyalty. As the third dimension, maintenance of ethnic pride and identity are included. The

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18) Lloyd, H. Rogler, Dharma. E. Cortes, & Robert G. Malgady, "Acculturation and Mental Health Status among Hispanics," *American Psychologist* 46 (1991): 585~597.

19) Amado Padilla, "The Role of Cultural Awareness and Ethnic Loyalty in Acculturation," In Amado Padilla, ed. *Acculturation: Theory, Models, and Some New Findings*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 85~105.

fourth and fifth dimensions are related to each other - inter-ethnic interactions and inter-ethnic distance. This means that the rate of acculturation is affected by generation, gender, and age.<sup>20)</sup> The more individuals interact with members from the other culture and the younger they are the more quickly they acculturate.<sup>21)</sup> However, Padilla fails to articulate the psychological process involved in retaining ethnic heritage or pride.

### 3. Challenges inherent in the acculturation process

*“We came here, of course, for our own personal and very human reasons - for a better education, for financial well being, for greater career opportunities and the like. But we no find that we do not wholly control our circumstances by ourselves. We find ourselves in a wilderness, living as aliens and strangers. And the inescapable question arises from the depth of your being: What is the real meaning of our immigrant existence in America? What is the spiritual meaning of our alien status?”* (Sang Hyun Lee (1980) quoted in Hurh and Kim 1984:134)

These sentiments were stated by a member of the Korean American community. The culture of Korean immigrants and that of Americans do not share much in their history, social culture, language, economic structure, and religion; nor do they share an ethical moral system. Therefore, it is imperative to clarify challenges in Korean immigrants during acculturation process. For instance, Korean culture clearly emphasizes

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20) Jose Szapocznik, & William Kurtines, op.cit., 139~157.

21) Amado Padilla, op.cit., 85~105.

Confucianism based on familial piety, family ties, and the patriarchal family order.<sup>22)</sup> On the other hand, American culture tends to underline individualism.<sup>23)</sup> In addition, in the process of acculturation, Korean immigrants face challenges toward traditional beliefs and patterns - inter-generational obligations, gender hierarchy, and customary familial practices - that are threatened with adaptation to the seemingly amoral American culture.

Furthermore, ethical and social considerations are viewed as essential parts for addressing difficulties inherited in the process of cultural adjustment. In ethical perspective, immigrants confront various ethical choices, specifically choosing the good or the morally correct course of action,<sup>24)</sup> and immigrants deal with the inevitable human adverse experiences such as death, suffering and loss which challenges their ethical hospitality. Furthermore, socially constructed challenges are augmented while immigrants try to maintain their comfort level in interacting with White Americans, one's own group, and other cultural groups. Social consideration also emphasize the cultural competence which involves pride in one's own culture, perception of acceptance by White Americans and other cultures, and of one's adjustment to both cultures.

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22) Min, Pyong Gap, "Changes in Korean Immigrants' Gender Role and Social Status, and Their Marital Conflicts", *Sociological Forum* 16, (2001): 301~320.

23) Moon H. Jo, *Korean Immigrants and the Challenge of Adjustment*. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 1999), 137~168.

24) Teresa Sullivan, "Immigration and the Ethics of Choice." *International Migration Review* 30 no.1 (1996): 90~104.

### III. CHURCH AND ACCULTURATION AMONG KOREAN IMMIGRANTS

Church involvement in many instances may influence perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of people in the ethical and social arenas. The certainty of religious percepts from church can provide an anchor as immigrants must adapt and change many other aspects of their lives and habits. In general, customary church practice such as attending weekly services and reciting prayers are examples of communal and family rituals that were brought from the old country to the new. However, these church activities sometimes take on new implications after migration. The usual feeling of loss experienced by immigrants represents those familiar religious rituals learned in childhood, such as hearing prayers in one's native tongue, provide an emotional connection particularly when shared with others. Occasionally, these feelings are accentuated with the death of a family member or some other tragedy. For these reasons, beliefs and attachment based on church activities have stronger roots after immigration than before.

#### 1. Social Perspective - Ethnic community

American churches have a long tradition of community service, particularly directed to those most in need of assistance. Churches also play an imperative position in the creation of ethnic community and as a major source of social and economic assistance for those in need. Upon arrival

immigrants need to find housing and employment, register their children in schools, learn or improve their language skills, and begin to generate a new social life. Churches and other religious institutions are one of the most central sources of support for the practical problems faced by immigrants. Helping others in need such as new immigrants is considered as one of the missions of many ethnic churches and many of their charitable works are directed to fellow congregants.

Before immigration, individuals can seek help to their extended family and the larger community for social and psychological well-being, as well as for material assistance. With smaller and less proximate families after immigration, churches can often fill the gap. Members in many religious bodies, similar to members of a family, do not expect instant reciprocity as a source for friendships and social exchange. The idea of ethnic community - of shared values and enduring association - is often enough to motivate persons to trust and assist one another, even in the absence of long personal relationships. Korean Immigrants' avenues to convince their social needs are harshly restricted due to their language limitation and/or racial minority status in the United States. Accordingly even the immigrants, who were not Christians before immigration, are attracted to ethnic churches after immigration to seek social and economic assistance.<sup>25)</sup>

Each generation has different levels of acculturation and socialization

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25) Kwang Chung Kim & Shin Kim, "The Ethnic Role of Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States," In Ho-youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner, ed. *Korean Americans and Their Religions*. (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 71~94.

patterns.<sup>26)</sup> For instance, the second generation children of immigrants are more acculturated than the first generation of children of immigrant parents because of the greater exposure to the host society; mainly through the educational system. The third generation tends to be more acculturated and socialize more with members of the host society than the second generation. In general, those who are reluctant or slow to interact with members of the host culture will delay the level of acculturation. The Korean American church has a vital role to play in the lives of many second-generation young people. It must strive to provide a safe and affirming setting in which these young people can work on their identities and life spans. Only until then will the church be able to develop its corporate identity as a multi generational institution that can serve emerging generations of Korean Americans.

For Korean Americans, especially for the first generation, sociological variables such as group affiliation and identification may have been a major factor in their presence at Korean churches. Many Koreans feel more empowered as soon as they enter their own sense of specialness and power which is something they cannot do outside that space in the mainstream society. Korean churches seem to have a widely recognized function to reach out to people in times of transition and trouble. In turn, many people in suffering prefer to seek help from their religious community rather than from mental health professionals.<sup>27)</sup> Furthermore, the iden-

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26) Amado Padilla, op.cit., 85~105.

27) Tong-He Koh, "Religion as a Variable in Mental Health: A Case for Korean Americans," In Ho-youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner, ed. *Korean Americans and Their Religions*. (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 95~112.

tity formation during the acculturation process is strongly influenced by the surrounding culture and society. A healthy identity formation requires an affirming environment that encourages exploration<sup>28)</sup> and that provides a deeply caring, relational support and system. Therefore, through the involvement of Korean churches, Korean immigrants have established their ethnic community where they could find their social needs and affirm ethnic affiliations and identities.

## 2. Ethical Perspective

In addition to a successful example of dealing with social and ethnic roles comforting ethnic community, the ethical role of church is crucial to further discuss by questioning Korean churches that have actively been involved with the outside of ethnic communities. The symmetric reciprocal hospitality between strangers and hosts is the key subject for this question.

The process of acculturation can be identified as the reduction of cultural distance, referring to the perceived degree of dissimilarity between the cultural environment of the stranger and that of the observer, as more intersecting social networks are progressed with the resident in the host city.<sup>29)</sup> Church has provided the ethical guidelines of symmetric reciprocity between immigrants and the hosts in the main society. Therefore, the following question is imperative to discuss the ethical role of church during the acculturation process. How should immigrants, as strangers,

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28) Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1950), 275~284.

29) Teresa Sullivan, "Immigration and the Ethics of Choice." *International Migration Review* 30 no.1 (1996): 90~104.

and hosts in the main society treat each other even though cultural distance exists between the two groups? In other words, how can the hosts respond to strangers? How can the strangers respond to the hosts?

The act of hospitality constitutes the classifications of host and stranger, but it is only through unconditional hospitality that one can face the other. Nonetheless, for hospitality to be ‘hospitality’ it must include within itself the irreducible possibility of hostility—without a boundary allowing the total stranger in ‘as a friend’ would not make sense.<sup>30)</sup> However, what happens once the ‘outsider’ is inside? Does the outsider not simply become an insider? In hospitality there is a contradiction: the unconditional is always already conditional. According to Derrida argument, hospitality can neither be developed into mere integration nor can it merely stay unconditional. Hospitality is the continuing ethical burden of community that must be negotiated and discovered every step of the way.

“Are we not always somehow ‘in’, but not quite, and always somehow ‘out’, but not quite? The virtual encounter with the stranger on screen may be part of the millennial old problematic continually working out, again and again, who we are/to be—as individuals, communities, societies—but we want to suggest Derrida invokes a distinctive and demanding response to such concerns”.<sup>31)</sup>

Jacques Derrida questions modern restrictions on hospitality in a recent essay. He argues that modern approaches to hospitality have been in-

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30) Lucas Introna & Martin Brigham, 2007, “Reconsidering community and the stranger in the age of virtuality”. *Society and Business Review* 2 no. 2. (2007), 166~178.

31) Ibid.,

clined to constrain and circumscribe the conception of hospitality, and have been accordingly unable to overcome antagonism. Derrida believes that in order to handle conflicts and anonymity, individuals must be in absolute radical position in offering hospitality to the other.<sup>32)</sup>

Furthermore, Derrida's considerations on hospitality can be illustrated by a comparable stance of openness. Taking Immanuel Kant's notion of "universal hospitality" in his essay on *Perpetual Peace* (1795) as an example, Derrida criticizes the limitations placed on this universal hospitality as the conditions of perpetual peace. Kant reflected that nations could only grant hospitality under two conditions: (1) the stranger's behaviors must be passive in another's country and (2) he is only given the right to visit, not the right to stay.<sup>33)</sup> Such hospitality based on Kant's notion is not virtually radical enough for Derrida's deconstructionist approach. Derrida believes that hospitality is an unconditional openness toward the other, regardless of what the other is going to convey:

"I must be unprepared, or prepared to be unprepared, for the unexpected arrival of *any* other. Is this possible? I don't know. If, however, there is pure hospitality, or a pure gift, it should consist in this opening without horizon, without horizon of expectation, an opening to the newcomer whoever that may be. It may be terrible because the newcomer may be a good person, or may be the devil; but if you exclude the possibility to control this and exclude in advance this possibility—there is no

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32) Boersma, Hans. "Irenaeus, Derrida and Hospitality: On the Eschatological Overcoming of Violence," *Modern Theology* 19 no.2. (2003): 163~180.

33) Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, ed. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957), 20-21.

hospitality.”<sup>34)</sup>

As such, Derrida advocates what he calls “unconditional” or “pure” hospitality.<sup>35)</sup> Based on Derrida’s note, what represent the decent treatments of immigrants as strangers and/or outsider has generated a fair amount of ethical wisdom. The gist of this wisdom is to take the risk of extending hospitable treatment. For instance, the stories of Abraham’s hospitality to strangers, Sodom’s and Gomorra’s lack of hospitality, and the subsequent rewards and punishment are part of the religious legacy of Christianity. Abraham offered strangers rest, food and drink, and conversation - admittedly for a short period of time (Genesis 18:1-15). In contrast, the residents of Sodom and Gomorra intimidated physically harm and death to strangers. Abraham became the father of nations and Sodom and Gomorra were destroyed (Genesis 19:1-26). One ethical conclusion from such stories appears to be that the immigrants as strangers should be treated to the basics of daily life in the equivalent way as one would treat a member of family and/or community.<sup>36)</sup>

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34) Jacques Derrida, “Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility: A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida,” in *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*, ed. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley (London: Routledge, 1999), 70; cf. John D. Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997), 145; Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 77.

35) Derrida also calls this pure hospitality the “hospitality of visitation”, which he contrasts with the “hospitality of invitation”, which we extend on our own terms and is conditional. See Brian Russell, “Developing Derrida: Pointers to Faith, Hope and Prayer”, *Theology* Vol. 104 no. 822 (November–December, 2001), 406.

36) Teresa Sullivan, “Immigration and the Ethics of Choice.” *International Migration Review* 30 no.1 (1996): 90~104.

However, the implicit risk of hospitality is the lack of reciprocation. For instance, a high proportion of Korean immigrants actively participate in ethnic churches in sharp contrast to their lack of concern with communities outside their churches. Therefore, the symmetric ethic of hospitality is also needed for the hosts. How should the immigrant treat the hosts? A counterpart story might be the story of the Good Samaritan, the stranger who was on the road to Jericho and actually minding his own business. Ahead of him on the road was the home boy who was treated inappropriately and was badly beaten from the immoral gang. Two people who shared the religious beliefs of the victim passed by and did nothing. The Samaritan, who was culturally distant and considered as a stranger, provided food, drink, medical assistance, transportation, and shelter. The Samaritan was commended for providing to the stranger host the same consideration he would have provided within his social network - that is, the necessities that would be reciprocated.<sup>37)</sup> This story affirms the symmetric reciprocity between immigrants and the hosts in the main society. However, compared to recent years, Korean ethnic churches in the past decades have not put enough attention to the communities outside their churches. Therefore, it is crucial for Korean ethnic churches to put more efforts on providing a symmetric social ethics which are imperative for not only the immigrants as stranger, but also the hosts in the main society in the process of acculturation.

The Christian church plays a crucial role as an actor of the reciprocal hospitality between the hosts and the immigrants. Among immigrant populations, the Christian church often times serves the religious needs to

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37) Ibid.,

them, Church, as an institutional religion, has withdrawn from its dominant position and ubiquitous impact on traditional societies to a more circumscribed role in modern industrial societies. However, religious faith and religious organizations remain fundamental to many, if not most, persons in the modern world. It is only through religion, or other spiritual beliefs, that many people are able to discover solace for the unavoidable human experiences of death, suffering, and loss.

Immigrants, like the native born, have religious needs which are most meaningful when tied together in a familiar linguistic and cultural context. Particularly, immigrants are drawn to the fellowship of ethnic churches, where principal relationships among congregants are reinforced with traditional foods and customs. Based on Hurh and Kim survey in the Chicago area (1988), three fourths of the Korean Americans were affiliated with Korean Christian churches.<sup>38)</sup> As the major reasons for their church affiliation, numerous Korean Americans responded - religious belief, to worship God, for salvation, or to encourage religious faith among children - indicated a profound religious motive.

Furthermore, David Kim (1993) examines second generation ministries in two Boston-area Korean American churches. He demonstrates that members of the churches adopt a core identity as a “Christian” that takes priority over both “Korean” and “American” identities.<sup>39)</sup> Consequently re-

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38) Won Moo Hurh & Kwang Chung Kim, *Uprooting and Adjustment: A Sociological Study of Korean Immigrants' Mental Health*. Final Report submitted to National Institute of Mental Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1988. 6~12.

39) David Kyuman Kim, *Becoming: Korean Americans, Faith, and Identity - Observations on Emerging Culture*. Master's thesis, Harvard Divinity School, (1993). 17~32.

ligion has supplanted ethnicity as the primary focus for identity and sense of the self. However, according to Kim, this does not mean that ethnic identity ceases to be important. He found that members of the churches felt more comfortable relating to other Korean American because they shared similar experiences. Furthermore, shared Christian identity became the basis for growing closer to other Korean Americans in the churches and ultimately coming to further embrace a Korean American Identity.<sup>40)</sup> Therefore, Korean ethnic churches have devoted to Korean immigrants so that they could embrace Christian ethics based on the reciprocal hospitality between the hosts and the strangers.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The immigration experience and its multifaceted outcomes have been a focus of interest in a variety of scholarly disciplines. Such work has addressed many significant questions about the immediate and long-term impact of this pervasive change in circumstance both for the immigrants themselves and for their children, who together come to comprise a part of an increasingly diverse multicultural America. Berry (1980) characterized the course of the acculturation process as flowing from contact between dominant and nondominant groups to conflict or crises between those groups that ultimately resulted in adaptations by one or both of

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40) Antony W. Alumkal, "Being Korean, Being Christian: Particularism and Universalism in a Second Generation Congregation,". In Ho-young Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner, ed, *Korean Americans and Their Religions*. (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 181~191

the groups. Usually, the nondominant group has been strongly influenced to take on the norms, values, and behaviors espoused by the dominant group.<sup>41)</sup>

Based on two interdisciplinary concepts, hospitality and ethnic community, the present study highlighted the ethical and social role of church in the acculturation process among Korean immigrant population in the U.S. These two motives are inherently intertwined. Separating them does not and cannot describe the whole picture. In short, neither of two roles alone can explain the acculturation process of Korean Immigrants. While Christianity carries a universal message, each group of Christians practices their faith in a specific way under a specific social context. Korean immigrant churches as ethnic community have efficiently handled immigrants' strong and complicated nonreligious needs along with religious needs during the process of acculturation. However, historically, Korean ethnic churches have not played an active role of assuring a reciprocal hospitality to Korean immigrants even though they have tried to conceptualize the reciprocal hospitality. In sum, this study highlights the importance of social and ethical perspectives on Korean ethnic churches when examining acculturation process among Korean immigrant population in the U.S.,

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41) John Berry, "Acculturation Stress," In P. Balls Organista, K. M. Chun, & G. Marin, ed. *Readings in Ethnic Psychology*. (New York: Routledge, 1998), 117-122.

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• 국 문 초 록 •

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본 연구는 미국에 거주하는 한국 이민자들의 문화변용에 대해 관심을 두고 있다. 특히 문화변용 상황에서의 교회의 역할에 대해 집중적으로 다루고 있다. 문화변용이란 다른 나라에서 태어난 사람들이 새로운 사회문화 속에서 언어, 가치, 믿음 및 행동들을 배우고 받아들이는 과정을 말한다. 본 논문은 문화변용의 세 가지 모델, 즉 단면적, 이면적 및 다면적 모델을 소개함으로써 한국 이민자들의 문화변용 경험을 다루고자 했다. 그리고 이 연구는 한국 이민자들이 문화변용 과정 속에서 경험하는 어려움에 직면할 때, 교회의 두 가지 역할을 윤리적 '환대'와 사회학적 '소수민족 공동체'라는 학제간의 개념을 바탕으로 설명하고 있다. 첫째로, 한국인 이민교회들은 문화변용 과정 속에 있는 이민자들의 사회적, 문화적 및 물질적 필요 또한 민족적 정체성을 확립하기 위한 소수민족 공동체를 형성하는 데에 큰 역할을 해왔다. 둘째로, 이 연구는 한국인 이민 교회가 한국 이민자들 가운데 상호적인 '환대'를 바탕으로 소수민족 공동체가 주류사회와 교류하고 확장해 나갈 수 있도록 경로를 제시하고 있음을 보여주고 있다. 그러므로 이 연구는 이민자의 문화 변용 과정에서 교회의 사회적 그리고 윤리적 역할을 강조하고 있다.

**주제어** : 문화변용, 교회, 한국 이민자들, 윤리적 환대, 소수민족 공동체

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