Perspectives on counselling and the counsellor in the Korean culture
A Narrative Approach

by

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SUMMARY

I studied perspectives on counselling and the counsellor in Korean culture. For this research I made use of a Narrative pastoral counselling approach that was situated in a Postmodern paradigm. As this research method concentrates on the life stories told by the life-story-tellers or co-researchers, I chose a few focus groups consisting of Koreans of different ages and both genders to help me to correct and understand my findings. I also used a questionnaire because language and communication is and was a big problem in Korea (I cannot speak Korean, and most Korean people cannot speak English). The findings were used as discussion topics in the focus groups and also in the interviews I had with several Korean individuals.

In this study I dealt with many of the interesting and new things I learnt in Korea and from the Korean people (my story). Secondly, I shared the results from the questionnaires and also the feedback from the focus groups and interviews concerning these results (the Action story). Thirdly, I also tried to share a very in-depth picture of the Korean people’s history, customs, language, psychology, present-day Korea and Korean religions (their story or background story). In the background story, I used their stories, thus, I have made use of different story tellers’ stories and have used these voices as is.

In listening to all of these life stories from Korean people, I have come to a better understanding of how Korean people deal with their problems. Coming from a paradigm where I tell my story with a Western culture’s tune, I have also came to see that even though I have come to a better understanding of how Korean people deal with their problems, it was still impossible for me to come to a true understanding of their approach.

My biggest discovery was that one has to realize that each culture, even each individual, has a unique story. To come to a better understanding of this story, I have to have empathy and also to allow myself to be pulled over the threshold into the other person’s life. Even so, I also have to realize that my listening will still be obscured by the “noise” of my own self.
GLOSSARY

*Che-Myun*: *Che-myun* literally means “body and face,” and refers to face-saving in the sense of saving social face or saving the external facade to maintain respectability.

*Haan*: *Haan* is the opposite of *jeong*. It is a Korean word that refers to suppressed anger, hate, despair, the holding of a grudge, or feelings of everlasting woe.

*Hwa-byung*: *Hwa-byung* is a Korean folk syndrome literally translated into English as “anger syndrome” and attributed to the suppression of anger. It is listed in the appendix of the Revised DSM-IV published by the American Psychiatric Association.

*Jeong*: *Jeong* refers to a special interpersonal bond of trust and closeness. There is no English equivalent. *Jeong* encompasses the meaning of a wide range of English terms: feeling, empathy, affection, closeness, tenderness, pathos, compassion, sentiment, trust, bonding and love.

*Muht*: *Muht* is a Korean word used to describe the quality of being “exquisite, beautiful, splendid, refined, and elegant”.

*Noonchi*: The Korean word *noonchi* means literally “measuring with eyes.” It is an intuitive, sixth-sense perception of another person – a capacity to size up and evaluate another person or situation quickly and intuitively.

*Palja*: *Palja* means “fate” or “destiny,” and is derived from terminology used in fortune telling.

(For a more in-depth discussion on these terms, please refer to Section 3.7)
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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION:

1.1 THE BEGINNING OF MY KOREAN EXPERIENCE

In March 2001 I took a journey which would prove to be a life-changing one. My wife and I accepted the challenge of becoming missionaries in South Korea. We found ourselves stepping into a strange new world.

Any Korean will tell you that Korea has five thousand years of history. That puts the beginning of Korea back when China was beginning to stir out of its own prehistoric sleep. Neither the geography nor the people of that ancient Korea were the same as the Korea we know now. There is no record (or history) until the 2nd or 3rd century B.C. So, to say realistically, Koreans have two thousand years of history. (Choi, 2000: s.p.).

Coming from a Western-oriented culture in South Africa, this “new” culture that we experienced was totally overwhelming and also very difficult to grasp, or even perceive clearly. I found many Korean things, mannerisms and ways of doing that I could not even relate to in my own thinking. The food, the different smells in the streets, the building styles, the people, and most frustrating of all, the language, was all new and strange to us. It was not just going to another country; it was going to another world. The Korean language, or Hangul as it is known, has its own alphabet and way of speaking. We were totally lost; we could not read what was written on the buildings, the road signs,
restaurant menus and many other things. Even asking someone for directions or help was
difficult, as only a few people, with the emphasis on few, could speak English or broken
English.

As we got over this culture shock, we started to learn and appreciate more and more
things about the Korean culture. Even to be a Christian took on a new experience for me.
But it was the way that the Korean people lived their daily life that started to fascinate
me. For instance, going to one of the electronics markets was totally a new experience. I
often visited these markets (as the photos show) and I was really amazed at the hundreds
and hundreds of open stalls, all selling the same product at the same price. There is
almost no competition or fighting amongst them. If you cannot find a product or the
owner cannot speak English, he/she will phone one of competitors and this person will
either bring the item to you or will come and close the deal for the other person in
English.

![Figure 1.2: Clothing stalls at Techno-Mart in Seoul.](image)

Most Korean shopping malls, or department stores, as they are known, work in the same
way. When I went to the second-hand car market in Daejeon, the city where we lived, I
was firstly amazed at the numbers of cars (more than one thousand) and then watched
how all these different dealers work together. There is one building with probably a
hundred or so different offices, each representing an individual business, and
everybody works together.

Working as an English teacher I spent many valuable hours in interacting with students of
all ages. Over the last 30 years learning English has gradually become more and more
important in Korea. Spending so much time with these students afforded me the
opportunity to take a closer look at the Korean culture. When I interviewed some of my
adult students, I asked then how it is possible for everybody to work together in harmony with each other. Their reply was: “It is not polite to work alone and to try to take another person’s business.”

Korean communication reflects this strong emphasis on a community culture. In their book *Korean communicative behaviour, recent research findings*, Park and Klopf (1997:96) write the following:

Korean communication practices exhibit the characteristics of a collectivistic culture in which Koreans strive to uphold harmony through their talk (Cooke, 1992). Crane (1967) exemplifies this aim by quoting a Korean saying, ‘If it’s not polite, do not say it’ (p.96). When interacting, Koreans attend to relationships first, the topics, using honorifics to indicate respect for others and modesty about
self (Crane, 1967; Min, 1983; Park 1970). Crane (1967) and Park (1979) feel that Koreans speak to enhance one another’s kibun (recognition of one’s ‘face,’ inner feelings and prestige), while encouraging group conformity.

How a message is conveyed reflects collectivistic Korea. A profusion of sayings are available to Koreans to transmit indirect messages (Min, 1983). This use of sayings decreases the likelihood of misunderstanding and follows rules of proper message exchange. Then, too, the Korean language demonstrates the importance of the group, the family, and harmony (Park, 1979).

After our first year in South Korea, my interest started to focus on how members of the Korean culture would relate towards opening up and sharing their problems, especially with a counsellor.

This interest started when I realized that not many Korean people would go to any kind of counsellor, not even Christian Koreans, to their pastors or a pastoral counsellor. I realized that one really has to look very hard to find a counsellor in Korea. Finding a counsellor running a private practice from an office or his/her home is almost unheard of. When I questioned the general public, many pastors, doctors, welfare workers and a psychologist, it seems that they are all coherent on the fact that not many Korean people are interested in counselling or sharing their problems with other people. Indeed, counselling or the counsellor, are almost non-existent in the Korean culture.

As I came to the understanding of the teachings of Confucius, you are not allowed to share your problem/s with someone else. When doing so, you will only shame yourself and you will make the other person’s life miserable as well. According to the Buddhist’s teachings, you must be satisfied with your situation – good or bad. You have to accept your situation and learn to live with it. If you achieve this, you will be re-incarnated into a better life and better situation. (For a more detailed discussion of religious views in Korea, see Section 3.9)
When I looked at some of the problems people have, my interest in this aspect grew. For instance, Korea has a syndrome which is unique to the Korean culture and is directly related to the suppression of anger. This syndrome is called the Hwa-byung syndrome and it is described as follows:

A Korean folk syndrome literally translated into English as ‘anger syndrome’ and attributed to the suppression of anger. The symptoms include insomnia, fatigue, panic, fear of impending death, dysphoric affect, indigestion, anorexia, dyspnea, palpitations, and generalized aches and pains. (Sue, Sue & Sue, 2003:96)

This syndrome is mostly found among Korean middle aged and/or married women. The main reason for this is the suppression of their feelings. Embedded in the Confucian and Buddhist culture, is also a very strong patriarchal system. This worsens the situation of women in Korea. They are not allowed to express their feelings; they are expected to accept their fate and not to have a say in life. So, for example, women are not allowed to question their husbands or their parents-in-law, especially the mothers-in-law. It is also very common for a man’s mother to try her uttermost to make life difficult for her daughter-in-law. The reason for this is that the Korean culture has a very strong preference for males and thus the mothers say that their daughters-in-law are stealing their sons from them.

I must, however, mention that times are changing very rapidly and so are some aspects of the culture. These days, women have a much bigger say in the family, the community and even in politics. Nevertheless one still finds that there is a strong patriarchal rule in the family and some forms of discrimination against women in society do survive. Luckily, discrimination in this society is beginning to become the exception to the rule. Even so, many women still suffer from Hwa-byung.

Another aspect of Korean culture is that most Korean people, if not all, enjoy going out at night to visit with their friends or families. As my Korean director explained to me, night time is the time to go out and visit with your friends or family and to relax. He also mentioned that during his travels to Australia, America and South Africa, he was
surprised and very “bored” when he had to stay at home and visit with the people and their families. “How can you stay at home the whole time and do nothing and then go to bed at 10 pm?” he asked me.

In Korea you seldom visit someone’s house; you normally go out to a restaurant, bar, coffee shop – where you can find coffee, tee, cold drinks and alcohol – or a Nori-bang (a karaoke room) and visit there. It is not uncommon to see adults and even children staying up until after midnight or one in the morning visiting and socialising. In summertime you will see families picnic outside in the park until midnight or one in the morning – even on week nights. One must also bear in mind that most people in Korea live in apartments (we would call them “flats” in South Africa). These apartment buildings are five to twenty floors high and even higher. There is sometimes a very small communal garden to relax in and a small play park for the children. To find a house with a garden or suitable entertainment area is a rarity.

During most of these outings, most men and many women become quite intoxicated. For Koreans, as most people said, it is how they socialize. Most people would say that it is a very good way of getting rid of your problems and to open up to your friends. One must remember that, according to Korea culture, they are not allowed to open up. Thus, while intoxicated and not in a sober mind, you are allowed to open up – bear in mind that it is only while one is “not oneself” that one may do so. From my discussions with many Korean people, it seems being intoxicated is generally acceptable to most people. I have never seen anybody in Korea treating a drunken person badly or heard anybody scolding a drunken person, not even the police.

Taking into consideration all these factors and looking at the Korean culture as a community culture and bearing in mind that according to Confucius and Buddhism people are not allowed to share their problems with others, I would like to find out what Korean people’s perceptions of counselling and the counsellors are. Why will they not share their problems and how do they “operate”?
It was while trying to understand the Korean mindset in this regard that I decided to do research about and to seek an answer to the following question: “How do Korean people perceive the counsellor and counselling in the light of the phenomenon that Korean culture is fundamentally influenced by Confucianism and also Buddhism?”

1.2 POSITIONING

In looking at this very “strange” and new culture, I also found myself in an interesting situation. When I decided to write this report, I first had to make sure what my story, my paradigm was. Coming to this realization, I began to look for the correct language on how I could explain what my paradigm was. I had the picture in my mind, the canvas was ready, but I did not have the right colours to put on canvas to portray what I had in my mind.

I looked at some of the models and teachings available in Psychology and I came to appreciate Roger’s view and model of active listening (Sue et al. 2003:57). Even so, something was missing. As a Christian pastor, I was also looking for a model that recognizes the importance of trusting God’s help and guidance in a counselling situation. I was looking for a model or paradigm that allows counsellor and his/her client or clients, to share each other’s experiences with one another. This is done in order for the counsellor to have a true empathy and a clear understanding of his/her client or clients.

I think that in most situations where one has to help someone with a problem; one intends to go for the fastest and easiest solution. This normally ends up where I as a pastor or helper give advice and the other person has to listen. This advice is normally given, even without a clear understanding of what the person in need is going through or what his/her real need is. In other words, as counsellors, we often do not invest the necessary time, effort, listening and empathy in our clients to understand fully what their needs are. We also do not trust in their own ability to help themselves.
It was only after Professor Julian Müller had introduced the narrative approach to me that I realized that this was the language that I was looking for to describe my own paradigm. As English reading materials are very limited in Korea, I mostly made use of articles on the internet and the electronic theses and dissertations that I found on the UPeTD net of the University of Pretoria. I also made use of Gerkin’s (1997) book *An introduction to pastoral care* and Julian Müller’s (2000) book *Reis-geselskap*.

1.2.1 Paradigm

In the writing of this dissertation I therefore used a Narrative pastoral counselling approach.

1.2.1.1 The narrative pastoral research approach

As narrative therapists, pastors and researchers, we position ourselves within the social-constructionist (some would say: postmodern) paradigm, which has implications not only for the way in which we think about truth, but also for the way in which we try to be truthful in doing research.

The ‘crisis’ of post modernity is not simply one of believing, but of revolutions in patterns of work and leisure, use of technology, the exercise of civic power, participation and citizenship, access to resources, relationships to the environment, and the use and abuse of scientific innovations (Graham 2000:107, cited in Müller, Van Deventer & Human 2001:1).

And we would like to add: the use and abuse of research. We as authors of this article, want to be part of the revolution of patterns of research in order to deconstruct the sometimes abusiveness of research projects. We want to be researchers who do not “pathologize or victimize their narrators” (Graham 2000:112, cited in Müller et al. 2001:1). Therefore, we would choose not to use language such as “research objects”, or “research population”, but rather refer to them as research participants or co-researchers.
It is important to us that our research must not in the first instance serve our objectives as researchers, but be of value for those being researched (Müller et al. 2001:1).

The narrative approach, which is aligned with a post-modern paradigm, emphasises understanding of the individual, the family and the group. In the past, the emphasis was placed on the teachings of the school of the day and the client or research object/s had to listen to the “wisdom” of the “educated counsellor”. In other words, everything that falls outside the understanding of the researcher’s paradigm was not applicable or regarded as just wrong.

As mentioned and as it is shown by the above quotation, a narrative approach foregrounds the story of the client as a co-researcher. One cannot have true empathy with someone if one does not hear, feel and understand clearly how he/she feels.

1 Pastoral work and having a pastoral conversation is an art rather than a science. It should be less concerned with diagnosis and more concerned with creativity. It does not design strategies, it creates expectations. That is why it does not answer people’s questions, but plays creatively with the questions to open curtains. A true master does not answer his student’s questions, but leads him to discover his answers himself in a creative way. [Researcher’s translation]

In my research, I had to come to the understanding that I am a member of a Western culture, whose thoughts are based on a Western paradigm. To be able to listen to the life stories of my co-researchers – members of the Korean culture, I had to undergo a paradigm shift. I had to try to really stand in the shoes of a Korean person.

For me it was and it is still probably the most difficult thing to do, even after living in Korea for more than four years. The reason for this difficulty is that our human nature always falls back on what seems most “natural” to us. In listening to someone, it is easier
to listen with one’s own ears and see the picture that is in one’s own mind. Thus, if one
does not get to the point where we realizes and acknowledges the fact that one is not the
co-researcher (the life-story-teller) and reminds oneself of one’s own paradigm/s; it is
difficult to listen with an open mind.

Let me give a very simple illustration of what I mean: in South Africa, especially among
Europeans, it is taboo to sniff loudly or to spit in public. You would rather use a
handkerchief or tissue, beg pardon and then clean your nose by blowing it into the tissue.
In Korea it is just the opposite. Taking out your handkerchief and blowing your nose in
public is considered to be strange if not downright rude. But walking in the street or any
other place outside, it is not strange to see people, especially the men, give a loud sniff,
clear their throats and spit, regardless of where they may be.

This is where the narrative approach can help a counsellor and co-researcher/s or life-
story-tellers, to understand each other. They can do this by sharing each other’s life
stories and also by listening and understanding each others stories with an undoubtedly
empathy. It allows each researcher (the researcher and the co-researcher) to move
between each others paradigms. Müller (2000:35) express this idea as follows:

Om uit te beweeg uit jou eie kulturele of subkulturele ‘dop’, vra meer as net
kennis en informasie oor die ander een se ‘dop’. Dit vereis dat jy doelbewus sal
toelaat dat die ander jou oor die drumpel van sy/haar wêreld trek. Dit vereis meer
as net ‘n neutrale luister na die ander se verhaal, maar ‘n gewilligheid om
betrokke te raak by die ander se verhaal. Dit kan nie gebeur as daar nie ‘n
doelbewuste en empatiese inbeweeg in die ander se kulturele sisteem is nie.

Empatie is meer as net om met begrip te luister. Dit is ook nie net die tegniek om
dit wat die ander sê, te reflekter nie. Dit is om jou te vereenselwig met die
lewensruim van ‘n ander en toe te laat dat jy daar ingetrek word. Dit is
betrokkenheid. Sonder hierdie soort empatie is werklike ontmoeting tussen mense
nie moontlik nie. Omdat ons onseker en bang voel oor die vreemde wêreld van
die ander, is ons geneig om ander vanuit ons eie klein ligkringetjie te probeer
verstaan. Dit is net nie moontlik nie. Ons moet ons oor die drumpel van die ander se lewensruim laat trek. (Müller 2000:35)

The stories shared by the co-researcher and the counsellor are the common language that is spoken in this dialogue. By listening to each other’s stories with empathy, we can begin to understand and respect each other. This is also the best way to prevent misunderstandings.

Initially I regarded the Korean culture as strange, describing many of their actions and mannerisms as foolish or unacceptable, but, as I allowed myself to be drawn into their culture and to understand it, I have come to realize how wrong I was.

1.2.1.2 The narrative pastoral approach and the pastors

As a pastor, I have also realized that the narrative approach is not anything new. When we look at the ministry of Jesus, we realize that it is full of stories. These stories interpret the activities of the people of that time and reveal the beauty of the Kingdom of God.

In his book *An introduction to pastoral care*, Charles V. Gerkin (1997) shares his idea of how the Christian story also becomes part of the stories that the counsellor and life-story-tellers are sharing. He calls his model of pastoral care the “Narrative hermeneutical model”. This model is mainly useful to the Christian community and for the many life

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2 To move out of your own cultural or sub cultural ‘shell’, asks more than just knowledge and information about the other one’s ‘shell’. It requires that you will knowingly allow the other to pull you across the threshold to his or her world. It requires more that just a neutral listening to the other person’s story, but a willingness to participate in the other person’s story. It cannot happen if there is no willingness to and empathy in moving into the other person’s cultural system.

Empathy is more than just listening with understanding. It is also not just about the technique of reflecting what the other person says. It is to allow yourself to become one with the other person’s life and also to allow yourself to be pulled into the other person’s life situation. It is to be part. Without this kind of empathy, a real meeting between people is not possible. Because we experience uncertainty and fear of the other in this strange world, we tend to understand the other in the light of our limited understanding. This is not difficult. We have to allow ourselves to be pulled over the threshold into the other person’s life situation. [Researcher’s translation]
stories of people who are in some way related to the Christian community (Gerkin 1997:110).

Gerkin (1997:111) gives the following schematized structure to explain his model (see Figure 1.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The story of the Christian</th>
<th>Pastoral</th>
<th>The particularity of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community and its tradition</td>
<td>Care</td>
<td>life stories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Gerkin (1997:111,112), “this figure locates pastoral care in the center of the dialogical space between the communal story of the Christian community and the many life stories of people who are in some way related to the Christian community. That location is highly significant and is meant to indicate a number of important elements in the model”.

To summarize, these elements are the following:

1. The most important aspect of this model is that the counsellor facilitates the process of connecting life stories to the Christian story and vice versa. This requires true empathy.

2. There is a tension between the life stories of those involved and the Christian story, as life stories are personal and are usually drawn from larger cultural stories. These stories are particular to the life experiences of the particular individuals, families, and other groups involved. These life stories are not always (I would to say in most cases) the same or many not fit in with the Christian story of the counsellor. Thus, standing between the Christian story and the life stories, the pastoral counsellor has to be “loyal” and has to represent the Christian story on the one hand and has to be empathetic towards the particularity of the life stories he/she hears on the other hand. Thus the counsellor has to facilitate a bridge between these two sides. This does not mean awaiting an opportunity to
proclaim the Christian truth to the life story teller – as many of our pastors would do – but it is to understand and try to connect these two poles. Such facilitation virtually always involves the pastor in a degree of tension.

As counsellors experience this tension, they have to move between the two sides without giving up their Christian story or changing the life story teller’s story. “Thus pastoral work, within the tension of dialogue, always involves mobility, the ability to move from side to side” (Gerkin 1997:113).

3. In closing, Gerkin (1997:113) emphasizes the fact that pastoral care “involves both the care of the Christian community and the care of persons: individually, in families, and in larger group relationships”.

As there are many non Christian religions or communities in Korea (and even most people of the Christian community is still settled in a Buddhist or Confucianism mindset), it is very important to realize that, myself as a Christian pastor coming from a Western mindset, has to be able to listen and facilitate between my Christian story and the Korean Culture’s life stories.

1.2.2 Research approach: Fiction writing as a metaphor for research

Since I’m using a narrative pastoral counselling approach as my paradigm, I used the “ABDCE-structure” described in the article “Fiction writing as metaphor for research: a narrative approach” (Müller et al. 2001).

I also used a questionnaire; although it is not usual to do when one use a narrative approach. My reason for using the questionnaire was that there was a language barrier between me and my co-researchers. My Korean is very limited, and most Korean people cannot speak English. To facilitate their participation, the questionnaire was translated into Korean. My questionnaire was only to be a means of listening to my co-researchers, and not to be part of the end product.
In the article mentioned above, Müller et al. discuss the use of Anne Lamott’s model for fiction writing, namely the “ABDCE” method:

Lamott refers to the formula of Alice Adams for writing, which goes ABDCE. The “A” is for action. As part of the action the researcher and co-researchers work with the “now” of the story, not the past or the future of the story, but the “now”. Setting the “now” against the socio-political and economic background entails the “B” of the narrative research process. Taking the action and the background into account, the researchers and co-researchers patiently and curiously develop (“D”) the research plot, like a Polaroid, which slowly develops to a full picture. Getting things together is echoed in the climax (“C”) of the research process, where things are different for the researchers and co-researchers. The research process has an ending (“E”) where we are left with a sense of what happened, where are the researchers and co-researchers now and what did it all mean.

1.2.2.1 A: The Action story

The action story is the “now”. To be able to come to an understanding of the “now” in the telling of the stories I heard, I conducted many personal interviews, mainly with students, pastors, doctors and other professionals in this field, like psychologists, psychiatrist and lecturers. I will also make use of focus groups to facilitate.

These interviews were unstructured, because I wanted to achieve an open conversation guided by the person being interviewed, in other words, to allow that person to tell his/her life story.

The questionnaire will consisted of general questions concerning personal problems, with a five point sliding scale which the participants could use to indicate their answer.

I solicited the help of five people in the preparation and translation of this questionnaire: a psychologist, Lee Youn Sook; a psychiatrist, Park Mi Young; Pastor Park Hi Man and Pastors Cha and Ahn. They made valuable suggestions with regard to some of the practical problems with which Koreans struggle from day to day. Professor Kang, head
of the Welfare Department at Gwang-ju University, and Professor Kim, head of the Christian Counselling Department at the SDA University in Seoul, also gave me a lot of advice. These people also helped to make sure that the translation was accurate.

I set out an English version of the questionnaire below.

**Gender:** Male / Female (please underline)

**Survey:**

There is no right or wrong answers to this questionnaire. The best answer is normally the one that first comes to your mind. In each statement, the first sentence gives a situation, and the second sentence gives a reaction. For each statement, indicate the number that is closest to the way you would handle the situation:

1. You never would act this way.  
2. You would seldom act this way.  
3. You would sometimes act this way.  
4. You would frequently act this way.  
5. You would always act this way.

**Questions:**

**A. You and your friend have had a terrible fight and you do not know what to do and you need help.**

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it.  
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it.  
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it.  
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it.  
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, monk) about it.  
6. I would talk to an older person about it.  
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it.  
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it.  
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away.  
10. I would talk to my spouse about it.  
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself.

**B. You and your husband / wife / boyfriend / girlfriend / fiancé (e) have a argument about something. You think that he/she is wrong and they think that you are wrong. You need help to solve this problem, who would you talk to?**

1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, monk) about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
6. I would talk to an older person about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

C. You and your employer are disagreeing about something. You know that you are right and that he/she is wrong. Who would you see about this problem?

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, monk) about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
6. I would talk to an older person about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

D. You have found out that your best friend / your child / husband / wife is addicted to drugs. Who would you talk to?

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, monk) about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
6. I would talk to an older person about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it.  
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it.  
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away.  
10. I would talk to my spouse about it.  
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself.  

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**E. You are having marriage problems / problems with your fiancé (e) / boyfriend / girlfriend. Who would you talk to?**

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it.  
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it.  
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it.  
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it.  
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, monk) about it.  
6. I would talk to an older person about it.  
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it.  
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it.  
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away.  
10. I would talk to my spouse about it.  
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself.  

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**F. A person close to you (husband / wife / child / loved one) is busy dying of an incurable decease, who would you talk to?**

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it.  
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it.  
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it.  
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it.  
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, monk) about it.  
6. I would talk to an older person about it.  
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it.  
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it.  
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away.  
10. I would talk to my spouse about it.  
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself.  

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**G. You are dying of an incurable decease (AIDS, cancer, etc). Who would you talk to?**
1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, monk) about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
6. I would talk to an older person about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

H. You have lost a huge amount of money, who would you talk to?

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, monk) about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
6. I would talk to an older person about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

I. You have just heard that you have lost your job, who would you talk to?

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, monk) about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
6. I would talk to an older person about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5

9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. 
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. 
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. 

J. **You have overspent on your credit card or you took out a loan and you cannot repay your debt, who would you talk to?**

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. 
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. 
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. 
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. 
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, monk) about it. 
6. I would talk to an older person about it. 
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. 
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. 
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. 
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. 
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. 

K. **Your best girlfriend / fiancé (e) / unmarried daughter has discovered that she is pregnant (unwanted). Whom would you talk to?**

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. 
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. 
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. 
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. 
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, monk) about it. 
6. I would talk to an older person about it. 
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. 
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. 
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. 
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. 
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. 

**Privacy:** The information that you have given in this questionnaire will be treated with great confidentiality. The data and will only be used for research purposes.

For any inquiries, contact Dennis Burger: 016-599-1605 or burgerdennis@yahoo.com
The results from the questionnaire were discussed in focus groups of between 4 and 10 Korean co-researchers, per group. This discussion ensured that I achieved a full understanding of the stories told by the co-researchers in this “means” of sharing their life story.

The results for each question and the feedback from the focus groups were used in this section as it gave the story of the “now”. I share my understandings in the discussion of this part of the research in Sections 2.5 and 2.6 as I shared it with the action groups.

1.2.2.2 B. The background story:

Korea has a very long and significant history. The Korean people are very proud of their history, even though their history tells how many times they have been conquered and oppressed. Most, if not all Korean people’s actions stories strongly are intertwined with their background story. In their telling of their life story, they often refer back to their background story.

In dealing with the background story, I’m sharing 11 sections/stories told by Korean writers themselves. These sections/stories are copied as is. They are:

3.1 “The Bear and the Tiger”,
3.2 “The background of the Korean culture”,
3.3 “Short Historical Background”,
3.4 “The Korean War”,
3.5 “Industrial Modernization”,
3.6 “Post Olympic Korea”,
3.7 “Korean Culture Tutorial: Psychology”,
3.8 “Korean customs and interesting mannerisms”,
3.9 “Religions”,
3.10 “A woman’s life, a short story I found in a newspaper article by Kim Heung-sook” and 3.11 “A short conclusion of the background section.”
1.2.2.3 D: The Development story

In the: “Fiction writing as metaphor for research: a narrative approach”, Müller et al. (2001:4) cite Anne Lamott as follows:

We found the metaphor of the Polaroid, used by Anne Lamott (1995:39) very useful. She says writing a first draft, (and doing research, I would add),

...is very much like watching a Polaroid develop. You can’t – and, in fact, you’re not supposed to – know exactly what the picture is going to look like until it has finished developing. First you just point at what has your attention and take the picture...maybe your Polaroid was supposed to be a picture of that boy standing against the fence, and you didn’t notice until the last minute that a family was standing a few feet away from him...Then the film emerges from the camera with a grayish green murkiness that gradually becomes clearer and clearer, and finally you see the husband and wife holding their baby with two children standing beside them. And at first it all seems very sweet, but then the shadows begin to appear.

I also think that the metaphor of the Polaroid is very useful. As I listened and talked to and even lived with my co-researchers, my understanding of their life stories developed into a clearer picture. If one looks at the development of a Polaroid, one also discovers that at first one sees things in the picture, things that are actually projected there by one’s own paradigm.

In the development, one has to wait to get a fuller perspective on the life story teller’s story. For this one has to wait, participate and enjoy the process of how the whole picture unfolds in front of you. If one does not participate with an open mind and empathy, you may also miss this unfolding.

Müller et al. (2001:5) also make the following relevant comments in the same article:
Research is not in the first instance about an action, but about people (characters) in action. These characters are participants and not objects. They are the co-researchers and should be allowed to be part of the development process.

The contribution of the researcher is to reflect and facilitate and wait until the plot emerges. It’s more than just to be a scribe. It’s like being the assistant for someone who is writing an autobiography.

In order to do that, you have to listen to your ‘characters’, and you have to have compassion for them. The better you get to know them, the better you will be able to see things from their perspective.

As I have already mentioned, I as a researcher had to stand back and become an observer, a listener, an assistant, an empathetic caregiver and so on. This is necessary not only to develop the co-researchers, but also to develop the researcher’s own understanding. The life story tellers’ stories are there, they are present. As they share their life stories, so the researcher’s understanding of the whole picture develops.

Thus, in my Development section, I share how the Action story and the Background stories are connected to each other. I also discuss the Development of this culture over time and how it perceives itself today. Just as importantly, I share how my understanding of Korean culture and the Korean participants’ understanding of counselling and the counsellor have developed.

I share many of my own personal experiences in coming to a better understanding of this new culture. I also reflect on some of the mistakes that I made, in thinking I knew what the picture was before it had developed.
Müller et al. (2001:6) discuss the Climax as follows:

We are talking here of the curiosity and patience of the good researcher. He or she sets the scene in motion and waits anxiously for the climax to develop. The fake or quasi researcher on the other hand, is a propagandist who knows the answers to the questions and therefore does not really need to do any research. Then the research document becomes propaganda material instead of an honest development of ‘character’ and ‘plot’. The person, who knows the outcome or climax before hand, hasn’t even started the process of becoming a researcher.

When ‘understanding’ comes too quickly, it is not to understand at all. This is also about the desire to maintain control. Lamott says (1995:85) that her students always assume that well-respected writers, when they sit down and write their books, know pretty well what is going to happen because they have outlined their plot and this is why their books turn out so beautifully. And then she reacts by saying: ‘I do not know anyone fitting this description, on the way to finding a plot and structure that work. You are welcome to join the club.’ Likewise, well-respected researchers shouldn’t know and therefore control the plot and climax of the story. You may perhaps just envision a temporary destination, but you must allow your ‘characters’ to develop from there in their own way towards the end.

Trying to come to a better understanding of another culture and then also to grasp how members of that culture understand the concept of counselling and the counsellor – especially if that concept is almost non-existed – requires time and patience. The main reasons for this is the fact that a researcher may not have a very strong mindset, and is often prejudiced against something outside his/her paradigm. If the writer knows the “understanding” before hand or if it comes too quickly, he/she actually writes the story with a pre-conceived idea or ideas. Even in writing my own paper about the Korean culture, I frequently had to guard against the temptation to jump ahead of the story.
Thus in writing about the Korean culture and the Korean’s understanding of counsellors and counselling, I hoped to get to a point where my co-researchers could tell me how they understand this aspect. I also hoped to come to a better understanding of how the Koreans share their problems or reduce their stress. By discovering this, I also hoped to explore a method to counsel the Korean culture.

I had to wait for the Development story to develop fully and show me the picture. I wanted to discover Koreans understanding of the counsellor and counselling, thus another challenge was not to let my questions or curiosity manipulate the Development. I would like to use the example of a 3-D picture to explain this process. A few years ago these pictures were quite popular. If one just looked at the picture, on the surface, it appeared to consist only of spots or stripes or different shapes and colours. One had to literally stare and focus on one point and then, very slowly one had to move the picture slowly away until everything becomes very blurry. Then suddenly, a picture started to emerge from all the blurred confusion. Sometimes, one had to do it over and over again to get it right, to see the full picture.

At one point, I was very nervous that I might miss the climax. On the other hand, it was also exciting to know that there is a climax and that’s when the time and conditions were right, the full picture would appear.

1.2.2.5 E: The Ending

Müller et al. (2001:6) quote Lamott on the ending:

And then there is the ending: what is our sense of who these people are now, what are they left with, what happened, and what did it mean? (Lamott 1995:62)
While one is still in the developing process and still anxiously awaiting the climax that will illuminate the story, it is difficult to say what the ending will be. What I can share is what I hope to do when all these other sections start to develop.

While the above quote from Lamott stated, I hoped to bring everything together in the ending. Not only did I want to describe my sense of who these people are, but more importantly what counselling and the counsellor meant to them. I planned to try to compare the life stories of my co-researchers with my Western paradigm as well.

I wanted to try to understand what place, if any, a narrative pastoral approach, had in the Korean culture – especially after I had attained a better understanding of the Korean’s understandings of counselling and the counsellor. I also looked at what my experience of Korean culture meant to me.

1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

To add extra voices to the research and to provide additional information on the paradigms used, Korean culture and other issues, various books, articles and internet sources were consulted. These are listed in the bibliography and are referred to throughout the report.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This study is divided into the following chapters:

   Chapter 1: Introduction: The beginning of my Korean Experience: In

Chapter 1, I give an overview of what the contents of this paper. It consists of

   Introduction.

   Positioning.

   Literature review.

   Outline of the study.
Chapter 2: The Korean culture’s present story: The action story of the Korean culture.

Chapter 3: The Korean culture’s past story: The background story of the Korean culture.

Chapter 4: My journey in understanding the Korean culture’s story: The Development story.

Chapter 5: It was there throughout my whole journey: The climax.

CHAPTER 2: THE KOREAN CULTURE’S PRESENT STORY

(The action story of the Korean culture)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Korea has a very long history. It also has many rich folk tales. In my experience and understanding, I think the folk tale that is most popular is the story of the Bear and the Tiger. This is not just a story or a folk tale about a bear and a tiger; it is the story of the origins of the Korean people. It could well be a meta-narrative for Koreans.

Since I am using a narrative approach, I took this folk tale as the basis of my story, as the melody of my song. I have heard the story many times, even though I might still have miss some of the finer details, I retell the story below as taken from the website http://allisonseo.tripod.com/mypersonalsite/id14.html. to the best of my ability.

2.2 THE BEAR AND THE TIGER

A long, long, long time ago the god of heaven and earth had a son whose name was Hwan-ung. He was a strong and energetic young man. One day he came to his father and asked his father to allow him to become the ruler of the earth. His father, who loved him very much, granted him his wish.

The young Hwan-ung was a good ruler and he taught the people many good things like farming, fishing, medicine and how to live in peace with one another.

Next to the birch tree where he was living was a big cave. In this cave there lived a bear and a tiger that look at all the human beings living in harmony and happiness. They also
longed to have part in this joy, thus every day they prayed to god to help them to become human too.

One day their prayers and the earnestness to become human, touched Hwan-ung and he called them out of the cave to come and see him. He asked them if they would really like to become human. With a great longing to become humans, they replied with an unmistaken “Yes”.

“This is what you have to do,” Hwan-ung replied. “You have to stay in your cave for 100 days and only eat garlic and mugwort. After you have done this, you will become humans.”

The tiger and the bear immediately went into the cave and started with their 100-day journey to become human. After 20 days, the tiger couldn’t take it any more and decided to leave the cave. The tiger reckoned to himself that he was a tiger and he has other needs, thus he doesn’t want to be a human any more.

The bear continued and stayed in the cave for the full one hundred days. After the one-hundredth day of garlic, mugwort and persistence, the bear came out of the cave and was transformed into a beautiful woman. Hwang-ung looked at this beautiful woman and decided to marry her. They had a son together and named him Tan-gun. Tan-gun became a very good ruler and is also know as the founder of the Korean Nation.
Not only are the Korean people or Korean culture a very old culture it is also a very proud culture. According to the Shamanistic and Totemic believers, the legend of the bear and the tiger, or the “Tan-gun story” is more than just a legend. I quote from a website: (http://www.koreanhistoryproject.org/Ket/Idx/KETIndex0000.htm).

The rational, logical mind quickly dismisses such legends as meaningless mythology, an indication of Korean totem worship. Much of what Westerners find so irrational and inconsistent with legends such as this represents the whole foundation of the Korean culture and it is the key to understanding their history. The ancient people of Choson did not question the significance of the legend's underlying truth; that a deity had desired to become human of his own volition. Unlike Westerners, Koreans never considered the earth as a place of exile for the gods, or a place where sinners were sent to do penance. They believed their land and their nation comprised a wonderful dream, a dream so good that even the deities and animals wanted to live there. Koreans felt gratified to have chosen so beautiful a place for their home. It is said even the ancient Chinese expressed wonder at Korea's beauty, summing it up in the verse: ‘[We] Would rather live in Korea and see Kumgangsan ([the] Diamond Mountains).’ Koreans have always preferred life in the present, no matter how sordid, to life in some imagined, unknown heaven, and much of their literature reflects such thinking. One proverb declares a preference for ‘an earthly field of dung to the wonders of the afterworld [after world].’

Once known as the ‘Eastern Land of Courtesy,’ Korea seldom cultivated overseas interests; never invaded its neighbors [neighbours]; nor sought development outside given boundaries. The Korean's excessive adulation of their homeland and their aversion to coveting the territories of others eventually invited foreign invasion, subjugation, and a long period of colonial suffering. Koreans have preserved the Tan'gun legend and its psychological foundation through the centuries as a source of spiritual comfort in times of crisis. Koreans feel a solemn duty to pass on such beliefs and the pride of a people with a long history and ancient culture to succeeding generations.
Despite incomplete evidence to support it, many archaeologists and historians accept the Tan'gun legend's founding date of 2333 BC as correct. Even ancient Chinese records written twenty or thirty centuries before Christ, mention the name of Choson. Whether legend or fact, somewhere, sometime, the power and personality of a man called Tan'gun made a deep and lasting impression on the Korean people. Consider Kim Saeng, Korea's most famous calligrapher. Born in 711 AD, Kim Saeng earnestly prayed to God for his special gift. One day an angel appeared to him in a vision and said, ‘I am Tan'gun, and am come down to bless you according to the longings of your heart.’

Solgo, another of Korea's greatest artists, also prayed for years that he might be divinely taught. One day an old man visited him and said, ‘I am the god-man Tan'gun. Moved by your earnest prayers, I have come to give you the divinely pointed brush.’

From that day, Solgo was a master artist. It has been said that he once painted a pine tree of such realistic beauty on a temple gateway that swallows beat their little breasts against the stonewall trying to alight in its branches. Solgo was so thankful for his gift that he painted the aged Tan'gun more than a thousand times. Icons picture Tan'gun as a kindly old Chinese-Korean man with white hair, usually smiling, sometimes accompanied by his wife, and usually attended by a pet tiger.”

2.3 THE ACTION STORY

2.3.1 The Bear and the Tiger

In the Development section I would like to concentrate on the following part of the story of the bear and the tiger:
The tiger and the bear immediately went into the cave and started with their 100-day journey to become human. After 20 days, the tiger couldn’t take it any more and decided to leave the cave.

2.4 THE STORY TOLD BY THE QUESTIONNAIRE AND ITS CONTEXT

Each person, family, group or culture has a story to tell. The Korean culture has a very long, significant and interesting story to share. In the background section (in Chapter 3), I discuss more Korean history and my experience in this culture and its story.

The action story is the now – the “Story of the bear and the tiger”. Thus I want to start by sharing the statistics from the questionnaires I drew up, the responses from the focus groups and the interviews. As mentioned earlier, the questionnaires were only used in an attempt to overcome a big language barrier and to facilitate discussion within the focus groups. The statistics I got from these questionnaires tell a story, the story of the now. The responses from the focus groups and the people I interviewed were included to make sure that my listening to the life story tellers now, was accurate.

2.4.1 The questions from the questionnaire

In the questionnaire, I tried to sketch problematic situations that varied from everyday problems to more serious problems. The questions are listed below.

Questions:

A. You and your friend have had a terrible fight and you do not know what to do and you need help. Who would you talk to?

B. You and your husband / wife / boyfriend / girlfriend / fiancé (e) had an argument about something. You think that he/she is wrong and they think that you are wrong. You need help to solve this problem, who would you talk to?
C. You and your employer are disagreeing about something. You know that you are right and that he/she is wrong. Who would you see about this problem?

D. You found out that your best friend / your child / husband / wife is addicted to drugs. Who would you talk to?

E. You are having marriage problems / problems with your fiancé (e)/ boyfriend / girlfriend. Who would you talk to?

F. A person close to you (husband / wife / child / loved one) is busy dying of an incurable decease, who would you talk to?

G. You are dying of an incurable disease (AIDS, cancer, etc). Who would you talk to?

H. You have lost a huge amount of money, who would you talk to?

I. You have just heard that you have lost your job, who would you talk to?

J. You have overspent on your credit card or you took out a loan and you cannot repay your debt. Who would you talk to?

K. Your best girlfriend / fiancé (e)/ unmarried daughter discovered that she is pregnant (unwanted). Whom would you talk to?

The co-researchers had to indicate on a sliding scale of 1 (the least interested) to 5 (the most interested) to whom they would talk to. The following are the options they were given for each of the above questions:

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it.
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if I still have them) about it.
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it.
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it.
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, and monk) about it.
6. I would talk to an older person about it.
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it.
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it.
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away.
10. I would talk to my spouse about it.
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself.

I handed questionnaires to 100 participants from different age groups, randomly consisting of males and females from different income groups in the Korean society.

2.5 FEEDBACK FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES, FOCUS GROUPS AND THE INTERVIEWS

First, I would like to remind the reader that my research topic is “The Korean people and their culture and their view or understanding of counselling or counsellor”. The reason I chose this topic is that counselling or counsellor, as we would know them in a Western culture, almost do not exist in Korea. There are a few psychologists and psychiatrists working in some hospitals and institutions, but private counsellors are a rarity and in some places do not exist at all. A few, of the Christian pastors do some counselling but almost none. This is not because there is lack of capable people in Korea; it is just part of the culture “not to share one’s problem with other people, especially if that person is a stranger to you”.

In the background section (Section 3.7), I include a detailed writing by Dr Luke Kim on different terms used in the Korean psychology and culture. His article, taken from the Internet, provides a deeper understanding of the Korean culture and its psychology.

Of all the professionals that I have spoken to, only a few, namely a psychiatrist, a welfare worker, a doctor and one or two pastors, actually provided counselling.

2.5.1 Discussing each question

In the following section I give the response from the people that have answered the different options. I give the percentage (rounded off to a full number) of the people who chose these options.
Together with this I give the feedback from the different focus groups and the interviews I had.

2.5.2 The Focus group

It was really a pleasure to spend time with each group and I learned a lot from each person. I think one of the biggest things that I have learned is the fact that although one thinks one knows a lot about someone, one actually does not. When I started with my study, I had already been in Korea two and a half years. By the time I started writing my findings, I have been in Korea for almost four years, and even after four years, I am learning new things every day.

One is inclined to make a judgment about someone. Even worse, one does not really want to let go of the preconceived idea one has built up in one’s mind – “if you do not know it, label it”. Talking to many Westerners working in Korea, I have heard many strange and wonderful things about the Korean people. When I was listening to the focus groups and the interviewees, I realized that I am still a blind person in the world of the Korean culture.

I had five different focus groups. Members differed in gender, age and occupation. They ranged from three in a group to 12. These groups consisted of middle school, high school and university students, teachers, housewives, businessmen and various professionals, like doctors, psychologists, pastors and dentists. Unfortunately, I could not get any persons from the farming community, although some of the members of the focus groups had grown up in the countryside.

2.5.3 The Interviews

The formal interviews were with a psychiatrist, a doctor, a welfare worker, a professor who was head of the Welfare Department at Keongju University, some pastors and the head of the Christian Counselling department at SDA University in Seoul and also his
assistant. I also had many informal interviews and discussions with individuals whenever the occasion arose.

All of these focus groups and interviews were with Korean people, except for the assistant at the Christian Counselling Department at the SDA University in Seoul (he was an American teaching in this department).

2.6 THE RESULTS FROM THE QUESTIONNAIRES AND THE FOCUS GROUP’S FEEDBACK ON THESE RESULTS

A. You and your friend had a terrible fight and you do not know what to do and you need help. Who would you talk to?

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. (75%)
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. (53%)
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. (54%)
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. (31%)
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, and monk) about it. (36%)
6. I would talk to an older person about it. (36%)
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. (25%)
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. (34%)
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. (41%)
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. (70%)
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. (60%)

Questions A to C are questions that are considered to be “not such serious problems”. In question A it is notable to see that options 1 (talking to a close friend) and 10 (talking to one’s spouse) had the highest rates (of 75% and 70% respectively). One sees this trend in most of the questions. Options 2 (talking to a parent), 3 (talking to a sibling) and 11 (talking to no one and solving the problem by oneself); were the only other options that were rated above 50% with 53%, 54% and 60%.
Option 8 “I would talk to a professional counsellor about it” was rated 34%.

Because the Korean culture is a community-orientated culture, Koreans tend to depend a lot on their families and friends. Most people – as indicated by the responses to the questionnaires and also in the interviews – said that if they would talk to someone, they would talk to their closest friend about a problem. Many of the housewives said that they would talk to their friends or to their husbands about problems.

Something that is also very common in Korea is the fact that most people go out at night and visit with their friends or with business acquaintances. As one businessman told me, when visiting Western countries like Australia, America and South Africa, he was surprised to see that most people go home and relax. To use his words: “I was very bored sitting at home and it was only 8 pm.” In Korea, it is quite normal to see families, especially in summer time, walking around or having a picnic with young children at night – sometimes even after midnight.

For businessmen, most of the time these sessions is spent drinking. The men, especially businessmen, go out with their friends and very often they get intoxicated. It was conveyed to me, that most people will not talk about their problems but it is acceptable to get intoxicated. Being intoxicated helps one to relax, to forget about one’s problems and then it is acceptable to talk about one’s problems.

Even though Option 9 (going for a drink and hoping the problem will go away) only received a score of 46.1%, the consumption of alcohol and alcoholism are big problems in Korea. When I spoke to a doctor about this problem, she said that many people, especially those in the rural area and in farming communities, consider alcohol a “food”. When I interviewed a psychiatrist, he also stated that most of his counselling is with people who have alcohol problems. One finds beer and Sojo (an inexpensive traditional, high alcoholic drink made from sweet potato), in almost every restaurant, supermarket, convenient store and drinking place.
The most of the men I spoke to said that alcohol helps them to relax and to forget about their problems, even momentarily. They – even those that do not drink – mentioned that socializing with their friends helps them to cope.

Most women (married and un-married) prefer to talk to their friends or spouses about their problems. The women also enjoy going out and some enjoy getting intoxicated, although this response was not as frequent as with the men. Being intoxicated is quite acceptable.

The only difference is that women would rather go out with friends at lunchtime so that they can be with their children at night. They do not have to prepare food for their children at lunchtime, as all the schools provide lunch for the children at school.

B. **You and your husband / wife / boyfriend / girlfriend / fiancé (e) had an argument about something. You think that he/she is wrong and they think that you are wrong. You need help to solve this problem, who would you talk to?**

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. (77%)
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. (56%)
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. (57%)
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. (31%)
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, and monk) about it. (33%)
6. I would talk to an older person about it. (38%)
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. (26%)
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. (36%)
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. (39%)
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. (71%)
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. (57%)
Question B is also considered a mild problem, and again Option 1 (77%) and option 10 (71%) got the highest scores. Also Options 2, 3 and 11 received scores above 50% (56%, 57% and 57% respectively). Option 8 only received a score of 36%.

As one can see, the results to Questions A, B and C are very similar. As I have discovered and as this research shows, most people would prefer to talk to a close friend or their spouse about their problems.

In the case where a wife has a serious problem with her husband or his family, as is the case with many of middle aged women, the woman would keep quiet about it. She might talk to a close friend about the personal problems she has with her husband, but most of the time she would keep it to herself. Most women – as I have discovered with my interviews, focus groups and housewives’ classes – would admit that they suffer from Hwa-byung.

According to Korean culture, women are not allowed to talk back to their husbands or the husband’s family. (There is a more detailed discussion of Hwa-byung in the Background section: Korean cultural tutorial, Section 3.7.6). Most of women say that most mothers do not accept their daughters-in-law. The mothers feel, they are losing a son to another woman, and because sons are so important in Korea, even today, this is a “big issue”. Most women also said that even the husband’s sisters – especially if they are older – try their best to exert their authority over their sister-in-law.

As a result most women cannot speak their minds. Because it is not part of their culture to share their problems with others, they are not able to open up and get their problems in the open, and so most women suffer from *Hwa-byung*.

Most women – especially the married women – agree that they suffer from *Hwa-byung*, but there has been a gradual change in this situation. When one looks at the younger generation – women in their twenties or thirties – one sees a difference in their attitude and their culture. In this younger generation, most of the women say that they would not
stand for treatment like that. If one looks at the divorce rate in South Korea today, it seems that most young women would rather get a divorce than settle in the traditional way.

The following article (Parker, 2003:1) from the Internet highlights the seriousness about the divorce rates in Korea.

“South Korea Undergoing Rapid Social Transformation

The divorce rate in South Korea is rapidly rising.

Still anchored in Confucian values of family and patriarchy, South Korea is fast becoming an open, Westernized society — with the world's highest concentration of Internet broadband users, a pop culture that has recently been breaking taboos left and right, and living patterns increasingly focusing on individual satisfaction.

Social changes that took decades in the West or Japan, sociologists here like to point out, are occurring here in a matter of years. In the last decade, South Korea's divorce rate swelled 250 percent, in keeping with women's rising social status.

A country that industrializes rapidly will be affected by the changing incentives that industrialization creates. At the same time, the people will absorb ideas from already industrialized countries more rapidly because of movies and other means of transmitting mass culture. Absent theocratic rule that suppresses social changes the changes which are occurring in South Korea seem inevitable for any country that fully industrializes.

South Korea has a higher divorce rate than the European Union. However, lumping all the countries of the EU together all too frequently obscures a wide range of variations. Also, the EU might have a lower divorce rate due to higher rates of unmarried cohabitation.
In 2001, the rate was 2.8, which was above the European Union's average of 1.8 and Japan's 2.3, though below the United States' rate of 4.

In another article taken from the BBC, it also talks about the divorce rate and possible reasons for this rate (Gluck 2005:1).

**Koreans learn to live with divorce**

South Korea has seen a massive shift in traditional family values, with soaring divorce rates that are now second only to the United States.

It is a huge change in a society which still places great importance on the continuation of the family line.

For every two marriages registered last year, there was one divorce. As South Korean society becomes more westernized, fewer couples are willing to put up with unhappy marriages

Kwak Bae-hee, director of the Korea legal aid centre for family relations, explained what lay behind the trend.

‘In just 30 years, Korea has gone through enormous social changes which took centuries in western societies. The roles of men and women have been transformed. But it's been a chaotic process, and the clash of cultures, between the old and the new, is why the divorce rate is so high,’ she said.

A weekly television show, Love and War, has become compulsive viewing for many South Koreans. It dramatizes real-life cases of unhappy couples filing for divorce.

Kim Kwang-im - a divorcee - is a regular viewer.
‘When I watch this program it reminds me of many of my own experiences. I think women are changing in Korea, but men are staying the same. They still want to control their wives, to keep them under their thumb,’ she said.

As the divorce rate soars, people are more cautious about marriage. Living together is slowly gaining wider acceptance in Korean society.

Lee Hwa-soo and Jin Kyung-cheul lived together for three years before marrying. At the time, it was such a taboo issue that they did not tell many of their friends they were unmarried.

Today, Mr. Lee runs an internet site where singles can find partners to move in with - without getting married first.

His site has more than 80,000 members. He says it is good way to test a relationship.

‘Many marriages end in divorce because people marry without really knowing each other. But by living together, knowing the ins and outs of that person, it can be a more serious relationship. And for some couples - like us - it can even lead to marriage,’ he said.

But the dream of having a fairy tale wedding still remains strong in South Korea.

More couples are getting divorced, but the number of people remarrying has also doubled over the past decade.

People are still looking for love - as well as marriage.

C. You and your employer are disagreeing about something. You know that you are right and that he/she is wrong. Who would you see about this problem?

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. (75%)
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. (66%)
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. (59%)
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. (33%)
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, and monk) about it. (36%)
6. I would talk to an older person about it. (45%)
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. (24%)
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. (39%)
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. (36%)
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. (73%)
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. (53%)

Question C is a little different from Questions A and B. Questions A and B focus on more personal relationships, whereas Question C focus on a working relationship. Again Option 1 scores the highest (with 75%) and second is Option 10 (with 73%). The same pattern occurs with Options 2, 3 and 11 scoring above 50% (66%, 59% and 53% respectively). Option 8 received a score of 39%.

D. You have found out that your best friend / your child / husband / wife is addicted to drugs. Who would you talk to?

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. (57%)
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. (62%)
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. (59%)
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. (33%)
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, and monk) about it. (44%)
6. I would talk to an older person about it. (40%)
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. (25%)
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. (62%)
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. (30%)
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. (72%)
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. (46%)
Questions D, E, F and G are considered to be very serious problems. They focus on either the self, close relatives or a very good friend, thus these questions focus more on a personal level and also discuss more “serious” issues.

Questions D, F, G and K can also be considered medical problems.

It is interesting to see that Option 10 scores the highest (with 72%). Option 10 scores the highest in Questions D, G, H, I, J and K. The second highest score is 62% for Options 2 and Option 8. The other scores above 50% are Options 1 and 3 (57% and 59% respectively).

It is interesting to look at a few differences in respect of this question as apposed to the other questions prior to and following this one. First, Option 1 did not receive the highest score. It was also the first time that Option 11 received a score below 50%. Option 8 received a score not just above 50%, but also above 60% (with 62%). This is the highest score for Option 8 in this questionnaire.

In the feedback from the discussions with the focus groups, I learnt more about whom the professional counsellors are that the people would go to. I also give a more detailed discussion concerning Questions D, F, G and K and Option 8’s score in the Development section in Sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2.

E. You are having marriage problems / problems with your fiancé(e) / boyfriend / girlfriend. Who would you talk to?

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. (81%)
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. (79%)
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. (71%)
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. (39%)
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, and monk) about it. (40%)
6. I would talk to an older person about it. (44%)
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. (27%)
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. (38%)
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. (30%)
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. (70%)
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. (43%)

Again the same pattern is seen as in Questions A to C with Option 1 scoring the highest (81%). The only difference is that Option 2 (79%) is second and closely to that are Options 3 and 10 (71% and 70% respectively). Questions D and E’s Option 9 both received the lowest (30%) in this questionnaire. Option 8 only received 38%.

F. A person close to you (husband / wife / child / loved one) is busy dying of an incurable decease, who would you talk to?

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. (75%)
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. (79%)
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. (74%)
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. (44%)
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, and monk) about it. (55%)
6. I would talk to an older person about it. (45%)
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. (30%)
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. (55%)
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. (36%)
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. (71%)
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. (42%)

In this question, Option 2 got the highest score (79%). Very close to this score are Options 1, 3 and 10 (75%, 74% and 71% respectively), all above the 70% level. Questions E and F are also the only two questions that have four options whose scores are above 70%. It is also interesting to notice that for Questions D, E and F, Option 11 is
below 50% (with 46%, 43% and 42% respectively). Again Option 8 had a score of more than 50% (55%).

G. You are dying of an incurable disease (AIDS, cancer, etc). Who would you talk to?

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. (67%)
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. (67%)
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. (69%)
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. (41%)
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, and monk) about it. (54%)
6. I would talk to an older person about it. (39%)
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. (30%)
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. (58%)
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. (38%)
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. (72%)
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. (56%)

It was interesting that in a few Korean dramas that I have seen on television, one of the protagonists, either the man or the girl, dies of an incurable disease, accident etc. When questioned about it, the housewives especially said that they prefer this kind of storyline because it has a strong emotional effect on them. By contrast, I have always enjoyed a story with a happy ending.

In this question, Option 10 scores the highest (72%). Options 1, 2, and 3 all had scores above 60% (67%, 67% and 69% respectively). Options 5, 8 and 11 had scores above 50% (54%, 58% and 56%). In both Questions F and G, Option 5 received a score above 50%, (55% and 54% respectively) – the only two questions where this happened. Option 8 received a score of 58%.
H. You have lost a huge amount of money, who would you talk to?

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. (70%)
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. (70%)
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. (69%)
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. (36%)
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, and monk) about it. (36%)
6. I would talk to an older person about it. (36%)
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. (28%)
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. (43%)
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. (41%)
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. (75%)
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. (53%)

In this question, Option 10 had the highest score (75%) with Options 1 and 2 also above 70% (each 70%). Option 3 scored above 60% (with 69%) and Option 11 above 50% (with 53%). The next two questions, Questions J and I, also deal with a similar situation as Question H does. It is interesting that their Options 11 also received scores of only 56% and only 55% respectively.

These questions mentioned above, only received scores in their 50’s. When I talked to a focus group that consisted only of housewives, they all said that if they had no money left or that if they were in financial difficulties, they would stay in their house and speak to nobody about it.

One of the Korean teachers that worked with us shared her life’s story about such an incident: she grew up in a rich family, but her father lost everything when she was in middle school. Even though he had nothing, he still tried to buy expensive gifts for his clients, and try to help others where he could. She also indicated that part of this reaction was because he was a good man and part of it was because of “Che-myun” or “Face-
saving as we would call it. During the IMF Crisis of the 1994’s, many people committed suicide because they had lost everything.

In the “Background” section, section 3.7.8, I discuss “Che-myun” and other terms related to Korean psychology in greater detail. Option 8 received 43%.

I. You have just heard that you have lost your job, who would you talk to?

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. (70%)
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. (71%)
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. (68%)
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. (36%)
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, and monk) about it. (38%)
6. I would talk to an older person about it. (37%)
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. (27%)
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. (42%)
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. (44%)
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. (76%)
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. (56%)

The highest scoring option in this question was Option 10 (76%). Also above 70% were Option 1 (70%) and Option 2 (71%). Option 3 scored 68% and Option 11 56%. Option 8 only scored 42%.

J. You have overspent on your credit card or you took out a loan and you cannot repay your debt. Who would you talk to?

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. (62%)
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. (73%)
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. (69%)
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. (35%)
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, and monk) about it. (31%)
6. I would talk to an older person about it. (32%)
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. (25%)
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. (43%)
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. (35%)
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. (76%)
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. (55%)

In this question, Option 10 received the highest score (76%). Option 2 received 73% and Options 1, 3 and 11 received 62%, 69% and 55% respectively. Option 8 only received 43%.

K. Your girlfriend / fiancé (e) / unmarried daughter has discovered that she is pregnant (unwanted). Whom would you talk to?

1. I would talk to my closest friend about it. (61%)
2. I would talk to one of my parents (if they are alive) about it. (59%)
3. I would talk to one of my sisters or brothers about it. (56%)
4. I would talk to one of my relatives about it. (32%)
5. I would talk to my spiritual leader (pastor, priest, and monk) about it. (38%)
6. I would talk to an older person about it. (37%)
7. I would talk to a fortune-teller about it. (26%)
8. I would talk to a professional counsellor about it. (58%)
9. I would go for a drink and hope it would go away. (33%)
10. I would talk to my spouse about it. (74%)
11. I would talk to nobody about it and try to solve it myself. (57%)

The highest score in this question was for Option 10 (74%). Option 1 was the only score above 60% (61%), followed closely by Options 2, 3, 8 and 11 with scores of 59%, 56%, 58% and 57% respectively.
It is noticeable to see that Option 8 has a score above 50% (58%). Only Questions D, F, G and K had scores above 50% for Option 8, with scores of 62%, 55%, 58% and 58% respectively.

The averages of the questions and the different options are set out in the table in figure 2.1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average %</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>K</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average %</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>55.2</td>
<td>53.8</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>48.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Highest / Lowest)

Figure 2.1: Each option’s average and each question’s average.

Option 10 (“I would talk to my spouse about it”) received the highest overall score.

The fact that Option 7 (“I would talk to a fortune-teller about it”) received the lowest score at first seems not too strange. But if one considers that about ten years ago it was custom to go and see a Shaman, or a fortune teller before one made any big decisions, it shows a significant shift in Korean thinking. These decisions would vary from getting married, buying a house or car, when to take a vacation, etc. It was almost unthinkable not to go and ask their blessing and their insights on one’s future plans.

Most women chose to speak to their friends and spouses about certain problems. The men, by contrast would rather go and get drunk to relax and to empty themselves of what is bothering them. It is especially popular among businessmen to go out and have a “Sojo-night”. Sojo is a potent alcoholic drink, which is brewed from rice or sweet potato. As I have interviewed a doctor, she pointed out to me that Sojo (the cheapest and best liked drink on the market in Korea) is considered a “food” especially by the people in the country side. It is interesting that it is considered all right to be intoxicated and then
share your problems, which is culturally acceptable, but that to share your problems while you are sober is not.

Having completed the Action story, I will continue to share stories from the Korean people themselves in the Background section in Chapter 3.
CHAPTER 3: THE KOREAN CULTURE’S PAST STORY
(The background story of the Korean culture)

3.1 THE BEAR AND THE TIGER

In the Background section I would like to concentrate on the following part of the story of the bear and the tiger:

Next to the birch tree where he was living was a big cave. In this cave there lived a bear and a tiger that look at all the human beings living in harmony and happiness. They also longed to have part in this joy, thus every day they prayed to god to help them to become human too.

One day their prayers and the earnestness to become human, touched Hwan-ung and he called them out of the cave to come and see him. He asked them if they really would like to become human. With a great longing to become humans, they replied with an unmistaken ‘Yes’.

3.2 INTRODUCTION

As I mentioned earlier, the Korean culture – a very strong Asian culture – has a very long and interesting background. While one looks at the Korean history one sees that the characteristics of the bear, such as to be diligent, hardworking, persistent, calm-tempered, modest, etc. is much the same as that which the Koreans as a nation value. Throughout all their suffering, caused by the different invasions, wars and the IMF crisis in the 1990’s, they still kept their pride and honour.

By being diligent, hardworking and persistent, Korea, although it is a very small country with limited resources, is a very strong competitor in world markets. So, for instance, Hyundai’s ship-building industry, which is part of the Hyundai Corporation, is the biggest in the world. The founder, Mr Chung Ju Yung, who was born the son of a poor
farmer in North Korea, build up this industry in his lifetime. He died in 2001, at aged 85. Samsung industries, the biggest semiconductor manufacturer in the world was also built up in one generation. These stories are part of most Korean people’s life story.

In the short history that follows and also in the rest of the background, one sees the character traits of the bear.

I deal with the background story in eight sections:

3.3 “Short Historical Background”;
3.4 “The Korean War”;
3.5 “Industrial Modernization”;
3.6 “Post Olympic Korea”;
3.7 “Korean Culture Tutorial: Psychology”
3.8 “Korean Customs and interesting mannerisms; the geography of South Korea and the Korean Language (Hangul)”
3.9 “Religions”
3.10 “A woman’s life, a short story I found in a news paper article by Kim Heung-sook”

The data was mainly copied from the given Internet sites and sources. The reason for this is that the articles were written by Korean people – who would know their background story better than themselves? Thus, the background story is told by the storytellers’ themselves.

3.3 A SHORT HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This history is set out on the internet site http://media.graniteschools.org/Curriculum/korea/history.htm. It is cited verbatim.

Korea is a modern nation with a history of over 5,000 years. The history of its culture can be seen in the Korean art and architecture that remains today.
In Korea mythology there is a story of the birth of the Korean nation when a god named Hwanung comes from heaven and transforms a bear into a woman. He marries her and she gives birth to a son, Tangun. Tangun establishes the first capital of the Korean nation in 2333 B.C. and calls it Joseon - Land of the Morning Calm.

Ko (Old) Joseon is the kingdom that many Koreans believe was founded by Tangun. They probably lived in pit houses and had iron tools. Their walled-kingdom was near Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea.

Prehistoric remains found throughout Korea indicate that early in the history of the Korean Peninsula these inhabitants knew sophisticated technologies. These people believed that all objects had spirits, which is a belief known as animism. They also believed that some people had the power to communicate with these spirits and this is known as Shamanism. Farming at this time, included growing rice. This was about 3,500 years ago at the start of the Bronze Age. Many farm tools have been found from this time.

There were many other nations in Manchuria and the Korean Peninsula during the Iron Age. In the 1st century B.C., Ko Joseon gives way to three nations. The first is Goguryeo (37 B.C. - 668 A.D.) to the north, which was in Manchuria and northern Korea. Goguryeo becomes a buffer against the aggressive nations of China. Two other kingdoms developed, Silla (founded in 57 B.C.) in the southeastern corner of the peninsula, and Baekche (founded in 18 B.C.) in the south-western part of the peninsula. They become known as the "Three Kingdoms" although there was a fourth kingdom known as Kaya (founded in 42 A.D.)

Korea, being a peninsula and being surrounded by the great powers of the Orient, has been subject to invasions throughout its history by warring nations from China and Manchuria to the north and from Japan to the east.
Being isolated from the north, Silla was the last kingdom to be influenced by foreign ideas. Due to this isolation, their art and architecture became distinctly Korean.

The cultures of the Three Kingdoms became very refined with an aristocratic society where the aristocrats became the leaders. With the development of Silla and Baekche, friction developed between the three kingdoms.

Between 417 and 458 A.D. the Three Kingdoms accepted Buddhism and this greatly expanded their art and architectural culture. The Buddhist culture later extended to Japan and influenced their culture.

With Buddhism the arts of building temples, creating stone Buddhas, stone pagodas, and stone lanterns flourished. Huge bells were cast which are struck by logs hanging from two chains. Many monks composed and wrote literature in Chinese.

In the 7th century Silla conquered the other kingdoms and Silla except for the part of Goryeo [Goguryeo] in Manchuria united the Three Kingdoms. They were then able to form a nation under one government known as Unified Silla.

Many beautiful temples and shrines were built including Bulguksa Temple and the Seokguram Buddhist Grotto, a technological as well as a sculptural masterpiece. Buddhists texts were printed with woodblocks. The oldest astronomical observatory in the world was also built in Gyeongju, the ancient Silla capital.

The Silla rulers began to fight among each other and in 918 Wang Kon founded the Goryeo [Goguryeo] Dynasty. This was where the name, Korea, was derived. The new laws were patterned after Chinese laws and Confucian and Buddhist beliefs. Buddhism became the official religion. The art of Goryeo celadon pottery was developed which continues as an art today.
In the 12th century, Goryeo underwent conflict between the civilian and military structures and later in the 13th century Goryeo was invaded several times by the Mongolians from the north. Japanese pirates also weakened Goryeo.

In 1392 the Goryeo Dynasty was taken over by the Joseon Dynasty who had a Confucian form of government. The Yi family from 1392 to 1910 ruled the Joseon Dynasty. This was a government, which promoted loyalty to their country and respect for parents. Joseon founder King Dae jo began the construction of Jongmyo Shrine in 1394 when the dynasty moved its capital to Hanyang, now Seoul. King Sejong the Great began his reign in 1418. In the early 1420 King Sejong also gathered many scholars to create a phonetic language, which has 11 vowels and 17 consonants, to form the Korean written language known as Hangeul. Until then, only a few scholars could read and write using Chinese characters. He also promoted education for all citizens and many scientific developments such as the sundial and water clocks.

Source: http://media.graniteschools.org/Curriculum/korea/history.htm

The Japanese attacked Korea in 1592-98 with [the] destruction of many buildings and the killing of many Koreans. Kobukson, the world's first ironclad battleships, were built by Admiral Yi Sun-shin, which helped the Koreans prevent Japan from taking over Korea.
The Korean society changed as traders and merchants began to trade with Japan and the West. In the 1800's the Joseon leaders wanted to close Korea to foreigners, while the merchant class wanted to improve their economy and technology to deal with outside trade.

Japan began to grow stronger and in 1895 they defeated China during the Sino-Japanese War. Russia was defeated in 1905 in the Russo-Japanese War. Japan had become the military power in Northeast Asia. Japan annexed Korea as a Japanese colony in 1910.

For 35 years Korea was ruled by Japan. Koreans were not allowed to speak their own language or to learn about their history during this time in an effort to obliterate the Korean culture. Japan plundered land and food. On March 1, 1919 many Koreans were killed or put in prison nationwide as they protested the colonial rule. Koreans remember this day as a symbol of their patriotism. Koreans strove to keep their cultural heritage, which we see today in their many historical sites.

On August 15th, 1945 Japan surrendered ending the Pacific War, but 10 days later Korea was divided into North and South Korea. The United States took control of surrendering Japanese soldiers south of the 38th Parallel while the Soviet Union took control of the north. The United Nations called for elections in 1947 but the North Koreans refused.

A communist form of government came into power in North Korea (known as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea). The United States turned its authority over to South Korea (the Republic of Korea) in 1948 and left a small group of military advisors.
3.4 THE KOREAN WAR (1950 - 1953)

The information on the Korean War comes from http://media.graniteschools.org/Curriculum/korea/history.htm. It is listed verbatim.

The Korean War began in June of 1950, when North Korean tanks rolled across the 38th parallel, attempting to quickly unite the country by force. Unprepared, undermanned, and overwhelmed, ROK forces retreated wildly, as the US rushed what troops it had from Japan. Such efforts were mostly futile, North Korean forces outnumbering US and ROK forces by a 2-1 ratio, not including ROK's complete lack of aircraft, artillery, and serviceable tanks. In short time the South Korean army was pushed back into a small defensive perimeter around the port city of Pusan, located at the Southern tip of the peninsula. During the hostilities, the UN Security Council had convened to take up the matter of possible intervention. It was here that the Soviet Union made one of the most unusual diplomatic moves, boycotting the Security Council meeting in protest of Nationalist China having a seat instead of Communist Mainland China. With the USSR abstaining, the resolution allowing UN forces to conduct a "policing" action, restoring the peninsula back to pre-war form un-expectantly [unexpectedly] passed, and quickly US troops, with minor contingents from other Western countries, were pouring into the area. Unfortunately, the tactical and logistical situation was poor at best. Ground forces were stretched thin, and barely holding onto the "Pusan Perimeter". Troops and supplies were taking time to move from the US to staging areas in Japan, and then onwards to the battlefront. WWII General Mc Aurther [Mc Arthur] was appointed supreme commander of UN operations, and devised a brilliantly bold plan for winning the conflict.

His now famous invasion was both simple and bold. A large UN force would land behind enemy lines at Inchon, the port city serving the capital, Seoul, and turn south to attack North Korean forces. Meanwhile, a second division of UN forces would break out of the peninsula, completing the pincer action. Caught between
the two armies, the North Korean invasion force would be effectively smashed. However, due to the limited number of ports capable of handling such a large invasion, combined with treacherous beaches subject to strong tidal forces, the landing at Inchon was VERY predictable, both in location and time. Due to a gradually sloping beach that stretched for miles to sea, a miscalculation of the tides would leave the invasion force stranded in a sea of mud, while defensive positions were hardened in anticipation of an attack. However, the landing was conducted with great success, a combination of grit and well timed aerial and ship based bombardment opened the way for the army to land, and as predicted, the North Korean invasion force was crushed between the "hammer" of Mc Aurther's [Mc Arthur] landing force from Inchon, and the "anvil" of the UN forces breaking out of the Pusan Perimeter.

With North Korean forces in disarray, McAurther [Mc Arthur] rolled his troops up the West side of the peninsula, crossing the 38th Parallel, and forcing retreating North Korean forces up to the Yalu river, the Korean border with China. His not too hidden agenda, and one supported by many people in the US and Korea, was to finish the war by completely defeating the North, pushing the remaining forces into China. However, this ran directly counter to the UN's goal of a policing action, which was meant to return the peninsula to the original divided political state, with the 38th parallel as the border. Also, and more foreboding, was what was seen as McAurther's [Mc Arthur] desire to carry the war into China, defeating the Communist government and replacing it with a democracy. This widening of the war was seen by Truman as too dangerous in the new nuclear world, and soon a very public dispute arose between the two. When Chinese forces, under the guise of volunteers to the North Korean cause, crossed the border in heavy numbers, events came to a head. Truman abruptly dismissed McAurther [Mc Arthur] (who, although [this is] not noted often, was about to resign to run for the presidency), and replaced him with the intent on keeping the war contained to the peninsula.
But events had run out of US control, as North Korean and Chinese forces had been hiding in the mountainous Eastern half of North Korea, and subsequently streamed out behind UN positions. Trapped, and facing, quite literally, seas of Chinese troops pouring in from the North, UN forces went into full retreat back down the peninsula, finally setting up defensive positions at around the 38th parallel. In the Eastern half, events were direr, as the Marine X Corp, completely surrounded at the Chosin reservoir by several Chinese divisions, was forced to fight, through one of the coldest heaviest winters on record, to the sea for evacuation. For most of a year the battle turned into a costly battle of attrition along a single front dividing the peninsula, closely following the original 38th parallel. Each "hill" (they were called hills, but more closely resemble the worn down lower mountains of Appalachia) was fought over fiercely, taken and lost countless times with enormous casualties on both sides. It seemed like the fighting could [go] on indefinitely, until finally a cease fire was signed in 1953. A demilitarized zone (DMZ) was set up between the North and South, along the front, which in turn closely followed the 38th parallel. While small skirmishes would occur between both sides, as well as some significant cases of intrigue and assassinations, all fighting effectively stopped at [in] 1953.

Following the cease fire [ceasefire], the ROK and the US signed a joint defense [defence] treaty, establishing US bases within South Korea as well as the stationing of upwards of 40,000 US troops, further ensuring that a second North Korean invasion would not follow. With peace, attention turned towards the rebuilding of the country and the development of the economy. It should be noted that while the cease-fire stopped the hostilities, nothing substantive was signed afterwards, up to present day. So, technically, both countries are still at war.
3.5 INDUSTRIAL MODERNIZATION (1953 AD - 1988 AD)

The information below is quoted from the Internet site http://media.graniteschools.org/Curriculum/korea/history.htm. It is listed *verbatim*.

South Korea was left in little more then ruins following the Korean War, with poverty and hunger rampant. Drastic measures would be taken by the President, Syngmon Rhee, in order to bring the country as rapidly as possible into the modern era. His first moves were to consolidate power, deposing of political rivals and creating what was effectively a dictatorship. With support from the US, who was pleased by the harsh suppression of remaining Communists in the South, the recovery efforts of Korea were to follow the Japanese model. Imitating the model almost exactly, South Korea began building large numbers of commercial ships for sale and use in shipping lines. Steel production jumped as dry-docks was built rapidly. Huge public works projects were started, creating road and rail arteries throughout the South. Due to general inexperience in such massive construction, many errors arose, but were quickly demolished and literally paved over, as the country was determined to continue the massive building efforts. Like Japan, the next stage in economic development was arms production, both for self use and for export. While Japan had the Korean War to fuel its arms sales explosion, Korea had the Vietnam War. In addition, as a signal of close ties with the US, a division of Korean troops was sent to Vietnam in 1965 to help with the anti-communist efforts (As a side note, the Korean marines have taken on an almost mythical following, with a reputation of having completely suppressed all Viet-Cong activity in their zones.). Fueled by the sale of arms (mostly munitions), industrial development expanded along other lines; automobile and electronics production, for example.

The political situation, however, was very turbulent, as might be expected from such a new democracy. By 1960 the military staged a coup, taking over control of the government. However they were not to last long, as another coup was staged
in 1961, with the subsequent government re-engineering itself to facilitate faster economic development. By 1963, the newly ruling government was finally officially installed, and the results of economic progress could clearly be seen, as urbanization grew by 4% annually.

Again in 1980, yet another coup occurred, with the military once again directing rapid economic development. College and university enrollment doubled under the direction of the new military government, and investment into education rose substantially. Ironically, the creation of such a large student body would contribute to the replacement of the military government with a more democratic government, as student riots spurred the call for changes. Despite human rights abuses, the continuing guidance of the economy by the government was returning amazing dividends. The economy had, in the short time of 30 years, gone from virtually nothing, to one of the top 20 in the world. And by 1988 South Korea was one of the "Four Dragons" (AKA Four Tigers) of the Asian economy, along with Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong. As a cap to the amazing economic feats, Korea was host to the 1988 Summer Olympics, a giant celebration introducing the country to the world stage.

3.6 POST-OLYMPIC KOREA (1988 AD – Present)

The information below, quoted verbatim, comes from http://media.graniteschools.org/Curriculum/korea/history.htm

Contemporary Korea has progressed even further then [than] 1988 Korea, both in terms of economy and society. Before the Asian Financial Crisis of 1998, South Korea was the 8th largest economy in the world. Even today, despite the financial meltdown, South Korea remains the 11th largest economy in the world.

Following the 1988 Olympics, Korea has developed into a fully democratic nation, with free elections being held, and even the election of the traditional
opposition to high offices including President. The economy continued its
dramatic expansion under the guidance of the government, with the Chaebols, the
major industrial conglomerates, creating ever expanding branches to cover all
aspects of industrial society. Even more telling of the South Korean economic
might is the continuing warming of relations between South Korea and
Communist China. Attracted by [the] possible investment and export market
potential of South Korea, relations between the two have improved dramatically,
despite China ['s] being the sole supporter of North Korea politically and
economically. South Korea has also become an attractive export country for US
companies, due to the continuing growth and relative stability of the country. One
of the more attractive features of the South Korean economy for US exporters was
the almost complete ban of Japanese products in South Korea, a result of still
simmering tensions from the colonial annexation. However, as exposed by the
financial crisis of 1998, the South Korean economy still has lingering problems.

The most basic problem with the Korean economy has been it's [its] following of the Japan model more closely then [than] Japan. Dramatic economic growth was
directed by government bureaucracies, which meant that bank loans and
investments were made without regard to market forces. The financial crisis of 1988 (referred [to] by Koreans as "the IMF", due to the IMF bailout), exposed
these weaknesses, and have lead [led] to the current correction. Banks have been
ordered to write off bad loans made in the heady 80's, and the Chaebols have
begun divesting various subdivisions, refocusing on their core industries.
However, ironically, the fundamental strengths of the Korean economy have lead
[led] to a quick recovery, which in turn has taken off political pressure for reforms. Time will tell if the reform efforts continue.
KOREAN CULTURE TUTORIAL : PSYCHOLOGY

The following long article gives an in-depth view of Korean Psychology. The information in this article, quoted *verbatim*, comes from http://www.parentsplace.com/fertility/adoptioncentral/articles/0,,252438_253088,00.html.

This article by Dr. Luke Kim is part of a series designed to teach families about Korean culture. Luke Kim, M.D., Ph.D. is a clinical professor of psychiatry at University of California School of Medicine. He is a board member of Friends of Korea organization in Sacramento, California, and a friend and supporter of Korean Quarterly newspaper.

If we were to describe the predominant ethos of Americans – those values which influence their social, political and personal life, – we would name individual freedom, independence, self-reliance, privacy and fun. Western psychology has been more interested in the individual person and his or her individual psychology, ego structure and psyche than in community.

However, psychology and consideration in what constitutes mental health developed differently in Asia. Due to the traditional Asian feudal and/or agrarian village society, people lived and worked in close proximity. Their economic, social and emotional lives were interdependent. Allegiance to each other was very important. The best interests of the group take priority over the interests of the individual. Emotional bonds of mutual help and support are necessary. Harmony is valued. The necessity of a group ethos was further reinforced by Confucian teachings, which are primarily concerned with human relationships.

Likewise, the ideology of freedom, independence, individuality and privacy was not developed in Asian societies. Individuals did not exist alone or independently but rather as a part of their extended family and collective network. With this orientation, it is difficult to define one's identity without reference to the collective identity to which an individual belongs.
Because Asians have historically been more conscious of group identity than of personal identity, Asian psychology has concentrated more on the area of human relations than on the psychology of the individual.

In both Japanese and Indian psychology, the group mentality is known as a porous ego, with the individual ego and the family ego interacting with each other. This porous ego would be regarded as undesirable or pathological by the Western psychology, which stresses the importance of the individual ego being protected by firm and strong ego boundaries. However, in the American society, people are increasingly fearful and distrustful of each other, and the institution of marriage, family values and sense of community are declining. This declining tendency may be attributed, at least partially, to the predominant ideology of individualism.

In recent years, it has been recognized that there is a danger in dichotomizing cultures into individualism and collectivism in a black-and-white manner. It not only clouds our understanding of the otherwise very complex interactions of the two orientations but also inevitably leads to our making good/bad comparisons. The following is my attempt to describe some of the more important Korean ethos that has greatly influenced Koreans and their social and interpersonal behavior, especially in the "old days." They are: 정 (jeong), 한 (haan), 체면 (chaemyun), 눈치 (noonchi), 팔자 (palja) and문흐 (muht).

This mention of the ethos of the old days needs an explanation. There is indeed a rapidly changing ethos among Koreans, due to rapid Westernization, industrialization and urbanization. People are becoming more individualistic and less collectivistic in recent years compared with 40 or 50 years ago, at the beginning of Westernization in Asian countries after World War II. Korean/Asian people are now in a blinded or confused transitional stage, and the ideology of individualism with emphasis on materialism is taking a strong hold in Asian countries. Therefore, the validity of the traditional Korean ethos described below is weakening in the present day:
3.7.1 Jeong

Although most second generation Korean Americans in the United States have experienced jeong relations with family members, especially in parental love, they may not have the slightest idea what jeong is. No word in the Korean vocabulary is more endearing and evocative. Jeong refers to a special interpersonal bond of trust and closeness. There is no English equivalent. Jeong encompasses the meaning of a wide range of English terms: feeling, empathy, affection, closeness, tenderness, pathos, compassion, sentiment, trust, bonding and love.

Jeong strengthens the bond between two persons. It is a special affection toward a person but not sexualized or erotic love. Koreans consider jeong an essential element in human life, promoting the depth and richness of personal relations. With jeong, relationships are deeper and longer lasting. In times of social upheaval, calamity and unrest, jeong is the only binding and stabilizing force. Without it, life would be emotionally barren. People would be isolated and disconnected from one another. Jeong is more than kindness or liking another. Jeong brings about the "special" feelings in relationships: togetherness, sharing, bonding. Jeong is what makes us say "we" rather than "I," "ours" rather than "mine".

The word jeong is usually combined with another word that modifies the nuances of meaning and defines the relationship. Mo-jeong is jeong bonding between a mother and child. Jeong among friends is Woo-jeong. Ae-jeong is usually lovers' jeong; In-jeong is human sympathy and universal compassion. The jeong relationship between teacher and student is that of an enduring mentorship, not merely a relationship where the teacher has the duty to transmit knowledge to the student. Shim-jeong is "jeong in the heart," the emotions we feel about another in our heart.

Jeong develops not only in horizontal relations, such as friendship, but also in vertical relationships, such as those between parent and child or teacher and
student. Woo-jeong, jeong of two friends, connotes more than an ordinary friendship. The concept of "soul mate" perhaps comes close to capturing the essence of a friendship with deep jeong.

Jeong is not erotic and not sexualized. There is no implication of a homosexual relationship. The only erotic jeong is Ae-jeong, which is the love jeong between husband and wife or between two lovers, although some would say that erotic jeong is also present between a mother and her baby.

Although jeong can develop mutually among a group of people, such as alumni, through group identification, it is usually cultivated in a give-and-take relationship between two people. Jeong is usually reciprocated, but it can be unilateral. Jeong is not experienced instantly but grows over time. It is not a love at first sight. It needs a certain period of incubation, so that the jeong bonding can occur.

Jeong is like water coming up slowly and gently sipping through sands in the beach. It is not a gush. The process occurs more naturally and less intentionally than in love.

3.7.2 The Negative Side of Jeong

While jeong makes it possible to enrich our life and environment with nurturing and meaningful personal relations, it does have a dark side with serious side effects. In its pure form, jeong, like love, may expect and demand the reciprocity of loyalty and trust. Therefore, if that royalty [loyalty] is betrayed, it can be as hurtful and destructive as when love is betrayed.

Boundary issues can be problematic. Westerners and westernized Koreans may fear that their personal and private lives could be easily encroached upon, intruded or interfered with by jeong-related people. This can be a source of conflict and tension. We need a balance between privacy and connectedness.
Another dark side of jeong is the risk of developing in-group vs. out-group phenomena. It has the potential of leading people to protect each other within the circle of the in-group and discriminating against outsiders. That was the way they used to survive and protect themselves against invaders in feudal/tribal villages and provinces in the past. Koreans are known for being very kind, helpful, hospitable and compassionate to their affiliates but may be lacking in these attributes toward strangers and outsiders.

Some criticize that Koreans are too survival-oriented and that they are primarily concerned with their family members, kin and friends. Critics say that Koreans are weak in social and community conscience, social justice and public etiquette. Also, regional distrust and biases still exist in Korea. In this regard, Koreans and people from other Asian countries can learn lessons from the experiences of American society in its effort to promote social justice.

A related concern is that jeong relations can cloud one's rational objectivity in the process of decision-making, such as in business transactions and personnel selection, resulting in a potential risk for nepotism and corruption. Mixing jeong relations with official matters in public life has seen problems in Asian countries.

As citizens become more sophisticated and enlightened politically with strong public education and respect for law, every effort should be made to stop mixing public matters with private personal relations, especially in the public and political arena.

Finally, I feel that the unique Korean/Asian concept of jeong can help us understand a new dimension of human emotions and interpersonal relationships, especially among Korean/Asians that has thus far not been known to Western
psychology. Despite some side effects, jeong relations are generally conducive to
life affirmation and emotional nurturing. Jeong is a fascinating concept in the
Asian traditions that deserves further attention and study.

3.7.3 Haan

Haan is the opposite of jeong. It is a Korean word that refers to suppressed anger,
hate, despair, the holding of a grudge, or feelings of everlasting woe. Anger is
likely to transform into haan feelings over time, when one could not outwardly
express anger and rage, act out, revenge, forget, push away, get over with,
resolve, dissolve or unknot [un-knots] the anger, especially in the old days when
they did not have much [many] options. Koreans so readily understand and deeply
experience haan that it is a folk term used by common people.

The original Chinese character for haan has the meaning of "to get even with, to
revenge." But when we look at how Koreans have used the word, we see that it
takes on different meanings. The Korean use of the word emphasizes aspects of
suppression of anger, indignation and holding a grudge. The notion of getting
even with is secondary.

The word haan is often combined with a second word to express the different
nuances of haan feeling. Examples are Haan-tan, which means crying and
lamenting haan; Hwoe-haan, which means haan with remorse and regret, similar
to the Japanese word zan-nen; Won-haan, which is revengeful haan; and Jung-
haan, which is a haan of passive acceptance and resignation.

Korean scholars believe that haan is not simply a private emotion of a person who
has suffered a lot; rather it is a pervasive collective emotional state among
Koreans who have historically experienced an abundance of tragedy and pain in
their lives. As a result of its geography, Korea has frequently been invaded and
occupied by surrounding military forces. Under foreign military occupation,
Korea -- the Land of Morning Calm -- has been repeatedly trampled, burned and
destroyed.
Each war, each political and social upheaval, brought about suffering, personal losses and unbearable woes to Koreans. Few have been spared the loss, pain and suffering. Most have fought and struggled for survival, and somehow managed to exist. Some even have thrived. But they harbor deep feelings of haan: suppressed anger, resentment and underlying depression. They have suffered feelings of indignation at having been unfairly victimized. For their own survival, however, as well as to live in harmony with the teachings of Confucius, they have had to swallow and suppress their feelings.

The haan in the "collective subconscious psyche" of Korea is related to historical, political and social upheavals that Korea has encountered for many centuries. But, in addition, there has been a great deal of personal misery, suffering and victimization in the domestic lives of Koreans. Traditionally, Korea had been a class-oriented society in which the ruling class, the Yangban, had oppressed and abused the poor and the underclass, the Ssang-nom. Also in the traditional Confucian society, the status and role of the female is subservient to that of the male. As a result, women have to endure much hardship and injustice. The poor and powerless had no recourse to appeal the injustice. In order to tolerate, they had to moderate their anger and indignation.

3.7.4 Four Phases of Haan

Sang-Chin Choi, a Korean psychologist, described the four experiential phases of haan. The first is one of rage, anger, hostility, hate and desire for revenge for the injustice done to the person experiencing it. An example would be when a wife, who had been cruelly treated and abused by her mother-in-law (especially in the old days when it was impossible to divorce), realizes that she can not achieve much in the way of retaliation and revenge. Therefore, she tries, or has no choice but to try, to control and suppress her anger and rage. She would start reevaluating [re-evaluating] the situation and begin to feel that perhaps it was her fault, at least partially. This would help dull the intensity of her anger. She begins
to entertain some self-blame. This is the second phase. She would feel depressed and pessimistic.

The third phase is the period when she begins to dwell on the situation again and starts questioning the rationale of her second-phase thinking, namely, self-blame. "I am powerless. I do not have power or position to get even with my mother-in-law. Is it my fault? Isn't it injustice? Why does this have to happen to me?" She begins to feel sad and resigned. This sadness phase may last a long time. This melancholic sentimentality could be expressed in a sublimated way, if she is talented, into singing, writing of diaries or poetry, and other art forms.

In the fourth phase, she begins to detach from her haan feeling by creating emotional distance and objectifying her haan experiences. She would talk about it as if it belongs to someone else, describing it in a third person's experience. During this phase, she may be calmer, more silent, and lonely. Her haan feelings could even be transformed into trans-reality and transpersonal experiences. She may accept it as her fate.

3.7.5 Haan and Symbolism

Some call Korea a nation of haan, and a nation of suffering. A Korean psychiatrist stated that haan is "some thing [something] that has been formed accumulated and precipitated in mass in the depth of Korean psyche over generations -- it is deeply imprinted in the collective subconscious of the Korean people." A well-known poet, Ko-Un, expressed his view graphically: "Koreans are born from the womb of haan, grew up in the bosom of haan, and live out haan, die leaving haan behind."

When seen in this way, haan is a symbol, a sign language of the Korean psyche and Korean history. Haan is the Korean version of victimization syndrome, analogous to the Holocaust when used as a symbol by the Jewish people. Korean folklore, songs, poems, novels, dancing, artwork and autobiographical literature
are full of haan-ridden stories, where motive and themes are derived from haan experiences.

A haan-ridden person feels that he or she is an innocent victim, who suffers not because of one's own fault or mistake but because of another's. That someone else could be a bad master, an abusive husband, a cruel mother-in-law, a corrupt government or an invading foreign power. Or it could be fate, nature, calamity or supernatural powers. The common way of expressing haan feeling is: "Uh-gul-hada," which refers to the sense of indignation at the injustice done to the person.

A Korean theologian, Suk-mo Ahn, takes the interpretation of haan one step further. For him, haan refers not only to pent-up emotions of anger and the holding of a grudge, but it also carries the image of wounded ness, the wrecked meaning of life, the fragmentation of self and world, and most of all, a strong sense of "Why me?" It is almost akin to the experience of mourning.

3.7.6 The Psychology of Haan and Hwa-byung

From a clinical point of view, haan is considered as a causative factor in the development of a Korean culture-bound psychiatric syndrome called "Hwa-byung." Hwa-byung literally means "fire (Hwa) disease (Byung)," or "anger disease." The syndrome manifests in the mixture of clinical depression, anxiety and somatic symptoms characterized by the presence of a "lump" and pressure in the throat or chest. The syndrome is most common among women, especially married women who are beyond the middle age and of low social class standing.

According to Sung Kil Min's survey of 100 Hwa-byung patient[s] seen at the Yonsei University Hospital Outpatient Clinic, Seoul, Korea, the symptoms most frequently complained of were: oppressive and heavy feelings in the chest, a feeling of a mass in the chest or abdomen; a feeling of something hot and pushing in the chest; a sensation of heat in the body; feelings of something boiling up, or
burning inside. Other physical symptoms include: headaches, palpitation, indigestion, etc. Generally the patients complained of physical symptoms, but when they were asked of [about] emotional symptoms, they mentioned frequently: sadness, pessimistic view, loss of interest, temper, startle, nervousness, and even suicidal thoughts. Other emotions include: rage, hate, resentment, frustration, mortification, regret and shame.

Hwa-byung has been known in Korea as a folk medical term for a long time. Interestingly, Korean immigrant patients who were seen at clinics in Los Angeles manifested symptoms of Hwa-byung. It was Keh-Ming Lin of UCLA who first reported [this phenomenon] in an English language psychiatric journal citing 3 Korean Hwa-byung cases in 1983. Subsequently several research articles [have] appeared in the American journals, which has aroused an interest in the syndrome among mental health professionals.

Hwa-byung is now listed as one of [the] culture-bound syndromes in the appendix of the Revised Diagnostic Manual (DSM-IV) published by the American Psychiatric Association. The DSM-IV edition describes Hwa-byung as: "A Korean folk syndrome literally translated into English as "anger syndrome" and attributed to the suppression of anger. The syndrome includes insomnia, fatigue, panic, fear of impending doom, dysphoric affect, indigestion, anorexia, palpitation, generalized aches and pains, and a feeling of a mass in the epigastria." There have been debates as to whether or not Hwa-byung is [to be] considered as a Korean culture-bound syndrome, or a clinical syndrome of "anger disease" that is more universal in nature, but is called differently in different ethnic cultures.

Of interest are the findings that most Hwa-byung patients were aware that the cause of Hwa-byung is psychogenic in nature. When they were asked what they think caused the symptoms, most answered that the symptom stems from suppressed Hwa (anger and fire) for too long. In the survey, when they were asked what kind of difficulties they thought were associated with their personal Hwa, their problems were multiple. 72% of them said they were having troubles
with their spouses in the form of such things as extramarital affairs, alcoholism, and domestic violence. 68% had in-law problems, and 35% felt their difficulties with children could be attributed to Hwa. In addition, social factors were cited: 65% were related to poverty, 58% some kind of life hardship, and 32% unfair blame and criticism.

3.7.7 Haan and Religion

What do Confucian and Buddhist teachings have to say about haan? While Korean folklore has recognized haan as a prevailing experience for a long time, haan or emotion like haan, are rarely mentioned in other Asian traditional literatures, including Oriental medicine. The Confucian traditions recognize various emotions; however, they emphasize the importance of having "proper four feelings," and using self-control so as not to arouse the "improper seven feelings." People were taught to control and suppress haan through self-discipline.

In Buddhism, we find a similar attitude. Buddhism tends to ignore haan and other human emotions, pointing out the impermanence and uselessness of emotion for the true self. This position can be easily understood, if one believes that all human suffering has its source in human desire, and that all emotions arise because of desires.

Contrary to these "high-minded" religions and teachings, we find a large number of references to haan in the popular folk traditions and shamanism. According to the Korean shamanism and folk beliefs, haan has been regarded as one of the prime causes of human suffering, illness and misfortunes. In fact, some claim that the Koreans' indigenous psychology is primarily the psychology of haan.

Shamans work with innocent or unfortunate, haan-ridden clients by offering care and healing. Korean shamanism uses complex forms of ritual called "goot." Goot ritual includes: invoking ancestral souls, dancing, chanting, and narrating the patient' [s] haan-ridden life story, and eventually going into a trance state. The
goot is to resolve the dead person’s haan as well as that of the client. The process to release haan is called "Haan-puri (unknots [un-knots] and let out haan)".

Almost all shamans are female, and most of the clients are female. Commonly the female shaman herself has a history of [a] haan-ridden life herself, and becomes a shaman following her healing through [the] help of a shaman. To be able to share one's deep feelings of haan with someone who has [had] similar haan experiences is considered most helpful in the healing process.

There is one more side to haan. Haan can create and energize a strong motivation, not to give up, but to persevere and fight on until justice is done. It generates a driving force to do better, to excel, and to succeed in achieving goals, even if it takes a long time. It may also create a desire to get back at, and get even with, the oppressor and enemy who caused the haan.

Some Korean scholars have observed that the frequent anti-government demonstrations by college students in Seoul that include throwing fire-bottles are basically ritualistic expressions of their haan and haan-rage. Better educated and Western-acculturated [Western acculturated] Koreans, especially women and members of younger generations, have become more verbally assertive and emotionally expressive without suppressing their feelings of anger and haan-related emotions.

3.7.8 Korean Culture: Che-Myun

Che-myun literally means "body and face," and refers to face-saving in the sense of saving social face or saving the external facade to maintain respectability. As in other Asian countries, face-saving behavior [behaviour] is very important to Koreans in their public and social relationship. Maintaining Che-myun protects one's sense of dignity, self-respect, and respectability. Honor [Honour] is an important concept to live by for Koreans and the honor [honour] of the individual as well as his or her family is maintained through Che-Myun. Che-myun helps to
promote harmonious relationships. For example, face-saving may help a person to behave more gracefully, and moderate his or her temper in facing a person, even if he or she is very angry with the person.

Che-myun also promotes the development of mutual obligations and responsibilities. If a person does not respond in a reciprocal manner, he or she loses face. If a person does you a favour, it is your turn to return the favour; Hence, Che-myun is conducive to the development of a reciprocal bond and mutual relationships between and among people.

Asian societies historically have been very social status-oriented. Therefore, generally Koreans/Asians are very conscious of their social status. That's why they like titles, honors, academic degrees from Ivy-league colleges, brand-name products, etc. People display che-myun behavior to maintain their social status, pride and prestige.

However, sometimes the che-myun behavior can be pretentious. If che-myun behavior is exaggerated, it can lead to a behavior of "huh-seh" or "ki-mae" in Japanese. Huh-seh is similar to the Western concept of bravado or show-off. A person may want to assure others as well as oneself of his or her status and prestige by driving a Mercedes and living in an expensive house in a exclusive area, even if he or she is actually living on a tight budget. In the spirit of huh-seh, one may give an expensive and extravagant party for friends, even if it means going into debt. Koreans especially are known for their very generous hospitality to house guests.

A concept related to che-myun is a behavior of ab-dui. In Korean Ab means "front," and dui, "back." It refers to presenting an external facade to a person's face, but behaves differently behind the other's back. This is similar to Takeo Doi's (1985) two fold theory of social consciousness of Japanese people. It is a behavior of "Omote and Ura: "external public display"
and "internal private reality." This theme is often played symbolically in Asian theatrical dramas or dancing wearing carved wooden facial masks, such as in Kabuki, Korean Tal-Choom, and Chinese traditional opera. Carl Jung also spoke of a "persona," an external social person.

The behavior [behaviour] of ab-dui represents a willful [wilful] effort, perhaps sometimes desperately, to maintain a facade, not only to save one's own face, but to pay the courtesy of being pleasant or presenting one's best to the other person. An example is smiling to a person's face, while being angry with him or her inside oneself. It is difficult to be totally honest and open all the time, and to show one's real or raw feelings --especially when one wants to maintain social harmony and civility.

3.7.9 Korean Communication: A Sense of Noonchi

In Western culture, verbal communication is very important. It is emphasized that verbal communication is clear and explicit. However, in Asian culture, verbal communication is less clear, more subtle, indirect, and [communication is] often non-verbal. Westerns who live in Korea often complain that Koreans are not communicative. A Korean may respond: "We, Koreans, carry on conversations without talking. We can tell how you are thinking and feeling, without explaining to me." Korea has been even called a "noonchi culture."

The Korean word Noonchi means literally "measuring with eyes." It is an intuitive, sixth-sense perception of another person -- a capacity to size up and evaluate another person or situation quickly and intuitively. With noonchi one develops heightened awareness of, and sensitivity to, another person's gestures, facial expressions, voice, the way of talking, body language, and other non-verbal cues.

In Asian countries, "[an] honorific" language system is highly developed. Depending on whom you are [one is] talking to, one uses different word [s] and sentence structure [s]. There are several words meaning "you," and which "you"
one uses defines the relationship between the addressee and addresser. It is somewhat similar to the German language which also has three different words of [for] ‘you’ and the speaker select [s] which word to use according to the level of intimacy or formality that is appropriate. There are also ways of "talking up" or "talking down" to the person.

Having an acute sense of noonchi is necessary and desirable in a hierarchical society where the emphasis is on observing the proper protocol and manners in inter-personal interactions. The intuitive ability of noonchi helps one discern where one stands in relation to a person or situation, since it is important to accord appropriate respect through the use of appropriate language and manner. In order to live in peace and harmony with people in crowded housing in a congested city, one needs to scrutinize others and accommodate their needs and feelings as much as possible. Hence, to describe a person as being without noonchi is a derogatory remark. It implies that the person is insensitive, uncouth, unmannered, and uncultured. In another word, he is a jerk.

On the other hand, excessive noonchi may be a sign of insecurity, hypersensitivity, and possible anxiety. If carried to an extreme, clinical manifestations of social phobia and paranoia may occur. A culture-related subtype of social phobia, called "Taein-Kongpo (TK)" in Korean, and "Taijin-kyofu" in Japanese, has been of great interest among Asian psychiatrists. Examples of TK symptoms include: fear of blushing, fear of one's hands shaking when in writing in front of someone, fear of bad breath or body odor [odour] offending someone, fear of gazing (i.e. fear that one's gaze might be seen as too sharp, fierce and threatening to others,) fear of being embarrassed and humiliated with a physical defect, etc. TK is considered to be related to excessive cultural emphasis on noonchi.
3.7.10 Korean Culture: Accepting Palja

Palja means "fate" or "destiny," and is derived from terminology used in fortune telling. In the traditional Korean and Asian societies, a person's role and life status were essentially predetermined, not only by one's gender and birth order, but also by one's social status, role, and the position accorded by one's family status and heritage. Individuals had little control over their lives. Using the modern psychological terminology, one's locus of control is not within oneself, but in the hands of fate and destiny.

How were people to cope with their misfortunes of not [of] their own making? They were to accept their fate with a stoic, fatalistic, or religious and philosophical attitude: "That is my palja," "that is my fate." In the old days, acceptance of one's own palja was probably the only option available.

Going along with fate through non-action, and accepting the nature the way it is, is the essence of Taoism. This is one of the strong reasons why religions, such as Buddhism, Taoism, Shamanism, and the philosophy of Confucianism have appealed to, and thrived among, so many Koreans.

Religions help people cope with [the] woes of life and accept their palja more readily. But now better educated, younger generations do not adopt stoicism and fatalism as did older generations. Nonetheless, because historically Koreans have suffered a lot, the idea of palja has a firm hold among Koreans.

With the beginning of the 20th century, people all over the world developed such a strong confidence and faith in the advancement of science and technology that people thought that humankind can chart the course of nature and can solve all the problems at hands with science and technology. I think the arrogance of science has emerged. In recent years, however, people began to realize the limitation as well as potential destructiveness of science and technology.
People begin to have more awareness of ecological issues and respect for nature. Earthquake [s], natural calamities, the unchanging viciousness of human nature, unsolved medical disease, such as cancer, immune disorders, genetic factors in many diseases, etc., all point to the power of the nature, in spite of the scientific efforts to harness and control the nature. Even in the U.S., people are now beginning to talk more about fate, acceptance and surrender. The rapid increase of [a] conservative Christian movement and the popular books, such as "Care of the Soul" reflect the new mood and awareness of the limitation of human's [s’]own power and self-sufficiency. Palja is still alive and well.

3.7.11 Korean Psychology: Understanding Muht

Muht is a Korean word used to describe the quality of being "exquisite, beautiful, splendid, refined, and elegant." A person of muht is someone who knows how to enjoy life; someone who appreciates nature, art, music, and poetry. The person is likely to enjoy good food, wine, refined clothes, and may be even good-looking. Hence, people like to date or marry such a person of muht taste.

The ethos of muht probably promotes the development of exquisite musical, artistic and other cultural tastes and appreciation among Koreans. Koreans love music -- especially singing -- even when they are sad. Koreans are regarded as very artistic and musical, and Korea has produced some world-class musicians. For the many Koreans who have had a painful history of war, suffering, and haan, the goal of having a muht-rich life is a hope and desire for them to attain.
3.8 KOREAN CUSTOMS GEOGRAPHY AND LANGUAGE

Living in Korea, one soon finds that there are a number of very important events in a Korean person’s life. These events are normally accompanied by rituals or “sesi”. In the following section taken from the internet at site http://www.korea.net/korea/korea.asp, we will look at some of these “sesi” or events. The reason why I added this information is that each sesi (event) is part of the life story of the Korean people. These events reflect Korean culture, beliefs and traits.

From the same source of information, I also quote information about the geography of Korea and background on some of the main religions (Buddhism, Shamanism, Confucianism, Catholicism and Protestantism) in Korea.

3.8.1 Important events or Sesi

The information below, quoted verbatim, comes from http://www.korea.net/korea/korea.asp. 1998

The expression “sesi customs” refer to ceremonial acts that are customarily repeated regularly during the year. Sesi, as days of festivity, act as a stimulus in life and accelerate the rhythm of the yearly life cycle so as to help one move on to the next cycle.

Sesi customs are based on the lunar calendar. The sun was not believed to show any seasonal characteristics; the moon, on the other hand, was believed to show these seasonal characteristics well through its wane and unity with passage of time. As a result, it was easy to observe and appropriately evaluate the seasonal change based on its changes.

Farming, however, was based on the twenty-four Jeolgi or “turning points.” In summary, sesi customs followed the phases of the moon, while farming followed the 24 solar terms.
The sesi customs tended to deal with singwan (view of god), jusulseong (nature of sorcery), jeomboksok (nature of fortune-telling), and minsok-nori (folk games).

The gods included the ilwolseongsin (god of the sun, moon, and stars) in the sky, the sancheonsin (god of the mountains and rivers), the yong-wangsin (the dragon king), the seonangsin (a tutelary deity), and the gasin (god of home). These gods were waited upon for they were believed to be able to manipulate a person’s luck and fortune. The days of performing sacrificial rites are festive days, and people pray for the gods’ protection and conquest of demons on these days.

Ways of praying for good fortune, which were also acts of praying for the safety of the populace as a whole, included “selling away the heat,” “nut cracking” (nuts eaten on the 15th day of the First Moon to guard oneself against boils for a year), “chasing away mosquitoes,” “treading on the bridge” (walking over a bridge under the first full moon of the year to ensure you will have strong legs and never be footsore), or “hanging a lucky rice scoop.”

In an agricultural society such as Korea’s, fortune-telling was performed to predict whether the forthcoming harvest would be good or bad, and depending on the prophecy, a good harvest was prayed for. Accordingly, in the first lunar month, when farming begins, fortune-telling was performed by listening for the sounds animals made and studying changes in the weather.

If cows brayed or the weather was clear on the Lunar New Year’s Day or on the 15th day of the First Moon, it was believed that a year of abundance was ahead. When the sun was red, a drought was believed to be forthcoming. A northward wind meant a bad year, and the southward wind was believed to bring a year of abundance. In the case of folk games, whether a town’s year would be good or bad was foretold via playing yut (a game using four wooden sticks) and a tug of war.

As a result, sesi customs could directly influence the policies of a nation, and at the same time, they were an important determinant factor in the character of the
Korean people and the structure of their consciousness. Presently, however, with the influence of Western culture and changing lifestyles, sesi customs are vanishing.

During the first Moon, New Year’s Day – the biggest holiday of the year – and the 15th day were celebrated. On New Year’s Day, Koreans enshrine their ancestral tablet and hold a charye. A charye is the holding of an ancestor memorial service on festive days, with food and wine offered in sacrifice to the ancestral tablet.

Ordinarily ancestor memorial services were held for ancestors up to four generations back; for ancestors further back than the fourth generation, ancestor memorial services were held only once a year at their graves. Sebae (a formal bow of respect to one’s elders) is a younger person’s bowing to an older person as the first greeting in the New Year. Sebae is done by kneeling down and bowing politely. After performing sebae, sebae, seongmyo was next. Seongmyo is a visit to the ancestral graves to bow and inform them of the New Year. Seongmyo was a custom that was equal to dong sebae for living people; it was an absolutely necessary act of etiquette for descendants.

On New Year’s Day and the first ten days of the first lunar month, there are various times when fortune is prayed for throughout the year. During the first ten days, each house bought a fortune mesh dipper and hung the dipper – with taffy, matches, or money in it – on the wall.

On the night before the 15th day of the First Moon, a straw effigy called jeung was made and then thrown into a steam. This was to signify throwing away hapless fate and greeting a fortunate year. On the morning of the 15th day, drinking wine to ‘clear the ear’ and cracking nuts were customs that were enjoyed.

By cracking and eating nuts with a hard shell (such as chestnuts, walnuts, pine nuts or ginko nuts), it was believed that one would not suffer from ulcers. By
drinking wine to clear the ear, it was believed that one would receive good things to hear; in other words, one would hear good news often during that year.

One of the most well-known sesi customs was treading on a bridge before and after the 15th. When crossing a bridge in the evening, one crossed a bridge the number of times equal to one’s age; by doing so, it was believed that one could stay healthy and not suffer from leg pains through the year.

One of the sesi customs that cannot go unmentioned is fortunetelling. It was customary to attempt to foretell one’s age; by doing so, it was believed that one could stay healthy and not suffer from leg pains through the year.

One of the sesi customs that cannot go unmentioned is fortunetelling. It was customary to attempt to foretell one’s fortune or how good or bad the harvest for the year would be. Particularly, tojeongbigyeol was very popular among the common people because of its monthly explanation of fortune and its high accuracy.

In the first lunar month, each town performed dongje. Dongje refers to a ritual ceremony that was performed as a unit by a town. Sansinje (a ritual service for the god of mountains), byeolsinje (a service, street ritual services, and a service for the dragon king are examples of dongje).

Ipchun, the onset of spring, usually comes in early February. Ipchun was believed to signal the beginning of the spring season. During this time, each house wrote a poem about the onset of the spring and pasted it on pillar or on the front gate.

The first of the Second Moon was called Yeongdeung Day. Yeongdeung, the goddess of the wind, was believed to bring her daughter and daughter-in-law. If it was windy, she was bringing her daughter; if it was rainy, she was bringing her daughter-in-law.
The 3rd day of the Third Moon was considered the day on which the swallows returned. As it became spring with its warming weather, people went out to the fields and ate a cake made in the shape of a flower. If sauce was made on this day, it was supposed to taste better, if a pumpkin was planted, many pumpkins would grow; and if any medicinal substances were taken, one was believed to live long without diseases.

The 8th day of the Fourth Moon is Buddha’s birthday. It was also called Buddha’s bathing day. On this day, people visit temples and prayed for the happiness of the dead while lighting lanterns.

The 5th day of the Fifth Moon is Dano. On this day, women washed their hair with iris and swung on a swing, while men wrestled in traditional Korean style ssireum.

The 15th day of the Sixth Moon is Yudu. On this day, people washed their in water that was flowing eastward, in the hope of eliminating bad happenings, and performed an ancestor memorial service with freshly harvested fruit and rice cakes.

Between the sixth and Seventh Moons, there was the midsummer heat. During this period, people sought mineral water, enjoyed river fishing, and cooked very nutritious dishes, such as samgyetang (a type of chicken soup with ginseng in it).

The 7th day of the Seventh Moon is Chilseok, when Gyeonu (the Herdsman) and Jungnyeo (the Vega) were believed to meet each other on Ojakgyo Bridge. On this day, people dried their clothes and books under the sunshine. Wives and children performed a sacrificial ceremony at the well (for abundance of water) and chilseongje (and ancestor memorial service for the Big Dipper God) to pray for the prosperity of their homes.

The 15th day of the Seventh Moon is called Baekjung or Jungwon. Various fruits and vegetables are abundant during this time. Baekjung means serving 100
different things on the table for a memorial service. On the farmland, a
ceremonial feast was prepared for the laborers [labourers] in recognition of their
work so they took a day off for an enjoyable time.

The 15th day of the Eight Moon is Chuseok, Thanksgiving Day. Along with New
Year’s Day Chuseok (also called the Harvest Moon Festival) is the biggest
holiday in Korea. With freshly harvested grains and fruits, ancestor memorial
services were performed, and visits to one’s ancestors’ graves are made. One of
the dishes prepared for this day that cannot go unmentioned is songpyeon (rice
cake). Inside songpyeon, freshly harvested sesame, beans, redbeans, chestnuts, or
Chinese dates are stuffed. Then the songpyeon is steamed over pine needles.

On the night before Chuseok, all the family members sat around and made
songpyeon, looking at the round moon. Particularly, single men and women tried
their best to make songpyeon as pretty as possible. That was because one was
believed to be able to meet a good looking spouse only if one was able to make
good looking songpyeon. During Chuseok, people share wine and food, besides
playing various kinds of fun games. Games such as so nori (cow play),
geobuknori (turtle play), ganggangsullae or ganggangsuwollae (a country circle
dance), and ssireum (Korean wrestling) were performed, creating a lively
atmosphere.

The 9th day of the Ninth Moon is Jungyangjeol of simply junggu. On junggu,
people cooked pancakes with chrysanthemum leaves or made wine with mums.
In groups, people went to the mountains or entered valleys to see the foliage, and
enjoyed the day by eating food and drinking wine. Folks believed that beginning
from junggu, mosquitoes would begin to vanish, swallows to fly south, and
snakes and frogs to enter the ground for hibernation.

The Tenth Moon was called Sangdal, which means the moon shines the highest in
the year. The moon during that month was considered sacred, and a ceremonial
service was usually performed directed toward the sky. At home, people set the
table with sirutteok (a steamed rice cake) to calm the household god for peace in the household, and replaced the gran jar of the tutelary spirit (of house sites) with newly harvested grain.

The Eleventh Moon was called Dongjuttal; rice gruel (prepared with red beans mashed and strained) was made and served on the table which held ancestral tablets. The rice gruel was also thrown against the front gate and wall. This custom originated from trying to repel falsehood and was believed to keep away demons.

The last day (Keumeum) of the last month was called Jeseok of Jeya. It was a must for the people with debts to pay them off prior to the beginning of a new year. On this day, people caught birds, bowed in greeting to elders on that eve, performed suse, or cleaned the entire house. Bowing on that eve was intended to be a report to the elders that one had safely spent the year without accident. For suse the house was lit by a lighted torch at various places to symbolically prevent the approach of minor demons.

Also, while housewives prepared food to treat the New Year’s guests, men cleaned in and outside the house. In other words, they were getting rid of the past year’s minor demons and misfortunes and were preparing to begin a new year with a pure spirit.

Additionally, if one slept on this night, it was believed that one’s eyebrows would turn white; therefore, it was a custom that people would stay up all night. When a sleeping child was found, his or her eyebrows would be painted by someone with white powder; the next morning people would tease the child by saying that the color [colour] of his or her eyebrow’s had changed into white.

Korea’s sesi customs are part of old traditions rooted in life experiences. Therefore, sesi customs include an abundance of native wisdom.
As mentioned previously, I copied much of the information on Korean history and customs directly from the sources mentioned (The Korean information service: 1998 & http://www.korea.net/korea/korea.asp). The reason for this is that these writings are written by Korean people, thus it’s their own stories. Another reason is that one notices that some of the terms are only found in the Korean language. One also sees that in some places, the writing style seems strange. The reason for this is that the sentence construction in Korean is very different from that of English or Afrikaans, for that matter. Because I cite verbatim, the Korean English spelling and punctuation is retained.

3.8.2 Korean geography

The reason why I added this section is to have a better understanding of the people. One’s life story consists of more than just verbal communication. It also consists of nonverbal stories, stories that are told through the places where you live, how many people live there and what they are doing. The statistics that I have found concerning South Korea are set below.

3.8.2.1 Geography

The information is quoted verbatim from http://www.korea.net/korea/korea.asp.

Korea lies adjacent to China and Japan. The northern border of Korea is formed by the Amnokgang (Yalu) and Dumangang (Tumen) rivers, which separate it from Manchuria. A 16-kilometer segment of the Dumangang to the east also serves as a natural border with Russia. The west coast of the Korean Peninsula is bounded by the Korean Bay to the north and the West Sea to the south; the east coast faces the East Sea.

Two hundred kilometers [kilometres] separate the peninsula from eastern China. The shortest distance between Korean and Chinese coasts is 200 kilometers [kilometres] and from the southeastern [south-eastern] tip of the peninsula, the nearest point on the Japanese coast is also about 200 kilometers [kilometres] away.
Because of its unique geographical location, Chinese culture filtered into Japan through Korea; a common cultural sphere of Buddhism and Confucianism was thus established between the three countries.

The Korean Peninsula extends about 1,000 kilometers [kilometres] southward from the northeast Asian continental landmass. Roughly 300 kilometers [kilometres] in width, climate variations are more pronounced along the south-north axis. Differences in plant vegetation can be seen between the colder north and the warmer south.

The peninsula and all of its associated islands lie between 33°06'40"N and 43°00'39"N parallels and 124°11'00"E and 131°52'08"E meridians. The latitudinal location of Korea is similar to that of the Iberian Peninsula and Greece. The entire peninsula corresponds approximately to the north-south span of the state of California.

### The Tips of Korean Territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extreme points</th>
<th>Places</th>
<th>Coordinates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northernmost</td>
<td>Yeopojin, Hamgyeongbuk-do</td>
<td>43°00'39&quot;N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southernmost</td>
<td>Marado Island, Jeju-do</td>
<td>33°06'40&quot;N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easternmost</td>
<td>Dokdo Island, Gyeongsangbuk-do</td>
<td>131°52'08&quot;E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westernmost</td>
<td>Maando Island, Pyeonganbuk-do</td>
<td>124°11'00&quot;E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Longitudinally, Korea lies straight north of the Philippines and central Australia. The meridian of 127°30'E passes through the middle of the Korean Peninsula. Korea, however, shares the same standard meridian of 135°E with Japan. Seoul and Tokyo local time is nine hours earlier than Greenwich Mean Time (GMT).
(a) Territory

The total area of the peninsula, including its islands, is 222,154 square kilometers [kilometres] of which about 45 percent (99,313 square kilometers [kilometres]), excluding the area in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), constitutes the territory of South Korea. The combined territories of South and North Korea are similar to the size of Britain (244,100 square kilometers [kilometres]) and Guyana (215,000 square kilometers [kilometres]). South Korea alone is about the size of Hungary (93,000 square kilometers [kilometres]) and Jordan (97,700 square kilometers [kilometres]).

There are about 3,000 islands belonging to Korea. The islands are located mostly off the west and south coasts; only a handful of them lie off the East Sea. Ulleungdo, the largest island in the East Sea, serves as a major fishery base as does Dokdo. Bigger islands include Jejudo - the largest, Geojedo, Ganghwado, and Namhaedo.

Until the 11th century, the territory of Korea had encompassed most of Manchuria but by the 15th century, due to repeated conflicts with China, Koreans retreated southward and the Amnokgang and Dumangang rivers became the permanent Sino-Korean border.

At the end of World War II, the peninsula was divided into a northern zone occupied by Soviet forces and a southern zone occupied by U.S. forces. The boundary between the two zones was the 38th parallel. In 1953, at the end of the Korean War, a new border was fixed at the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), a 4 kilometer [kilometres]-wide strip of land that runs along the lines of ceasefire from the east to the west coast for a distance of about 241 kilometers [kilometres].
Mountain ranges have traditionally served as natural boundary markers between regions. Because these natural boundaries inhibited contacts between peoples living on either side of the range, subtle, and sometimes substantial, regional differences developed in both the spoken language and customs of the people. These regional distinctions also correspond to the traditional administrative divisions set up during the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910).

The Korean Peninsula is divided into three distinct regions; Central, South and North. These macro regions are divided into three separate geographical spheres, each of which shows particular economic, cultural and physical distinctiveness. In the Central region are the Seoul metropolitan area, Chungcheong and Gangwon provinces; in the South, Gyeongsang, Jeolla and Jeju provinces; and in the North, Pyeongan, Hamgyeong and Hwanghae provinces. The term "northern area" traditionally referred to those regions of Pyeongan and Hamgyeong provinces prior to the division of the peninsula in 1945. The "North" now refers to all the areas north of the Demilitarized Zone, comprising Pyeongan, Hamgyeong, Hwanghae and the northern parts of the Gyeonggi and Gangwon provinces.

(a) The Central Region

This region consists of the Seoul metropolitan area which is part of, Gyeonggi Province, Chungcheong Province to the south, and Gangwon province to the east.

- The Capital (Seoul / Gyeonggi) Area: This includes Seoul and Incheon, which encompass the Gyeonggi-do. The capital area, as the name implies, is the center of all political, economic and cultural activity in South Korea. Clustered around Seoul are also a number of smaller cities, which form a continuous and sprawling urban area. In and around Seoul is the largest concentration of the nation's industries. As the hub of South Korea's transportation networks, with Gimpo International Airport located on the western outskirts of Seoul, the newly built Incheon International Airport, and
railroad networks that connect to all parts of the country, the capital area serves as South Korea's gateway to the world. Given its strategic importance, the dialect spoken in Seoul is considered to be the nation's standard language.

- Chungcheong Province: This region lies between the capital area and the South. Cheongju and Daejeon are the leading urban centers of the region, respectively. Lying just below the capital area, this region consisting of Chungcheongnam-do and Chungcheongbuk-do, has been characterized as a southern extension of Seoul; its proximity to the capital has been economically advantageous. New industries have recently mushroomed along the Asanman Bay on the west coast. The region has also profited from transportation and urban services available for Seoul and its vicinity. Chungcheong and Gyeonggi provinces specialize in horticulture and dairy farming to meet the huge demands of the nearby urban centers of the capital area.

- Gangwon Province: This region lies to the east of the capital area. The Taebaeksan Mountain range, which runs north-south through the middle of the region, divides the province into eastern coastal and western inland areas. Gangneung, Chuncheon, and Wonju are its leading urban areas. Gangwon-do offers a variety of opportunities for tourism and sports, with its rugged terrain. Mining industries, once a major sector in the regional economy, have recently experienced a drastic decline due to competition from cheaper foreign-imported coal and minerals. The fall of mining industries, coupled with the national trend of rural to urban migration, are the major contributing factors for the recent migration out of the region. Gangwon-do, with less than 2 million residents, has now the smallest population of all the mainland provinces.

(b) The South Region

The region includes the Gyeongsang Province, located in the southeast, Jeolla Province in the southwest, and Jejudo province which lies off the south coast.

- Gyeongsang Province: This area includes metropolitan cities Busan, Daegu, and
Ulsan encompassing Gyeongsangbuk-do and Gyeongsangnam-do. Busan and Daegu are the major urban centers [centres] of the province, being the second (4 million) and third (2.5 million) largest cities in South Korea.

This region is characterized by the vast basin of the Nakdonggang River and is surrounded by the Sobaeksan mountain ranges. Due to the rugged topography of the surrounding mountains, sub-areas within the region share common cultural traits such as dialect and custom, which are quite distinct from peoples of other regions. The fact that Gyeongsang Province also has another name, "Yeongnam," which literally means "south of the mountain pass," attests to the key role that the mountains have historically played in fostering regional differences between the Korean people.

Gyeongsang Province has one of the largest industrial agglomerations, second only to the capital area, due mainly to the heavy investments in the region by the South Korean government since the 1960s. These heavy industrial facilities of steel, shipbuilding, automobile and petrochemical factories are largely concentrated along the southeast stretch of Pohang, through Ulsan, Busan, Changwon, and Masan. The northern part also has two major clusters of industries around Daegu and Gumi, specializing in textile and electronics.

- **Jeolla Province**: Jeolla Province is located southwest of the peninsula and comprises of Jeollabuk-do and Jeollanam-do. Gwangju, Jeonju, and Naju are their respective centers [centres].

Honam" is another name for Jeolla Province. The flat fertile lands of the Geumgang and Yeongsangang river basins, as well as the coastal lowlands, have made the region the major granary of the nation. The regional economy has lagged somewhat behind the capital and Gyeongsang regions due to sparse industrial investments made there during the past decades. However, this situation is changing and the region is now experiencing industrial growth in major urban centers [centres] like Gwangju and Jeonju, as well as along its western coast. Also, the tidal flats near Gunsan and Mokpo
have recently been reclaimed, adding new land for industrial development. The region is endowed with a very irregular coastline and countless large and small islands, and this unique landscape attracts a number of tourists year-round.

- **Jejudo Island**: Jejudo is the largest Island in Korea located about 140 kilometers [kilometres] south of Mokpo in the South Sea. Its historic isolation from the mainland contributed to the Jejudo peoples' distinct dialect and lifestyle. Of volcanic origin, the island has rugged topography of numerous hills, gorges, and waterfalls. Because of its subtropical climate and the unique lifestyles and customs of its people, tourism is the region's most important industry. The island is also famous for its subtropical fruits such as tangerines, pineapples and bananas. It is also known for its women divers.

(c) The North Region

The northern part of the peninsula is divided into two geographic regions: Pyeongan Province in the northwest and Hamgyeong Province in the northeast. The former with its flatlands is also known as the Gwanseo region while the latter is often referred to as Gwanbuk. Pyeongan Province serves as the major agricultural area of the North. By contrast, Hamgyeong Province, due to its mountainous topography, boasts mining and forestry as its major economic activities. Pyongyang, the leading urban center in the Pyeongan Province, is the capital of North Korea and Nampo serves as the gateway port to Pyongyang. Hamheung and Cheongjin are the major cities of Hamgyeong Province.

The third geographical region of the North, Hwanghae Province lies to the south of Pyeongan Province. Once, a part of the Central Region, prior to the South-North division, Hwanghae Province, shares a great many cultural similarities with other west-central regions of the peninsula. Gaeseong is the major city of the region.
Administrative Units

There are three administrative tiers in South Korea. The highest tier includes seven metropolitan cities and nine provinces (do). Designated metropolitan cities are those urban areas with a population of over one million. Seoul, the capital of South Korea, is the largest urban center [centre], having 10 million residents. Busan is the second largest city, with a population of over four million. Daegu, Incheon, Gwangju, Daejeon and Ulsan, in descending order, are each home to more than one million people. At the second administrative tier, provinces (do) are subdivided into cities (si) and counties (gun). A city has a population of more than 50,000. A gun consists of one town (eup) and five to ten myeon. Although they are administrative units, provinces (do) also play an important role in the regional identification of the people and many Koreans often identify themselves by the province in which they were born and raised. Metropolitan cities are subdivided into districts (gu). The lowest units are dong in cities and ri in provinces. In the last several decades, South Korea has witnessed the rapid growth of its urban centers [centres]. The population of these areas now constitutes over 85 percent of the national total. Urban growth has been particularly spectacular along the Seoul-Busan corridor, the Seoul metropolitan area and the Gyeongsang Province area. By contrast, the southwestern [south-western] and northeastern [north-eastern] regions have sustained a considerable loss in population.

3.8.2.3 Population

Source: http://www.korea.net/korea/korea.asp

The population of the Republic of Korea as of 2003 was 48 million. The population density of the country is 490 persons per square kilometre [kilometre]. As of 2002 the population of North Korea was 22.2 million. Fast population growth was once a serious social problem in the Republic, as in most other developing nations. Due to successful family planning campaigns and changing attitudes, however, population growth has been curbed remarkably in recent years. The annual growth rate was 0.60 percent in 2003.
A notable trend in the population structure is that it is getting increasingly older. The 2003 population estimate revealed that 8.3 percent of the total population was 65 years old or over. The number of people in the age of 15-64 years accounted for 71.44 percent.

3.8.3 Language

The material in this section is taken verbatim from http://www.korea.net/korea/korea.asp.

3.8.3.1 Overview

All Koreans speak and write the same language, which has been a decisive factor in forging their strong national identity. Koreans have developed several different dialects in addition to the standard [Korean] used in Seoul. However, the dialects, except for that of [the] Jeju-do province, are similar enough for native speakers to understand [each other] without any difficulties.

Linguistic and ethnological studies have classified the Korean language in the Altaic language family, which includes the Turkic, Mongolic and Tungus-Manchu languages.

The Korean Alphabet *Hangeul* was created by King Sejong the Great during the 15th century. Before its creation, only a relatively small percentage of the population could master the Chinese characters due to their difficulty.

In attempting to invent a Korean writing system, King Sejong looked to several writing systems known at the time, such as old Chinese seal characters and [the] Uighur and Mongolian scripts.

The system that they came up with, however, is predominantly based upon phonological studies. Above all, they developed and followed a theory of tripartite division of the syllable into initial, medial and final phonemes, as opposed to the bipartite division of traditional Chinese phonology.
Hangeul which consists of 10 vowels and 14 consonants can be combined to form numerous syllabic groupings. It is simple, yet systematic and comprehensive, and is considered one of the most scientific writing systems in the world. Hangeul is easy to learn and write which has greatly contributed to Korea's high literacy rate and advanced publication industry.

Korean language is spoken by about 70 million people. Although most speakers of Korean live on the Korean Peninsula and its adjacent islands, more than 5 million are scattered throughout the world.

The origin of the Korean language is as obscure as the origins of the Korean people. In the 19th century when Western scholars "discovered" the Korean language, from what family of languages the Korean language derived was one of the first question[s]. These scholars proposed various theories linking the Korean language with Ural-Altaic, Japanese, Chinese, Tibetan, Dravidian, Ainu, Indo-European and other languages. Among these theories, only the relationship between Korean and Altaic (which groups the Turkic, Mongolian and Manchu-Tungus languages) and the relationship between Korean and Japanese have continuously attracted the attention of comparative linguists in the 20th century.

Altaic, Korean and Japanese not only exhibit similarities in their general structure, but also share common features such as vowel harmony and lack of conjunctions, although the vowel harmony in old Japanese has been the object of dispute among specialists in the field. These languages also have various common elements in their grammar and vocabulary.

3.8.3.2 History

According to early historical records, two groups of languages were spoken in Manchuria and on the Korean Peninsula at the dawn of the Christian era: one belonged to the Northern Buyeo group and the other to the Southern Han group. Around the middle of the
7th century when the kingdom of Silla unified the peninsula, its language became the dominant form of communication. As a result, the linguistic unification of the peninsula was achieved on the basis of the Silla language.

When the Goryeo Dynasty was founded in the 10th century, the capital was moved to Gaeseong, located at the center of the Korean Peninsula. From that time onward, the dialect of Gaeseong became the standard national language. After the Joseon Dynasty was founded at the end of the 14th century, the capital was moved to Hanyang, today's Seoul. However, since Seoul is geographically close to Gaeseong, the move had little significant effect on the development of the language.

3.8.3.3 Korean Script

The Korean script which is now generally called Han-geul was invented in 1443 under the reign of King Sejong (r.1418-1450), the fourth king of the Joseon Dynasty. It was then called *Hunminjeongeum*, or proper sounds to instruct the people. The script was promulgated in 1446 in a document which was also called *Hunminjeongeum*. The motivation behind the invention of the Korean script, according to King Sejong's preface to the above book, was to enable the Korean people to write their own language without the use of Chinese characters. Until the introduction of *Hunminjeongeum*, Chinese characters were used by the upper classes, and Idu letters, a kind of Chinese-based Korean character system, were used by the populace. There also seems to have been a second motivation behind the development of Korean script: to represent the "proper" sound associated with each Chinese character.

In attempting to invent a Korean writing system, King Sejong and the scholars who assisted him probably looked to several writing systems known to them at the time, such as Chinese old seal characters, the Uighur script and the Mongolian scripts. The system that they came up with, however, is predominantly based upon their own phonological studies. Above all, they developed a theory of tripartite division of the syllable into initial, medial and final, as opposed to the bipartite division of traditional Chinese
The initial sounds (consonants) are represented by 17 letters of which there are five basic forms. According to the explanations of the original *Hunminjeongeum* text,

 Ginny (g) depicts the root of the tongue blocking the throat;

  (n) depicts the outline of the tongue touching the upper palate;

  (m) depicts the outline of the mouth;

  (s) depicts the outline of the incisor; and

  (ng) depicts the outline of the throat.

The other initial letters were derived by adding strokes to the basic letters. No letters were invented for the final sounds, the initial letters being used for that purpose.

The original *Hunminjeongeum* text also explains that the medial sounds (vowels) are represented by 11 letters of which there are three basic forms:

- (a) is a depiction of Heaven
- (eu) is a depiction of Earth
- (i) is a depiction of man

By combining these three signs, the other medial letters are formed.

After the promulgation of the Korean alphabet, its popularity gradually increased, particularly in modern times, to the point where it has replaced Chinese characters as the primary writing system in the country.
One of the more interesting characteristics of the Korean script is its syllabic grouping of the initial, medial and final letters. […]

3.8.3.4 Standard language and orthography

Modern Korean is divided into six dialects: Central, Northwest, Northeast, Southeast, Southwest and Jeju. Except for the Jeju dialect, these are similar enough for speakers of the various dialects to communicate. This is due to the fact that Korea has been a centralized state for more than a thousand years. The language of the capital exercised a steady influence on the language spoken throughout the country.

The language of the capital was established as the basis for modern standard Korean in 1936, as a result of the deliberations of a committee organized by the Korean Language Research Society. The language of the political and cultural center of a nation usually becomes the standard language for the entire population. In Korea, however, the case was somewhat different, since the guidelines for the national language standard were set forth by a small but dedicated group of scholars who had worked during the Japanese occupation. They endeavored to preserve their own language in the face of an oppressive regime which had sought the eventual extinction of the Korean language.

Modern orthography was also determined by this same Korean Language Research Society in 1933. In this way, Korean orthography, rather than being a product of a gradual process of natural selection, was deliberately manufactured. Whereas 15th century orthography had been based on a phonemic principle, with each letter representing one phoneme, modern Korean orthography operates on a morphophonemic
principle. That is, while a morpheme, or a minimum meaningful unit, may be realized differently according to its context, its orthographic representation is a single base form. The Korean word "값" for "price," for example, is pronounced [gaps] or [gap], according to the context; nevertheless, it is always spelled according to its base form, "값."

3.8.3.5 Phonology

The Korean language possesses a rich variety of vowels and consonants with nine simple vowels and three series of stops and affricates: plain, aspirated, and glottalized. These variations make it difficult for foreigners to learn and pronounce the language. They also complicate the task of Romanization.

Phonemes of the plain stop series are realized as unvoiced sounds in the word-initial position, voiced sounds in the intervocalic position and unreleased sounds in the word-final position, e.g. 갑 [gap] "case or small box" and 갑에 [gabe] "in the case." The liquid phoneme is realized as [r] in the intervocalic position and [l] in the word-final position. For example, 달 [dal] "moon," and 달에 [dare] "at the moon."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Velar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affricates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fricatives | ㅅ (s) ㅆ (ss) ㅎ (h)
---|---
Nasals | ㅁ (m) ㄴ (n) ㅇ (ng)
---|---
Liquid | ㄹ (r, l)

Notes: The letter ㅗ has a double function: in the final position, it denotes a nasal consonant (n, ng), while in the initial position, it denotes that the syllable begins with a vowel.

Vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Simple</th>
<th>ㅏ (a) ㅓ (eo) ㅗ (o) ㅜ (u)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vowels</td>
<td>ㅓ (i) ㅐ (ae) ㅔ (e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ㅏ (oe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diphthongs</td>
<td>ㅑ (ya) ㅕ (yeo) ㅛ (yo) ㅠ (yu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ㅒ (yae) ㅖ (ye) ㅢ (ui)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ㅘ (wa) ㅝ (wo) ㅙ (wae)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ㅞ (we) ㅟ (wi)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another characteristic of modern Korean is that there are no consonant clusters or liquid sounds in the word-initial position. As a result, Koreans pronounce the English word "stop" in two syllables, as [seu-top], and change the initial [l] or [r] in foreign words to [n]. Recently, however, there has been a tendency to pronounce initial liquid sounds in Western loan words.
Korean is similar to the Altaic languages in that it possesses vowel harmony. Evidence indicates that vowel harmony was rigidly observed in old Korean, but rules have been significantly weakened in modern Korean. Vowel harmony nevertheless continues to play an important role in the onomatopoeic and mimetic words so abundant in the language.

3.8.3.6 Romanization

Korean is a difficult language to Romanize, given the variety of vowel and consonant phonemes and the complex rules for their realization. Of the Romanization systems that have been in use since the 19th century, the most widely accepted have been the McCune-Reischauer System (1939), and the Ministry of Education System (1959). The former has been used mainly in the United States and other Western countries, while the latter has been used in Korea. In 1984, however, the Korean system was revised along the lines of the McCune-Reischauer System, with a few modifications, so that the two systems most widely used in Korea and the West were, in effect, the same.

Examples of Syllabics

가 (ga) 격(gyeok) 관(gwan) 오(o) 옹(ong) 왕(wang)

Examples of Sentences

마을 앞에 높은 산이 있다.


There is a high mountain in front of the village

(1) Noun: village
(2) Noun: front
There was, however, a drastic revision of Romanization system by the Korean Government in 2000, which, in effect, returned to the system of 1959. This was made necessary by the widespread use of the computer which required automatic transliteration in searching words. There also was the need to adopt a system which does not use diacritical signs [such] as those seen in the M-R System. The Romanized forms in this book reflect the latest revised system.

3.8.3.7 Morphology and syntax

Korean is one of the so-called agglutinative languages which add suffixes to nominal and verbal stems in derivation and inflection. Suffixes agglutinate one after another and indicate different styles of speech, express moods and aspects, and function as case markers, connectives, etc. Vowel gradation, that is, the change of vowels to make morphological distinctions such as singular-plural in nouns (e.g. man-men) and present-past in verbs (e.g. sing-sang), is not found in Korean.

Korean is a verb-final language: the verb is always the last constituent of the sentence. Constituents other than verbs are relatively free to switch around, although the normal and preferred word order is subject-object-verb. In Korean, modifying words or phrases precede the modified words without exception: adjectives precede nouns, adverbs precede verbs, etc. Since Korean has no relative clauses, the clauses precede the nouns.
they modify however long they may be. One of the important characteristics of Korean grammar is the honorific system. Korean is perhaps the only language in the world which has honorific suffixes such as -si-, exalting the subject of the sentence, and -seumni-, showing the speaker's respect to the hearer. Although Japanese has a well-developed system of honorific expressions, it is different from that of Korean in that it utilizes auxiliary verbs instead of suffixes.

3.8.3.8 Vocabulary

The vocabulary of the Korean language is composed of indigenous words and loanwords, the latter being the result of contact with other languages. The majority of the loanwords are of Chinese origin, often called Sino-Korean words, a reflection of several millennia of Chinese cultural influence on Korea. In modern Korean, native words are significantly outnumbered by Sino-Korean words. As a result, a dual system of native and Sino-Korean words pervades the Korean lexicon, including two sets of numerals which are interchangeable in some cases but mutually exclusive in others. For example, native numerals are used with si (the hour, i.e. ahop si, "nine o'clock") but Sino-Korean numerals are used with bun (the minute, i.e. gu bun, "nine minutes"). The process of modernization has resulted in a steady flow of Western words entering the Korean language. Technological and scientific terms represent the majority of these loanwords, although Western terms have been introduced into almost every field.

3.9 RELIGION

The information on religions in Korea is cited verbatim from http://www.korea.net/korea/korea.asp.

3.9.1 Buddhism

Buddhism is a highly disciplined philosophical religion which emphasizes personal salvation through rebirth in an endless cycle of reincarnation.
Buddhism was introduced into Korea in A.D. 372 during the Goguryeo Kingdom period by a monk named Sundo who came from Qian Qin Dynasty China. In 384, monk Malananda brought Buddhism to Baekje from the Eastern Jin State of China. In Silla, Buddhism was disseminated by a monk Ado of Goguryeo by the mid-fifth century. Buddhism seems to have been well supported by the ruling people of the Three Kingdoms because it was suitable as a spiritual prop for the governing structure, with Buddha as the single object of worship like the king as the single object of authority.

Under royal patronage, many temples and monasteries were constructed and believers grew steadily. By the sixth century monks and artisans were migrating to Japan with scriptures and religious artifacts to form the basis of early Buddhist culture there.

By the time Silla unified the peninsula in 668, it had embraced Buddhism as the state religion, though the government systems were along Confucian lines. Royal preference for Buddhism in this period produced a magnificent flowering [of] Buddhist arts and temple architecture including Bulguksa Temple and other relics in Gyeongju, the capital of Silla. The state cult of Buddhism began to deteriorate as the nobility indulged in a luxurious lifestyle. Buddhism then established the Seon sect (Zen) to concentrate on finding universal truth through a life of frugality.

The rulers of the succeeding Goryeo Dynasty were even more enthusiastic in their support of the religion. During Goryeo, Buddhist arts and architecture continued to flourish with unreserved support from the aristocracy. The Tripitaka Koreana was produced during this period. When Yi Seong-gye, founder of the Joseon Dynasty, staged a revolt and had himself proclaimed king in 1392, he tried to remove all influences of Buddhism from the government and adopted Confucianism as the guiding principles for state management and moral decorum. Throughout the five-century reign of Joseon, any effort to revive Buddhism was met with strong opposition from Confucian scholars and officials.

When Japan forcibly took over Joseon as a colonial ruler in 1910, he made attempts to assimilate Korean Buddhist sects with those of Japan. These attempts however failed and
even resulted in a revival of interest in native Buddhism among Koreans. The past few decades have seen Buddhism undergo a sort of renaissance involving efforts to adapt to the changes of modern society. While the majority of monks remain in mountainous areas, absorbed in self-discipline and meditation, some come down to the cities to spread their religion. There are a large number of monks indulging in scholastic research in religion at universities in and outside Korea. Seon (meditation)-oriented Korean Buddhism has been growing noticeably with many foreigners following in the footsteps of revered Korean monks through training at Songgwangsa temple in Jeollanam-do province and Seon centers in Seoul and provincial cities.
3.9.2 Shamanism

Shamanism is a primitive religion which does not have a systematic structure but permeates into the daily lives of the people through folklore and customs. Neolithic man in Korea had animistic beliefs that every object in the world possessed a soul.

Man was also believed to have a soul that never dies. So a corpse was laid with its head toward the east in the direction of the sunrise. Neolithic man believed that while good spirits like the sun would bring good luck to human beings, evil spirits would bring misfortune.

Shamanism gradually gave way to Confucianism or Buddhism as a tool for governing the people but its influence lingered on. The shaman, Mudang in Korean, is an intermediary who can link the living with the spiritual world where the dead reside. The shaman is considered capable of averting bad luck, curing sickness and assuring a propitious passage from this world to the next. The shaman is also believed to resolve conflicts and tensions that might exist between the living and the dead.

Korean shamanism includes the worship of thousands of spirits and demons that are believed to dwell in every object in the natural world, including rocks, trees, mountains and streams as well as celestial bodies.

Shamanism in ancient Korea was a religion of fear and superstition, but for modern generations, it remains a colorful and artistic ingredient of their culture. A shamanistic ritual, rich with exorcist elements, presents theatrical elements with music and dance.

The introduction of more sophisticated religions like Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism did not result in the abandonment of shamanistic beliefs and practices. They assimilated elements of shamanistic faith and coexisted peacefully. Shamanism has
remained an underlying religion of the Korean people as well as a vital aspect of their culture.

Shamanism is a folk religion centered on a belief in good and evil spirits who can only be influenced by shamans. The shaman is a professional spiritual mediator who performs rites. Mudang, in Korean, usually refers to female shamans, while male shamans are called baksu-mudang.

When shamans dance, they enter a trance, and their souls depart their body for the realm of the spirits. By falling into ecstasy, the shaman communicates directly with the spirits and displays supernatural strength and knowledge as their mouthpiece. The shaman plays the role of an intermediary between human beings and the supernatural, speaking for the humans to deliver their wishes and for the spirits to reveal their will.

The extraordinary gifts of the shaman allow him or her to be naturally distinguished from others in society. The belief that the shaman communicates with the spirits gives that person authority. In ancient societies, probably beginning from the time of tribal states, the shaman assumed the role of a leader as his or her supernatural powers contributed to the common interest of the community. As the possessor of transcendental abilities which were beyond the capacity of ordinary human beings, the shaman may be defined by the following characteristics:

First, the shaman has to have experienced the torture of the spirits by resisting being chosen for the vocation, which is manifested in the form of illness. The supernatural abilities of the shaman result from being the choice of the spirits. The illness breaks the resistance of the shaman candidate and the person has to accept the vocation.

Second, the shaman should be capable of officiating at rites in which they are believed to communicate with the spirits. The rites constitute an essential religious expression in shamanism.

Third, the shaman needs to be recognized as a religious leader with the ability to satisfy
the spiritual requirements of the community.

Fourth, the shaman has to serve and assist specific spirits. This indicates that the shaman has experienced and accepted specific spirits at the time of initiation.

A great variety of spirits are worshiped in the pantheon of shamans, such as the mountain spirit, the seven star spirits, the earth spirit and the dragon spirit. In addition to these spirits in nature, the shaman may also serve the spirits of renowned historic figures including kings, generals and ministers.

Shamans are divided largely into two types according to their initiation process – those who are chosen by the spirits and those who inherit the vocation from their ancestors. The shamans who are chosen by the spirits are endowed with supernatural powers to heal and to divine. They communicate with the spirits and speak for them in rites. The costumes used by these possessed shamans vary widely, reaching some 12 to 20 different kinds, representing the various spirits they embody. Percussion instruments are played in fast, exciting rhythms to accompany the shaman as she or he falls into an ecstatic state by dancing.

Without fail shamans of this type experience the so-called sinbyeong, the illness resulting from resisting the call of the spirits, as an unavoidable process of initiation. The shaman candidate usually faints, has visions, and similar symptoms. Then, in a vision or a dream, the spirit who has chosen them appears and announces that they have been selected, a call necessary for shamans to acquire their powers.
The illness will cause the future shaman to suffer for months, or perhaps for years. Shamans say that the illness lasts about eight years on the average, but in some cases, it may last as many as 30 years. It is characterized by an extremely unstable psychological state bordering on lunacy; the person can hardly eat and sometimes roams around in the fields and in the mountains. The illness, which defies modern medicine, disappears suddenly when the person finally gives way to the compulsion and becomes a shaman.

Then an initiation rite is held under the guidance of a senior shaman assuming the role of a godmother or a godfather. The novice shaman learns all the necessary skills of a professional shaman from the senior shaman before practicing on his or her own. The apprenticeship lasts for about three years in most cases though it may vary depending on individual talent.

Those who become shamans by inheritance do not possess transcendental powers, and their role is restricted mostly to the performance of rites. The rites they officiate at do not involve ecstasy for communion with the supernatural, and no specific spirits are worshiped. These shamans do not keep altars, and for each rite they set up a sacred passageway for the descending spirits. During a rite, the shaman does not embody the spirits but takes on a separate role.

The hereditary shamans use simple costumes of two or three kinds. But they use more colorful music, including not only percussion but also string and wind instruments as well. Both the music and the dance are much slower than those performed by the "possessed" shamans.

Rites are performed for various purposes in shamanism, a religious phenomenon with deep roots in folk traditions. The rituals are divided largely into those performed for the guardian spirits of the house and the family, those for the tutelary spirits of the community and those for the deities of the universe.
First, the rites are performed frequently to invoke happiness. In ancient times, shaman rites were performed at all levels of society ranging from the royal household down to remote villages. Historical records say that the court of the Goryeo Dynasty set up 10 state shrines to perform rites to invoke peace and prosperity for the nation. Shamans danced and played music at these shrines for national well-being. Private rites were observed by aristocrats and commoners as well to pray for happiness in the family and in the village. These developed into communal rites and festivals in later years.

Second, shaman rites are purported to cure illness. Ancient people believed illness was caused by spirits, which only the shamans could control. They even believed that the houses of the shamans were safe from the spirits causing illness, so, when epidemics spread, they took refuge at their houses.

During these epidemics, the royal court invited shamans to perform rites to expel the evil spirits. At private homes, rites were performed frequently to chase away the smallpox spirit, called *mama* (lord) or *sonnim* (guest), both implying that it was an object of fear. Third, shaman rites are performed to escort the soul of a dead person to heaven. Shaman rites in Korea are intended not only to appease the soul of a deceased person but also to unleash the baleful elements which brought about the death. This allows the soul of the victim to find peace in heaven and to never bring bad fortune to the living. Particularly, deaths from illness or accidents were considered to need the rites in order to guide the wandering and unhappy souls of the dead to heaven.

Shaman rites are classified into three kinds based on their style. The simplest form is offering prayers while rubbing one's palms. Rites of the possessed shamans are characterized by an ecstatic state in which the shaman is deified or embodies the spirits. Rites of the hereditary shamans are also involved in communion with the supernatural, but the shaman and the spirits keep their separate identities.

In the shamanistic world view, human beings have both a body and a soul, or even several souls. The soul, which provides the vital force of life for the body, never perishes.
After the body dies, the soul lives forever in the afterworld or is reborn in a new body. Shamanism classifies souls into those of living persons and those of dead persons. The souls of dead persons are personified, too. These souls are believed to be formless and invisible but omnipotent, floating around freely in the void with no barriers of time or space.

3.9.3 Confucianism

Confucianism was the moral and religious belief founded by Confucius in the 6th century B.C. Basically it is a system of ethical percepts – benevolent love, righteousness, decorum and wise leadership – designed to inspire and preserve the good management of family and society.

Confucianism was a religion without a god like early Buddhism, but ages passed and the sage and principal disciplines were canonized by late followers.

Confucianism was introduced along with the earliest specimens of Chinese written materials around the beginning of the Christian era. The Three Kingdoms of Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla all left records that indicate the early existence of Confucian influence. In Goguryeo, a state university called Daehak was established in 372 and private Confucian academies were founded in the province. Baekje set up such institutions even earlier.

The Unified Silla sent delegations of scholars to Tang China to observe the workings of the Confucian institutions firsthand and to bring back voluminous writings on the subjects. For Goryeo Dynasty in the 10th century, Buddhism was the state religion, and Confucianism formed the philosophical and structural backbone of the state. The civil service examination of Gwageo, adopted after the Chinese system in the late 10th century, greatly encouraged studies in the Confucian classics and deeply implanted Confucian values in Korean minds.

The Joseon Dynasty, which was established in 1392, accepted Confucianism as the official ideology and developed a Confucian system of education, ceremony and civil
administration. When Korea was invaded by many West European countries and Japan in the late 19th century, the Confucianists raised "righteous armies" to fight against the aggressor. Efforts were also made to reform Confucianism to adapt it to the changing conditions of the times.

These reformists accepted the new Western civilization and endeavored to establish a Modern Independence government. Also, during Japan's colonial rule of Korea, these reformists joined many independence movements to fight against imperial Japan. Today, Confucian ancestral worship is still prevalent and filial piety highly revered as a virtue in Korean society. (http://www.korea.net/korea/korea.asp)

3.9.4 Catholicism

The tide of Christian mission activity reached Korea in the 17th century, when copies of Catholic missionary Matteo Ricci's works in Chinese were brought from Beijing by the annual tributary mission to the Chinese Emperor. Along with religious doctrine, these books included aspects of Western learning such as the solar calendar and other matters that attracted the attention of the Joseon scholars of Silhak, or the School of Practical Learning.

By the 18th century, there were several converts among these scholars and their families. No priests entered Korea until 1794, when a Chinese priest Zhou wenmo visited Korea. The number of converts continued to increase, although the propagation of foreign religion on Korean soil was still technically against the law and there were sporadic persecutions. By the year 1865, a dozen priests presided over a community of some 23,000 believers.

With the coming to power in 1863 of Daewongun, a xenophobic prince regent, persecution began in earnest and continued until 1873. In 1925, 79 Koreans who had been martyred during the Joseon Dynasty persecutions were beatified at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, and in 1968 an additional 24 were honored in the same way.
During and after the Korean War (1950-53), the number of Catholic relief organization[s] and missionar[ies] increased. The Korean Catholic Church grew quickly and its hierarchy was established in 1962. The Roman Catholic Church in Korea celebrated its bicentennial with a visit to Seoul by Pope John Paul II and the canonization of 93 Korean and 10 French missionary martyrs in 1984. It was the first time that a canonization ceremony was held outside the Vatican. This gave Korea the fourth-largest number of Catholic saints in the world, although quantitative growth has been slow for Catholicism.

(http://www.korea.net/korea/korea.asp)

3.9.5 Protestantism

In 1884, Horace N. Allen, an American medical doctor and Presbyterian missionary, arrived in Korea. Horace G. Underwood of the same denomination and Methodist Episcopal missionary, Henry G. Appenzeller, came from the United States the next year. They were followed by representatives of other Protestant denominations. The missionaries contributed to Korean society by rendering medical service and education as a means of disseminating their credo. Korean Protestants like Dr. Seo Jae-pil, Yi Sang-jae and Yun Chi-ho, all independence leaders, committed themselves to political causes.

The Protestant private schools, such as Yonhi and Ewha schools functioned to enhance nationalist thought among the public. The Seoul Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) was founded in 1903 along with other such Christian organizations. The organizations carried out socio-political programs actively, encouraging the inauguration of similar groupings of young Koreans. These groups pursued not only political and educational causes but also awakened social consciousness against superstitious practices and bad habits, while promoting the equality of men and women, elimination of the concubine system, and simplification of ceremonial observances.

The ever-growing vitality of the Protestant Churches in Korea saw the inauguration of large-scale Bible study conferences in 1905. Four years later, "A Million Souls for Christ" campaign was kicked off to encourage massive new conversions to the Protestant
faith. Protestantism was warmly received not only as a religious credo but also for its political, social, educational and cultural aspects. (http://www.korea.net/korea/korea.asp)

3.9.6 Statistics of the different religions present in Korea

No affiliation 46%

Christian 26%

Buddhist 26%

Confucianists 1%

Other 1%

Taken from: http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ks.html#People

According to my co-researchers (especially pastors from different Christian dominations in Korea), most of the people still have a strong Buddhist background and usually still practise many customs related to Korean culture and other Korean religions, even as Christians. An example of this is that Korean Christians still bow to a Buddhist temple when they pass it. Most Korean Christians also still go to the graves of their ancestors to pay their respect during Chuseok (thanksgiving).

The Christian religion is growing very strongly in Korea. During the four years when I was in Korea, I could see several changes.

3.10 A WOMAN’S LIFE, LANDOM [Random] WALK (by Kim Heung-sook)

I found the article I retell here in the The Korea Times, an English newspaper in Korea. I used the story as a discussion topic with my adult students. Its title was “A Woman’s Life, Landom Walk” (yes, Landom and not Random – although the author meant Random: the Korean language has only one symbol for both R and L). This story was written by Kim Heung-sook, a freelance writer.
It was not a welcome arrival. Her parents had a son and two daughters already and wished their fourth baby would be the second son, not the third daughter. The baby moved briskly when inside its mother and that seemed to be a good sign to the expecting parents.

On the twelfth of February by lunar calendar, the baby arrived safe. It cried heartily as if disapproving the timing of her arrival and the wishes of its father and mother. Even the much-experienced midwife thought it was a boy when she held the baby in the dim-lit chamber. She checked and noticed that it was not a male, though it weighed as much as any male baby.

The midwife whispered “Your princess” in a most casual manner. She knew fairly well that her exhausted client had waited for a boy. Without opening her mouth, the midwife blessed the baby. “Have a good life, dear.” She was nearing 60 and had heard enough about the fate of those born in the month of February, that they would lead lonely lives. She had seen many February children lose their parents early in their lives. If the parents manage to survive until the baby reaches adulthood, its siblings may succumb prematurely, the midwife predicted without a word.

The baby’s father was a learned man with delicate hands, who couldn’t fare well with the farming society of Korea in early 20th century. Though bright, he was a captive of Confucian values and the baby girl was a disappointment to him. Warmhearted as he was, however, he didn’t betray his feelings and gave the name “Choon-mae” or “spring cherry plum” to her with a smile. His wife was happy with the flowery name as she had been with her marriage whose middle name was poverty.

Choon-mae grew to be an apple-cheeked fair, unknowing all the grim things that lingered on the midwife’s mind on the day of her birth. Her elegant, hardworking mother would always tell her that three daughters were the best luck a mother could have. The mother taught Choon-mae how to be a responsible human being
and how to be self-supportive. The mother was extraordinary in many ways and Choon-mae wanted to be like her.

As is often the case with good citizens, her father was a obedient child of his times. Cherishing the conventional preference of sons to daughters and blaming poverty, he sent his two sons to schools, while letting the girls learn various ways of housekeeping and embroidery at home.

Choon-mae learned to read and write by overseeing the books and notes of her brothers. At age 12, she became a student of a night school operated by a group of patriotic young minds. The makeshift school was quite far and Choon-mae had to walk miles and miles through the dark mountain. She would be soaked in perspiration whenever she got to her destination, but the joy of learning cooled it off instantly.

One night when she reached the school in sweat, she almost fainted: Japanese colonial officers had nailed wood panels to what used to be the entrance to the school. She cried her hearts out. That was how her student life ended.

At age 20, Choon-mae became the wife of a wooer who had impressed her by writing Korean equivalents to all the Chinese characters he had employed in his love letters to her. Her married life was a challenge largely because of her mother-in-law’s unkind treatment, but still she produced five children, three of them girls, and let them have a higher education as they wanted. As time went by, Choon-mae came to understand why three daughters were the best luck a mother could expect. The girls were like suns that brighten every dark corner of her mind and life, and she could sustain despite her early loss of her beloved parents and sisters. Now that all the girls are middle-aged, they surely are her best friends.

Coon-mae has just celebrated her 75th birthday with her sons and “suns”. She has seen and gone through nearly everything and has forgiven almost anyone that made her sad at some point in her life. She knows that though she didn’t enjoy much welcome at the time of her arrival, her departure would see a lot bigger
farewell. And, like Shakespeare, she believes that all’s well that ends well.
(Heung-sook 2004:s.p.).

3.11 A SHORT CONCLUSION TO THE BACKGROUND SECTION

Looking at the very long history of South Korea and also the many rich and interesting customs that the people of South Korea share, one realizes that there are many things that are not the same as in Western culture. There are many things that I, as a Westerner, cannot understand, especially when one realizes that Korea is doing better than just coping.

It is with great respect and amazement that I close the Background section.

In the following section, the “Development” part of the research, I try to bring the Action story and the Background story closer to each other, and I look more closely at the aspects of Korean people’s coping without the traditional Western understanding of counselling. I also try to find an answer to the question of whether there is a place for a pastor doing Narrative Pastoral counselling.
CHAPTER 4

MY JOURNEY TOWARD UNDERSTANDIG THE KOREAN CULTURE’S STORY

(The Development story)

4.1 THE BEAR AND THE TIGER

GOING BACK TO “THE BEAR AND THE TIGER”

The story of the bear and the tiger open with the words “Long, long, long time ago the god of heaven and earth had a son whose name was Hwan-ung.”

_The bear continue and stayed in the cave for the full one hundred days. After the one-hundredth day of garlic, mugwort and persistence, the bear came out of the cave and was transformed into a beautiful woman_

The reason why I use this section of the story is that the Development can be reached when there is persistence. When one continues your life story, development does take place. Persistence is something that most Korean people will tell you that they have. The persistence of the bear was the reason why he/she was transformed into a beautiful woman.

4.2 INTRODUCTION

Somebody once said that God put people on earth because He loves stories. People are storytellers. You cannot work with people in communities without communicating with them, listening to their stories, or facilitating the story-telling process. When the facilitator (e.g. health worker, social worker, development worker, engineer, etc.) enters the community, gets to know them, and so forth, he
she performs these tasks by communicating and conversing with the individuals and groups within the community, and by listening to what the individuals and groups within the community have to say, in other words the stories they have to tell. At the same time, the facilitator shares his/her experiences and perceptions with the community, empathises with them, and so forth. (Du Toit, Grobler & Schenck 2001:113)

To try to understand a culture, you have to listen to what that culture is telling you. To do this, you have to listen to the stories of the people from that culture and also make sure that you are hearing and understanding the stories correctly.

I have been living in South Korea for more than four years now; and the Korean lifestyle, stories and customs really intrigue me. The most fascinating aspect of this experience is that I am learning something new each day.

When they look at the story of the bear and the tiger, the Korean people see themselves as the bear. They proudly acknowledge the fact that they share the same characteristics as the bear: they are as persistent, diligent, hardworking, content, loving and caring as the bear. For them, the characteristics of the bear are crucial, as it is these characteristics that help a person to develop into “a beautiful woman” – the person you ought to be, or a person of Muht.

According to Confucianism and Buddhism, one has to adopt these characteristics in order to become a better person. Confucius says the following:

The "Jen": The essence of all his teachings may be summed up under this one word ‘Jen’. The nearest equivalent to this difficult word is "social virtue". All those virtues which help to maintain social harmony and peace like benevolence, charity, magnanimity, sincerity, respectfulness, altruism, diligence, loving kindness, goodness are included in Jen.
His "Golden Rule" is: "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do unto others". "The injuries done to you by an enemy should be returned with a combination of love and justice. (http://www.religion-cults.com/Eastern/Confucianism/confuci.htm)

As I listened to Korean people in order to come to a better understanding of how they see and understand counselling and the counsellor, I have made many discoveries. One of the biggest discoveries I made in the Development section was the realization that it was not the culture that was developing, but my understanding about the culture.

I can only speak for myself, although I think it can very easily happen to many people: many of us see “development” as things starting to go our way, in other words, how we would like to see and experience these things. Anne Lamott uses the metaphor of a Polaroid when talking about Development:

.... Is very much like watching a Polaroid develop. You can’t – and, in fact, you’re not supposed to – know exactly what the picture is going to look like until it has finished developing. First you just point at what has your attention and take the picture...maybe your Polaroid was supposed to be a picture of that boy standing against the fence, and you didn’t notice until the last minute that a family was standing a few feet away from him...Then the film emerges from the camera with a grayish green murkiness that gradually becomes clearer and clearer, and finally you see the husband and wife holding their baby with two children standing beside them. And at first it all seems very sweet, but then the shadows begin to appear.... (Müller et al. 1997:4)

To use Anne LaMotte’s metaphor of a Polaroid: you can very easily see the picture as showing what you want it to show. You can even believe that the picture is exactly what you think it ought to be. In other words, your own paradigm can easily blind you to the true picture. To truly understand a different culture, and, for that matter, your own, you have to listen to, you have to live the life stories the people share with you. You have to
enter into a dialogue to reflect these stories back to them to make sure that you understand them correctly. It was during this journey and in such dialogue that my understanding of Korean culture developed, and it was not the culture that developed.

In the “Development” section, I would firstly like to share some aspects of Korean culture that interested me. Then I would like to share some of the discoveries I have made in the course of my developing a better understanding of Korean culture, especially things concerning Koreans’ understanding of sharing their problems, or their understanding of counselling and the counsellor. Secondly, I would also like to share with you some “changes” that are taking place in Korean culture in this day and age. Thirdly, I would like to share how Korean people feel about these changes.

4.3 MY DEVELOPMENT IN UNDERSTANDING KOREAN CULTURE

4.3.1 My personal story

When my wife and I arrived at a very cold Gimpo Airport, back in March 2001, we really did not know what to expect. We had not done much research on Korea before we came. The only information we had was what we had heard from one of our friends and my brother-in-law and his family, who were working in Korea. I must also be honest and say that I had an unfortunate preconceived idea that Korea was like some of the movie scenes that Korean films appear to portray; for instance, I believed that all Asian countries had lots of dark alleys full of deep dark secrets and people who try to take you for a “ride”.

For us as a newly wed couple (we had just got married that January), this journey to Korea was still an adventure, and, for us, it was an extended honeymoon. My brother-in-law picked us up at the airport and took us to his house in a taxi. As we were driving to his house, I started to realize that I did not even know where north or south was. I could not read any road signs or advertising boards, or understand what the taxi-driver was trying to say to us, even though he spoke some broken English. I can still remember very clearly, when we reached my brother-in-law’s house, the different and unknown smells
that assailed me. As we entered his house, we were stopped at the door and told to take off our shoes – everything was suddenly different.

Early the next Sunday morning, two young men came to fetch us to take us to Daejeon, a city about 150 km south of Seoul. It takes little more than two hours to get there if the traffic is good (during public vacations, it can take you up to seven hours because of bad traffic). The one young man, Jin, was the vice-director of the Institute where we were to teach and the other a friend that could speak English. He was the first Korean we met that could speak good conversational English.

The trip to Daejeon was just as interesting as the trip from the airport had been: everything was different and strange. Except for a few Korean cars that we also have in South Africa, even the cars were new and strange. When we stopped at a rest area, we did not even recognize any of the foods served at the restaurant or the takeaway.

We truly entered a new world, with a new language, new food, new smells, new people and a totally new culture. It is very difficult to describe it; when we walked down the street, everything was unknown. All the writing on the buildings was in Korean; the signboards were in Korean; when we asked for directions, the people just shook their heads and walked on.

It took us about two to three months to get over the culture shock. It was only after this time that we started to begin to understand this new, interesting and strange culture.

4.3.2 Aspects of Korean culture that interested me

As I got to know the culture better, there were certain aspects of the culture that started to puzzle me. Many of the things Korean people do and also how they do them started to interest me.

A few of the many things that intrigued me were and still are discussed below.
How the Korean people do their business is really fascinating. As I mentioned in Chapter One, Koreans have different markets where you can buy most things, depending on the kind of market it is. For instance, if you go to the fabric markets at Dong-dae Moon (one of the famous markets in Seoul), you find hundreds of stalls, all selling fabric. If you go to a place like Young-san, which is famous for its electronic markets, you find high-rise buildings, each containing hundreds of electronic shops. Some sell computers, others MP3 players and digital cameras; others would sell TVs and so on. There are literally hundreds of these shops, all working together and selling a similar product. These markets vary from food markets, clothing markets, second-hand car markets, house appliances, material, electronics markets, and many more.

Something that was very frustrating was the fact that Koreans sometimes share information at the last minute (and even later). It happened a number of times that very important meetings or events were only announced literally minutes beforehand. For instance, I might be phoned ten minutes before a class to be informed that I had to take it.
This was something I could get no answer to – why did they do their planning in such a way? The only reason that I could come up with was that maybe it was a kind of face-saving, but I cannot say for certain.

When Koreans visit your house or even if you and your students or friends meet for lunch, Koreans often prepare gifts for you, especially if it is the first time. Sometimes as a teacher or a pastor, you might almost come to the conclusion that they try to bribe you or try to buy your favour, but it is not so. It is part of their culture to present gifts to their hosts, teachers etc.

The safety in Korea is quite remarkable. For me, coming from South Africa where you have to be alert most of the time, Korea is incomparable. You can park your car without even locking it; you can walk at night in the cities without any fear of being attacked or robbed. Even if my wife wanted to go and do some midnight shopping, it would be safe for her to take the bus, the subway or even a taxi and go and walk around the markets or shopping centres.

I remember the first few times I took a taxi. Because I did not know the roads and the places and also could not communicate, the first idea that came to my mind was that this taxi driver was going to take me for a “ride”. Great was my surprise when I later realized that it is not in the Korean nature to take a longer way or to cheat you out of your money. If something like this did happen, it would be the absolute exception to the rule.

When one is buying at the markets, one has to try to bargain – although I do not like doing that – but the prices rarely differ a lot.

Something that takes most foreigners some getting used to is that when Koreans are walking in the streets and even in some of their public buildings and public places, they may give a loud sniff and then spit on the ground – I must say that not all Korean people do it, but most do, especially the men.
When I, as a Westerner, am standing in a queue, for example at an ATM or in a shop at the pay point, I am used to leaving a small space between myself and the person in front and the person behind me. Great was my surprise when the first time I did it, about one or two Korean people took up the space in front of me (for me, they were cutting into the queue). Even taking an elevator or the subway can be a frightful experience for someone who is used to a big personal space. The only way that Korean people will stop going into an elevator is when the alarm sounds that there is too much weight in the elevator.

We have a saying that Koreans “come to life” after nine or ten o’clock at night: parents, children, old people, young school-going children, everyone. It is almost as if the streets, restaurants, drinking places, parks and even the shops, start to live. We even have adult classes that only starts at 8pm and after that, many of the students like to go out and visit or relax with some of their friends.

Another thing that amazed me was the fact that so many Koreans would get intoxicated during these nightly sessions that sometimes go on until two or three o’clock in the morning. They then sleep for a few hours and are in class at 6 am in the morning or at work by 8 am. I have not done a study in this regard, but it seems that most of the Korean people sleep less than six or seven hours a night.

The schools and the schooling system also fascinate me. The school system works as follows: the first six years of school are called Elementary School. Then you have three years of Middle School and finely you have three years of High School. The students never repeat a year, they just continue to the next year. At the end of their last High School year, they prepare for their Entrance Examination. This examination either allows them to enter university or it does not; thus, this examination is considered to be the most important examination in their school careers. When the examination is written, it is not strange to see mothers at the school gates or fences, praying the whole day for their children writing the exams. Unfortunately, it is also known that many High School students commit suicide during this time.
At the moment the schools maintain a six-day school week although the government is busy changing it to a five-day week. The students only have Sundays off. Because the competition among the students and especially the parents is so great, almost all the children have extra curricular activities after school. These activities vary from music, Taekwondo (a traditional Korean sport used in self-defence and fighting), different school subjects, art and also the very popular English classes. The children start attending these institutes (or “Hag won” as it is known in Korean) straight after school until about nine at night. Most of the High School students, especially those that are in their final year, start at four or five in the morning with their institutes, go to school, and then finish their institutes only at one or two in the morning again.

The way the people live here in Korea is also very intriguing. Korea is a very small country, about a twelfth of the size of South Africa. According to http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Korea_South.htm, the population count for 2004 was 48,598,175; so the country is densely populated.
Having lived for more than three years in Daejeon (one of the five biggest cities in South Korea) and then for a year in Seoul (the biggest city in South Korea, with about 15 million people that live in and around it) and looking at any city, it strikes me that they have one thing in common: everybody lives on top of each other. The accommodation that is most common in Korea is apartment buildings, as they are called. These buildings range from 12 to even more than 20 floors. At the moment, we live in an apartment building with 21 floors. On average, such a building has about 10 “houses” per floor. These apartments literally look like domino pieces stacked together.

As I mentioned, there are so many differences that it would take a whole book to write about them all. I have not even mentioned the food. Korean eating habits and foods are totally different from what I was used too, even the way they prepare it. For more about the Korean culture, you can find some very interesting information at www.korea.net.

The thing that started to interest me most about Korean culture was the way the people function as a culture and how they survive every day. An interesting thing that I noticed was that, even thought Koreans live so close together and work together, it almost seems that people are not really concerned with other people’s spiritual or emotional well-being. It was in this context of how Koreans function that I asked myself how they treat their own problems and other people’s problems.

4.3.3 How my understanding developed

The metaphor of the Polaroid used by Ann Lamott suggests that development takes time. Müller et al. (1997:5) comment as follows:

Research is not in the first instance about an action, but about people (characters) in action. These characters are participants and not objects. They are the co-researchers and should be allowed to be part of the development process. The contribution of the researcher is to reflect and facilitate and wait until the plot emerges. It’s more than just to be a scribe. It’s like being the assistant for someone who is writing an autobiography.
In order to do that, you have to listen to your “characters”, and you have to have compassion for them. The better you get to know them, the better you will be able to see things from their perspective.

As I began to communicate with the Korean people, I started to come to a better realization of how this interesting culture functions. Not just talking with them, but also living with them, smelling, walking, eating, drinking, and so on with them, helped me to understand the culture better.

At first, I thought it was very rude of them to just a queue without even apologizing. Then I started to come to a better realization concerning their personal space in comparison to mine as a Westerner. There are many things they do differently from what I am used to as a Westerner; but living with, listening to and trying to understand the Korean people gave me a better understanding of their lives. I also realized that difference is not necessarily wrong. Although I have begun to understand why Koreans do things in certain ways, there are still many things that I cannot fully grasp and or understand.

4.4 KOREAN PEOPLE’S VIEW CONCERNING COUNSELLING AND THE COUNSELLOR

On the basis of the answers to the questionnaires that I have discussed in the Action section (Chapter One), from interviews with many individuals (my students and the focus groups) and also from other written material that was published by Koreans, I have come to the following understanding: almost no Korean people (with the exception of a few that I will discuss later) have been to a counsellor or almost none of them are interested in going to a counsellor when they experience major problems.
4.4.1 Who would most Korean people regard as a counsellor?

In my own research, only Questions D, F, G and K received a score higher than 50% for Option 8: “I would talk to a professional counsellor about it.” Just as a reminder, research using the Narrative approach normally does not use questionnaires. But, as I have mentioned in Chapter One, because the language was and still is a big problem, I used the questionnaires to help me in my discussions with the different focus groups and interviews.

The questions mentioned primarily refer to problems that also involve a medical condition, for example, drug or alcohol abuse, incurable diseases, unwanted pregnancies, etc. These are Questions D, F, G and K:

D: You have found out that your best friend / your child / husband / wife is addicted to drugs. To whom would you talk?

F: A person close to you (husband / wife / child / loved one) is dying of an incurable disease. To whom would you talk?

G: You are dying of an incurable disease (AIDS, cancer, etc). To whom would you talk?

K: Your girlfriend / fiancée / unmarried daughter has discovered that she is pregnant (the child is unwanted). To whom would you talk?

The scores for Option 8 for these different questions are as follows: D: 62%; F: 55%; G: 58% and K: 58%; with an average of 58%.

If one takes into consideration that Option 8’s average score for all the other questions (A, B, C, E, H, I and K) was only 39%, one can see that there is a difference (19%) between the answers to Questions D, F, G and K and the other questions.

In my communication with the co-researchers, I have come to the understanding that many Korean people will consult a medical doctor as a counsellor and that they will go
and speak to him/her about certain problems. According to the feedback from my co-
researchers, most Korean people, including themselves, want to go to the doctor
(traditional and Western), listen to what he or she has to say, and use the medicine they
receive from the doctor. One or two doctors I spoke to confirmed this. One doctor I
interviewed said that, even though she does counsel people, especially for alcohol abuse,
they do not really listen to what she has to say – they just want some medicine or
something to give them quick relief. To use her words: “Most of the Korean people,
especially those in the country, see alcohol as a food and don’t really want to be
c counselled.”

I have also spoken to a welfare worker and she also stated that most of the cases they
normally work with are alcohol abuse, unwedded mothers, orphans and abused women.
She also mentioned that abused women have only recently started to admit their problem
and begun to seek help. This help also does not generally include counselling, but it
consists more in help to meet their physical needs. Previously, most, if not all, women
did not talk about their abuse.

As I understood it, and this was confirmed by the focus groups, the kind of counselling
that Koreans seek from these doctors will not be counselling as for instance most
Westerners consider it, but rather a session where the doctor teach or give advice to the
“patient”. In other words, the Korean “patient” tends to share his or her problems (which
are rather the symptoms) with the doctor or counsellor and in return the doctor or
counsellor will tell the person what the problem is and what the patient has to do to solve
it.

In my interviews with a few pastors they also stated that they very seldom counsel people
and if they do, the pattern would be very similar to that with medical and other experts –
they would teaching or advise them.

These days, one does get counsellors in Korea, but they are very difficult to find. One
really has to look hard to find a counsellor, and because of time and language problems, I
only had a chance to interview one counsellor, an American lecturer, Adam Gaines, who is teaching at the SDA University in Seoul. According to him, he has never had the chance to do counselling with a Korean person. He also mentioned that his understanding of the “Korean way of counselling” is more that of an “advice-giving session.”

Thus, in short, from my meetings with my focus groups and interviews with my co-researchers, my understanding is that the majority of the Korean people will not share their problems with a counsellor. However, some of the younger members mainly young people in their twenties, students and young and upcoming professionals) that joined the focus groups did indicate that they will strongly consider talking to a counsellor. I will discuss this more when I talk about the changes in the Korean culture (see Section 4.8).

Also from the same discussion, it is my understanding that most Korean people would think of a doctor as a counsellor, and they will only seek advice if it concerns some sort of medical condition. Again, the views of the younger generation do differ a bit from that of most Korean people.

4.4.2 If the Korean people would share their problems, with whom would they share them?

In response to the questionnaires that I sent out, the four options that received more than 60% (and the highest score) were options that involved talking to their best friends (Option 1), their parents (Options 2), their siblings (Option 3) and their spouse (Option 10).

It was interesting that, when I asked the focus groups or the co-researchers “If you have a serious problem, would you share it with someone?”, their response, most of the time, was “no”. However, after I had shared the results from my questionnaires with them (that most people had said that they would either share their problems with a spouse (72.8%), their best friend (70%), their parents (66.9%) or their siblings (64%)), they agreed with
those findings, except that they disagreed that their spouse would be the most likely person for them to share their problems with.

Most of the focus groups, individuals and even my adult students (university students, workers, professionals and mostly housewives) said that, if they did share their problems, it would be with their best friend. The only reason that I could think of why the questionnaire results rated the spouse as the most favourable person to talk to could be that many of the participants in the questionnaires were married women.

According to the focus groups and especially the housewives, more women these days have the openness to share problems with their spouses, in comparison to about ten or more years ago when they never questioned or argued with their husbands.

In research done by Professors Myung-Seok Park and Donald W Klopf, they tried to determine which topics American, Japanese and Korean university students would disclose anything to others about. To measure this, they used the “What We Talk About” scale that was developed by Ishii, Thomas and Klopf in 1993 (Park & Klopf, 1997:67). In their cross-cultural disclosure comparisons, where they tested 718 university students, one of the conclusions they reached was the following:

First the majority of the respondents from the three countries will willingly self-disclose about their preferences in television programming, motion pictures, automobiles, and the like (table 13) with any of the eight communicators types except for the Koreans in the case of strangers. Second, the Japanese majority will not self-disclose with strangers except on item 13’s likes and dislikes. Third, the majority of the three countries will disclose to their same sex closest friend on any of the fifteen topics, topics in some cases they would not discuss with their parents or siblings. Fourth, the American majority seems willing to self-disclose with more different types of communicators than those from the two Asian countries. Fifth, the majority of the Koreans and Japanese do not disclose to relatives other than parents and siblings. The Americans disclose on only certain
topics. Sixth, the Asians will not disclose to their fathers their feelings on sex, face and body, abortion, and pornography while the Americans avoid disclosing only about sex relations to their fathers. (Park & Klopf, 1997:70)

Taking all of these aspects into consideration, I came to the understanding that the Korean people would prefer not to share personal problems with anyone. If they do share them, it would firstly be with their close friends of the same sex. Secondly, they would talk to their parents (preferably to their mother) and, thirdly, to their siblings. As mentioned, if there is a medical condition, they would share the symptoms with their doctor, but not a personal problem.

1.4.3 Why will Koreans not share their problems, and if they do, why only with certain people?

When I talked to my co-researchers about why they do not share their problems, and if they do, why mostly with their best friend, parents or siblings, I really received some very interesting answers:

- “We don’t tell other people about our problems.”
- “Korean people don’t want to talk to other people, especially strangers, about their problems.”
- “Many Koreans don’t want to show others that they have problems or difficulty, they would rather pretend or save face.”
- “Problems are private and it only stays with yourself or in your family (immediate family).”
- “No, I won’t share my problems, I have to control it myself and accept my fate and it is part of my destiny.”
- “I cannot allow my problem to make other people unhappy.”
- “If I show my problems to other people, they would think that I’m weak.”
These few answers that I summarize most of the answers I got to this question. When I reflected on this question with some of my focus groups, they also agreed with these comments.

As my understanding concerning the Korean culture began to develop, I came to the understanding that there were a number of important factors that influenced the reason why Korean people will not easily share their problems nor easily consult a counsellor. According to my understanding, these factors are the following (they are not listed accordingly to priority or preference, and this non-comprehensive list only reflects my understanding):

- Korean history – a history of invasions, wars and difficulty;
- the influence of religion or philosophy; and
- a collective or community culture.

To come to a better understanding about these influences, I have mainly looked at two outside sources: an article, “Korean Culture Tutorial: Psychology”, by Dr Luke Kim (2003), a Korean, and a book, *Korean communicative behavior, Recent research and findings* by Myung-Seok Park (also a Korean) and Donald W. Klopf (1997). I used this article and certain sections of the book that was applicable to my research as discussion topics for some of my adult classes and my focus groups. In my interviews with my co-researchers, I also referred to these sources. In Kim’s (2003) article "Korean Culture Tutorial: Psychology” (there is a copy of this article in the Background section of this paper, see Section 3.7), I mainly looked at the sections about *jeong* (Kim, 2003:2), *haan* (Kim, 2003:4), *che-myun* (Kim, 2003:7) and *palja* (Kim, 2003:9).

In the book *Korean communicative behavior, Recent research and findings* (Park & Klopf, 1997), I looked at how Korean people communicate in their culture.

Except for the fact that my pronunciation of these different terms was mostly wrong, all the the Korean people that I have spoken to agree with the authors of the sources used. I
have also had the opportunity to speak telephonically with Professor Myung-Seok Park. Unfortunately, it was very difficult to arrange a personal meeting.

4.4.3.1 Their history, a history of invasions, wars and difficulty

According to Kim (2003:4),

Each war, each political and social upheaval brought about suffering, personal losses and unbearable woes to Koreans. Few have been spared the loss, pain and suffering. Most have fought and struggled for survival, and somehow managed to exist. Some even have thrived. But they harbor deep feelings of haan: suppressed anger, resentment and underlying depression. They have suffered feelings of indignation at having been unfairly victimized. For their own survival, however, as well as to live in harmony with the teachings of Confucius, they have had to swallow and suppress their feelings.

The haan in the "collective subconscious psyche" of Korea is related to historical, political and social upheavals that Korea has encountered for many centuries. But, in addition, there has been a great deal of personal misery, suffering and victimization in the domestic lives of Koreans. Traditionally, Korea had been a class-oriented society in which the ruling class, the Yangban, had oppressed and abused the poor and the underclass, the Ssang-nom. Also in the traditional Confucian society, the status and role of the female is subservient to that of the male. As a result, women have to endure much hardship and injustice. The poor and powerless had no recourse to appeal the injustice. In order to tolerate, they had to moderate their anger and indignation.

Although South Korea is a very prosperous and well-established financial country, one always finds a strong presence of their difficult past. There is also the ever-lingering presence of the threat posed by Communist North Korea. One can see this clearly in the very heavily guarded border. Because of this threat, all young men still have to do two
years of mandatory military service. When one talks to Korean people, most still have a
*haan* feeling towards Japan, even the elementary school children.

In the life stories that I have listened to from my co-researchers, they were all in
agreement that Korea’s difficult past does play an important role with regard to their
*haan* culture.

Taking into consideration the history of the Korean people, one can have empathy with
Korean people, maybe not a full understanding, but at least some understanding. Also
taking into consideration the fact that the Korean people have been subjected to so many
invasions and wars, one can understand that they have a sense of not trusting the out-
group or strangers. Thus, one can also understand better why they will not easily talk to
strangers, for example, a counsellor, but rather to their closest friend or a family member.

When one takes into consideration the teachings of Confucianism and Buddhism (as
discussed in the next section), one can see more clearly why Korean people will not share
their problems: firstly, because of their doubting or not trusting strangers, and secondly,
because their culture does not allow it.

As I have said, when one listens to this aspect of their life story, one can try to have
empathy, but as a Westerner with a different background and culture, it is still difficult to
perceive the mindset fully.

4.4.3.2 The influence of religious teachings and philosophy

Coming from a Christian home, a Christian background and also a primarily Christian
country, it was at first difficult for me to realize that the Korean people, even the
Christians, do have a different perception concerning their religious status. Whereas my
paradigm was primarily a Western Christian orientation, the Korean people’s paradigm is
governed by a few main religions and philosophies, which I mentioned, dating from
many centuries before Christ. Park and Klopf (1997:146) comment as follows:
Although foreign religions accompanied the imperialistic forces occupying Korea from time to time, Korea’s traditional religions, Shamanism, remains intact, resulting in the coexistence of ideologies, sometimes disparate. The religious strains now include shamanism, Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Ch’Aandokyo, and lesser influential religions.

As my understanding concerning Korean culture developed, I realized that the teachings of Confucianism and Buddhism play an important role in the thinking of a Korean person.

One of my students, a Methodist pastor, told me that many Christians in Korea, when the go for a walk in the mountains, still bow as they pass a Buddhist temple. This does not necessarily mean that they are Buddhist; it is just part of who they are, “almost like throwing a coin into a pond and making a wish”.

When I talked to some of the other Christian pastors I have interviewed and also my focus groups, they confirmed this. Christians still spend the two main holidays in Korea, Solar (New Year), and Chuseok (Thanksgiving Day) remembering their ancestors and also paying tribute to them. These holidays are mainly spent in their home town where the family takes part in different ceremonies of bowing and preparing certain foods when paying respect to their ancestors.

The reason why I mention this is that Confucianism, Buddhism and Shamanism have had a very deep impact on Korean culture. Although Christianity is also starting to play a prominent role in their culture, it is still these religions that have the biggest underlying influence, especially on Koreans’ views regarding counsellors and counselling.

Even when I spoke to many Christians and to some of my focus groups that just consisted of Christians, they agreed that the main reason they do not talk to a counsellor is their culture. They also agree that the teachings of the religions I have mentioned are the basis
of Korean culture: “This is who we Koreans are, this doesn’t make us Buddhist or followers of the Confucian teachings, but we are still Koreans.”

Looking at *haan* and religion, Kim (2003:6) writes the following:

> What do Confucian and Buddhist teachings have to say about haan? While Korean folklore has recognized haan as a prevailing experience for a long time, haan or emotion[s] like haan, are rarely mentioned in other Asian traditional literatures, including Oriental medicine. The Confucian traditions recognize various emotions; however, they emphasize the importance of having "proper four feelings," and using self-control so as not to arouse the "improper seven feelings." People were taught to control and suppress haan through self-discipline.

In Buddhism, we find a similar attitude. Buddhism tends to ignore haan and other human emotions, pointing out the impermanence and uselessness of emotion for the true self. This position can be easily understood, if one believes that all human suffering has its source in human desire, and that all emotions arise because of desires.

Contrary to these "high-minded" religions and teachings, we find a large number of references to haan in the popular folk traditions and shamanism. According to the Korean shamanism and folk beliefs, haan has been regarded as one of the prime causes of human suffering, illness and misfortunes. In fact, some claim that the Koreans' indigenous psychology is primarily the psychology of haan.

Shamans work with innocent or unfortunate, haan-ridden clients by offering care and healing. Korean shamanism uses complex forms of ritual called "goot." Goot ritual includes: invoking ancestral souls, dancing, chanting, and narrating the patient's haan-ridden life story, and eventually going into a trance state. The goot is to resolve the dead person’s haan as well as that of the client. The process to release haan is called "Haan-puri (unknots and let out haan)".
Almost all shamans are female, and most of the clients are female. Commonly the female shaman herself has a history of haan-ridden life herself, and becomes a shaman following her healing through help of a shaman. To be able to share one's deep feelings of haan with someone who has similar haan experiences is considered most helpful in the healing process.

It was very interesting to note that Option 7 ("I would talk to a fortune-teller about it") or to a Shaman (Shamans were and still are fortune-tellers) received the lowest score (26.6%). Today, Shamans are not as prominent as they were a few years ago, when most Korean people would consult a Shaman before getting married, buying a house or a new car, starting a new job and, as we’ve read from the quote, even when suffering from haan.

Another point of interest is that when these haan-ridden persons consulted the Shaman, the Shaman would “narrate” or re-tell the haan-ridden person’s life story. According to my co-researchers, none of them had spoken to or would consult a Shaman if they had personal problems. It is as if the teachings of Confucianism and Buddhism have overshadowed certain traditions and practices of Shamanism.

Just prior to this section, Kim (2003:5) also writes the following about this deep feeling of haan:

But they harbor deep feelings of haan: suppressed anger, resentment and underlying depression. They have suffered feelings of indignation at having been unfairly victimized. For their own survival, however, as well as to live in harmony with the teachings of Confucius, they have had to swallow and suppress their feelings.

The haan in the "collective subconscious psyche" of Korea is related to historical, political and social upheavals that Korea has encountered for many centuries. But, in addition, there has been a great deal of personal misery, suffering and victimization in the domestic lives of Koreans. Traditionally, Korea had been a
class-oriented society in which the ruling class, the Yangban, had oppressed and abused the poor and the underclass, the Ssang-nom. Also in the traditional Confucian society, the status and role of the female is subservient to that of the male. As a result, women have to endure much hardship and injustice. The poor and powerless had no recourse to appeal the injustice. In order to tolerate, they had to moderate their anger and indignation.

In their book, Park and Klopf (1997:149) say the following concerning the influence of these religions on the communicative culture of Koreans:

> Religion’s importance can be seen in the language, especially Confucianism and its standards of righteousness. Language formality and differential address is a product of Confucian influence. Suppression of emotional expression also stems from Confucianism.

These teachings are not just a separate part of Korean culture; this is their culture. One also has to understand that these teachings have been part of Korean culture for thousands of years.

Park and Klopf (1997:152) also write:

> Every culture has a belief system, a system of well-established and unchangeable judgments about what is true or probable about the world around it. To Koreans, this central core of beliefs, their world view, is Eastern in perspective. They believe human beings are one with nature and their spiritual and physical, mind and body, are inseparable. In contrast, in the Western world view, humans are distinguishable from nature and the spiritual. Humans consist of body, mind, and spirit overshadowed by the existence of a personal God.

It is my understanding that because of these influences, especially that of Confucianism and Buddhism, the Korean people have *haan*. Although most of my co-researchers do not fully understand or know the teachings of Confucius or Buddha, they agree that these teachings are the underlying philosophy of the Korean culture. They also agree that it is
because of these teachings that the Korean people have *haan*, but for them it is not a problem – that is life and it is part of their life.

Given my understanding of counselling and the benefits I believe it can provide to a *haan*-ridden person, I wanted to cry out: “But why don’t you share your problems with someone?” When I shared the concept of counselling and its benefits with my co-researchers, they just said: “But that is the Korean way, Korean people keep their problems to themselves, you have to control it and accept your *palja*.”

*4.4.3.3 The Korean culture is a collective or community culture*

Kim (2003:1) comments as follows:

> If we were to describe the predominant ethos of Americans – those values which influence their social, political and personal life – we would name individual freedom, independence, self-reliance, privacy and fun. Western psychology has been more interested in the individual person and his or her individual psychology, ego structure and psyche than in community.

However, psychology and consideration in what constitutes mental health developed differently in Asia. Due to the traditional Asian feudal and/or agrarian village society, people lived and worked in close proximity. Their economic, social and emotional lives were interdependent. Allegiance to each other was very important. The best interests of the group take priority over the interests of the individual. Emotional bonds of mutual help and support are necessary. Harmony is valued. The necessity of a group ethos was further reinforced by Confucian teachings, which are primarily concerned with human relationships.

Likewise, the ideology of freedom, independence, individuality and privacy was not developed in Asian societies. Individuals did not exist alone or independently but rather as a part of their extended family and collective network. With this
orientation, it is difficult to define one's identity without reference to the collective identity to which an individual belongs.

Because Asians have historically been more conscious of group identity than of personal identity, Asian psychology has concentrated more on the area of human relations than on the psychology of the individual.

If there is one thing that was and still is difficult for me to get used to in Korea, it is the fact that everywhere you go, you find lots of people. As a Westerner, I am used to more space around me. Coming from South Africa, with its vast open spaces, I find Korea crowded. People live in crowded cities; they have picnics in crowded parks; they shop in crowded shopping centres or department stores; and they drive on crowded roads – it does not matter where you are, there will always be people.

When I questioned the focus groups and my co-researchers about this matter, some of them said they do not think places are crowded, others enjoy it and some just say it is crowded, but they do not mind. When I shared pictures of some of the places in South Africa where you can see or hear nobody with them, they almost looked at me with disbelief.

Park and Klopf (1997:2003) in their study of people’s need for inclusion refer to three needs:

Needs motivate people to act, and in interpersonal situations, three needs – inclusion, control, and affection – …

The Korean people are a community culture and because of that, they also do certain thing differently from what I am used to. They also have certain terminologies describing some of their relationships. One of these aspects or terminologies is jeong.
I would like to remind the reader briefly that the word *jeong* describes a special interpersonal bond of trust and closeness that exists among two or more people. Kim (2003:2) adds:

> Jeong develops not only in horizontal relations, such as friendship, but also in vertical relationships, such as those between parent and child or teacher and student.

According to my understanding, it is the existence of *jeong* that makes the Korean people a community culture. I think the closest that my understanding comes, is to compare *jeong* to the Zulu concept *ubuntu*, that is used in the South African community culture. It means "a person is a person through other persons".

When I asked my co-researchers “If there is such a closeness or bond among the Korean people, why don’t they share their problems with each other?”, their reply was this:

> It is because we are a community culture that we don’t share our problems with each other, we rather try to enhance the community and ourselves by accepting our problems and by keeping it to ourselves.

In other words, Koreans tend to rather enhance the community than themselves as individuals. Park and Klopf (1997:144-145) comment as follows:

> Koreans deviate from absolute collectivism in another way, also caused by a desire to survive. They place considerable value on kibun, a concept difficult to define accurately. Kibun concerns the recognition of the individual’s self, allowing the individual to endure within the collective.

The self publicly presents itself through the concept of face, suggesting high moral and self-esteem in spite of the person’s inner state. As Park (1979) avers, Koreans are more interested in how others perceive them rather that with how they perceive themselves. Good kibun relies on another’s response to one’s face. The individual is affirmed through the recognition of his or her prestige and inner
feelings. The recognition brings receipt of deference and acknowledgement of one’s kibun.

Kibun emphasizes the individual, yet persons with good kibun contribute to group harmony. Koreans work at developing a sense of nunchi or sensitivity to what another is feeling and thinking. An ideal situation occurs when several Korean are each sensitive to each other’s kibun while each receives due recognition.

Kibun improves interpersonal relationships because of its mutuality and its confirmation of the social hierarch. It contributes, therefore, to group harmony, yet permits a degree of individualism. It also allows the person to bring honor to the family through acknowledgement of the person’s status.

The same authors had the following to say concerning how Korean people would uphold this in their communication:

The effect of education, religion, family, and social structure becomes evident in Korean’s communicative behavior. Ideally, harmony is upheld and collectivism sustained. Koreans speak in terms of “We” and “our” omitting the “I” or speaking of “I” as a humble little being. Indirect, circuitous message construction typifies Korean speech. Important ideas and issues come at the end of sentence along with the important grammar, specifically verbs. Their indirect style does not impose upon the listener. It points to a direction of thought, but does not lead to a conclusion. It pays respect to the listener while promoting harmony between the communicators.

The Korean language promotes the group, family, and harmony. Kinship terms imply status. “Brother” is not in the vocabulary but words indicating younger and older brother are. Differences between “cousin” and “sibling” are not important and the words, do not distinguish between them. (Park & Klopf, 1997:149)

In Kim’s (2003:7) article, the same concept is explained through the term che-myun.
Che-myun literally means “body and face,” and refers to face-saving in the sense of saving social face or saving the external façade to maintain respectability. As in other Asian countries, face-saving behavior is very important to Koreans in their public and social relationship. Maintaining Che-myun protects one’s sense of dignity, self-respect, and respectability. Honor is an important concept to live by for.

As I was sharing this information with one of my focus groups, one lady very carefully and with great hesitation told us what had happened to them. When she was still in Middle School (a teenager of about 15 years old), her father, who was a prominent businessman, lost every thing he had. Even though they had nothing, he still tried to give money to his younger sisters and tried to buy expensive gifts for his clients at the end of the year. He did all these things in order to save his and his family’s “face”.

Another example that was frequently mentioned is the fact that someone that had nothing to eat will still walk around with a toothpick in his or her mouth pretending he or she has just had a great meal.

From the focus groups and my interviews, it was also apparent that many Korean people would rather commit suicide, than lose face or shame their family or culture.

Kim (2003:6) the following about haan and Korean culture:

Some call Korea a nation of haan, and a nation of suffering. A Korean psychiatrist stated that Haan is “some thing that has been formed accumulated and precipitated in mass in the depth of Korean psyche over generations – it is deeply imprinted in the collective subconscious of the Korean people.” A well-known poet, Ko-Un, expressed his view graphically: “Koreans are born from the womb of haan, grew up in the bosom of haan, and live out haan, die leaving haan behind.

Each culture has certain values and understandings that make them different from other cultures and gives them their own identity. The same is true of each individual who co-
exists in that culture – each person is different from other individuals, but their values and understandings accord with that of their culture.

As my understanding concerning the Koreans’ community culture developed, I came to the understanding that the Korean culture exists of individuals that always try to enhance their own face, but this takes place in such a way that it is congruent with enhancing the image of their family and also the community or culture they live in. Thus, living in a community culture, each individual does live his or her own life, but in such a way that everyone enhances the group. Because of this, I also came to a better understanding on why Koreans would not share problems with other people and rather keep problems to themselves, even though doing so causes them suffering. I also understood better that they would rather share their problems with a close friend, mother or sibling than with a stranger, because of the *jeong* that exists between the two people. It is a different kind of *jeong*, than the *jeong* that exists between the members of the community.

When one looks at the story of the bear and tiger, one sees that the bear did not ask any questions. She just stayed in the cave for one hundred days and ate the garlic and mugwort. One can almost say that the bear, like the tiger, had many difficulties, staying in the cave: the cave was probably dark; it was lonely after the tiger had left, the food was not very tasty – especially after one hundred days; and so on. But still the bear did not complain. To put it in the Korean context, she kept her *haan* to herself and she learned to adapt to her bad situation. After this, the result of her persistence and conquering her *haan* was that out of her come a great nation. Because she could manage her *haan*, she turned into a beautiful woman, married Hwan-ung, and their son was the father of the Korean nation.

**4.5 CHANGES IN KOREAN CULTURE**

Looking at today’s life with its many technological advances changing the world literally each day, it is inevitable that even a small country like Korea, which is basically cut off from the mainland by North Korea, is also part of the Global Village. In actual fact, this
small “secluded country” is one of the world’s leaders in technology, with companies like Samsung (the world leader in the manufacture of semiconductors), LG (also a world-leading company in electrical and electronic devices) and Hyundai (the world’s largest shipbuilding company).

It is also said that Korea is one of the world’s most wired countries, with Internet access in every little corner of the country at very high speeds (up to 2 and 3 Mega Bites per second) at very low cost. Just walking on the streets, you realize how electronically adept these people are, with almost everyone, including children as young as those at kindergarten, walking around with the latest model cell phones.

Korea is indeed a country that is part of the global village and, fortunately or unfortunately, its people are also exposed to the influences that come from the West. Because I have lived in Korea for more than four years, I began to notice these influences very clearly.

Compared to four years ago, one hears much more English, especially in the bigger cities. For instance, for the 2002 Soccer World Cup, which was held in South Korea and Japan, most of the road signs, which had previously been marked only in Korean, were also translated into English. Although other foreign languages are still scarce, there is an increase in the number of people that speak or want to learn English.

When one looks at the diet of most Korean children, there has also been a big change. Instead of enjoying traditional Korean foods – which is mostly very healthy – most children now would rather enjoy hamburgers, pizza or spaghetti. There is even a problem with many children that are becoming overweight, something that was unheard of a few years ago.

When one looks at people on the streets, one also realizes that brand names such as Adidas, Nike and others have become the general trend in fashion.
As a Christian, I am also glad to say that over the last few years Christianity has grown and its influences can also been seen in Korean Culture. I believe, and the focus groups agreed, that Christianity has played a great influence in the improvements in terms of equality among the Korean people, especially for women. Women today have much more freedom and many more rights than a few years ago. The strong patriarchal or class-oriented culture that caused of a lot of suffering to the people is also busy changing to a more equal view of all people.

As a teacher, I can also see the changes that are taking place among the younger generation. These days, in comparison with a few years ago, there is a great lack of respect for the teacher and for older people among Korean youths. It is not only the other Korean teachers that are concerned about it – when I asked my co-researches about it, they also shared this great concern.

At the moment there is another big change taking place. A few years ago, the government initiated a five-day working week instead of a six-day working week. The plan was that all businesses and schools (schools also operate on a six-day schedule) would be working on a five-day week within the next year or two. Something that is very interesting is that most of the people I have talked to about this are happy about this change, but there are some that are concerned. Some High School students said that they are scared that they will fall behind the rest of the world, and some people are concerned that this change may have a negative effect on Korea’s economy.

Another aspect that is changing among the younger generation is the attitude of the younger Koreans (people in their twenties and even early thirties) to counselling. The notion of sharing their problems with a professional counsellor is changing from “not at all” (as most people would say) to “perhaps”. In my discussions with the focus groups and also from communication with my co-researchers, it became evident that they had a better understanding of the counsellor and quite a few also indicated that they would strongly consider it talking to a counsellor. In fact, it would not surprise me if this age group mostly contributed to Option 8’s score of 46.1%.
There are many changes happening in Korea, and it is not for me to say whether these changes are good or bad. In the next section I will very briefly share some of the communication I had with my co-researchers about this aspect. One thing that everybody agrees on is the fact that most of these changes are brought about by the Western influences that are bombarding Korean culture. Things like the entertainment media, designer fashions, food, and so on, are all those things that originate in the West. These influences, for better or worse, also promote the individualist culture from the West.

When I look at the story of the bear and the tiger, I am inclined to say that the Korean people (the younger generation) are changing from displaying the character of the bear to emulating the character of the tiger. Whereas the bear persisted and stayed in the cave for the full 100 days, the tiger said that he was a tiger and that he had his own nature and character that he wanted to follow. The bear was very diligent, and without asking questions, she endured this discomfort and suffering in order to become something better. She also did not do it only for herself, but also for the great nation that was to be born out of her. The tiger, on the other hand, decided that he had had enough after twenty days of the cave, garlic and mugwort. The tiger said that he had his own identity and that he was happy to be a tiger; thus he left the cave and went and lived in the mountains as a tiger.

Nowadays, it seems that the younger generation is more inclined to be individualistic. As I taught a class this morning, I again asked the class (mostly university students) what they thought about this idea. Most of them agreed that this change is taking place, but most also said that they thought this change is one for the worse.

As I was speaking to our director about these changes, he stated that many young people changed, but that when they became young adults with families, they returned to their traditional ways. I think there is a lot of truth in this, except (and as many of the other co-researchers stated) that the “returning back to the traditional ways” is getting less and less. It is almost, as one person in a focus group said, as if “it is three steps forward and one step back”.

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4.5.1 How do the Korean people feel about these changes?

Some of the changes that were mentioned by my co-researchers was greater equality for women, social equality, better education, economic growth and financial prosperity, better quality of life, more leisure with a five-day work week, more comfortable fashions, more opportunities to travel to other countries, and so on. According to them, all of these changes are improvements, but these changes also have a negative side.

For instance, most people are glad about that fact that Korean women have many more rights, much more say and more privileges than a few years ago, but they also shares their concern about the dangerous increase in divorce rates these days.

Concerning the Western influences, most Korean people, especially the younger generation, do welcome many of the changes, for instance, the new fashions, foods, luxuries and so on, but they are very scared of the fact that their unique Korean culture may give way to an individualistic culture. Concerns such as overweight children and adults, disrespectfulness by the younger generation for the older people, disrespectfulness between parents and children and even teachers and children, broken families, a competitive life style (living up to the Joneses), less time spent with families, disrespectful fashions, and so on, were shared by all the co-researchers, young and old. To quote one of my co-researchers: “One can only wait and see what the future will show; we hope it will be a good future, we believe so and it is what we make of it.”

Many of my co-researchers felt that although it is an exciting time to live in, it also presents challenges. Most of them were optimistic, but some shared their pessimism about the future of Korean culture. Indeed, only time will tell.
CHAPTER 5:
IT WAS THERE THROUGHOUT MY WHOLE YOURNEY
(The climax)

5.1 THE BEAR AND THE TIGER

GOING BACK TO “THE BEAR AND THE TIGER”

The story of the bear and the tiger open with the words “Long, long, long time ago the god of heaven and earth had a son whose name was Hwan-ung.”

The bear continue and stayed in the cave for the full one hundred days. After the one-hundredth day of garlic, mugwort and persistance, the bear came out of the cave and was transformed into a beautiful woman. Hwang-ung looked at this beautiful woman and decided to marry her. They had a son together and named him Tan-gun. Tan-gun became a very good ruler and is also known as the founder of the Korean Nation.

After persisting the bear came out of the cave, was transformed into a beautiful woman and she and Hwang-ung got married. From this marriage the Korean people were born. In persisting with your journey through your life story your view does develop and the climax will come at the right time.

5.2 THE CLIMAX

Müller et al. (2001:6) comment on the researcher’s approach to the climax as follows:

We are talking here of the curiosity and patience of the good researcher. He or she sets the scene in motion and wait anxiously for the climax to develop. The fake or quasi researcher on the other hand, is a propagandist who knows the answers to the questions and therefore doesn’t really need to do any research. Then the research document becomes propaganda material instead of an honest
development of “character” and “plot”. The person, who knows the outcome or climax before hand, hasn’t even started the process of becoming a researcher.

When we look carefully at this quote, it made me very nervous about writing this report. In the first line of this quote, two words are mentioned, namely “curiosity” and “patience”, and we also all know the saying “curiosity killed the cat”. These two words are almost a paradox when used together. The thing that I was most scared about was the fact that it is so easy to write something according to an outline you already have, either on paper or just in your mind, as Lamott, cited in Müller et al. (2001:6) also says:

Lamott says (1995:85) that her students always assume that well-respected writers, when they sit down and write their books, know pretty well what is going to happen because they have outlined their plot and this is why their books turn out so beautifully. And then she reacts by saying: “I do not know anyone fitting this description, on the way to finding a plot and structure that work. You are welcome to join the club.” Likewise, well-respected researchers shouldn’t know and therefore control the plot and climax of the story. You may perhaps just envision a temporary destination, but you must allow your “characters” to develop from there in their own way towards the end.

Another aspect was that I know what my curiosity was: “How does the Korean person see and understand counselling and the counsellor?” But I was not sure what the answer to this question was, nor whether I had the patience to wait for the right answer. As I communicated with my co-researchers, this fear even grew stronger, because it seems that I just did not get the answers I was looking for.

As I was writing the Development section, sharing my understanding on how Korean culture functions, I was still struggling to find out how exactly Korean people see and understand counselling and the counsellor. Then, almost at the end of the Development section, I realized that I was trying to find an answer that was not there. In other words, I
was looking for the answer the why I wanted it to be. Only after I had come to this realization did I find that the answer to my question was in front of me the whole time.

The analogy of the lame dog that Professor Julian Müller (2000) uses in his book Reisgeselskap, Die kuns van verhalende pastorale gesprekvoering suddenly struck me. It is so easy to look for the obvious, the healthy dogs, that one does not even recognize that the lame dog, the answer, was right in front of you.

Although I’ve made a lot of discoveries and have learned a lot from my co-researchers and Korean culture, the climax for me in this journey was the fact that there are other cultures. Many times you imprison yourself in your own culture, your own paradigm; so that it is difficult to realize that there are other ways of doing things or different ways of coping with your problems.

In my mindset I just could not reach a clear understanding of why Korean people did not see the advantages there are in sharing their problems with someone. Because I believe in counselling, especially with a qualified counsellor, it was very difficult for me to come to the understanding that there is no perceived need for counsellors or counselling in the Korean paradigm. This is not just an unwillingness to share personal problems, but it is an approach that has been part of Korean culture for at least few hundred or a thousand years. As I have stated, I do not know what changes the future will bring for the Korean people, but I believe that each person and culture does adapt over time.

As a counsellor, I think it is very important to come to the understanding that there are different views and understandings of the same concepts. Different people and cultures also do things differently from what people elsewhere (for example, in the West) are used to. Sometimes we cannot understand it or see the “logic” in it, but when we are working with people from different cultures, we have to trust their capabilities.

Looking at the Korean culture, there are definitely things that I do not understand, but whatever Koreans are doing, they feel it is working for them. Although I have learned a
lot about how Korean culture functions, how Koreans talk and think, there are certain aspects to their culture that only they fully can understand. This does not mean that I cannot try to have empathy and understanding for their actions, but as a counsellor I have to realize and accept that the world consists of different cultures and people. These cultures and people have their own paradigms, and it is not necessarily the same as Western paradigms. One would also make a great mistake if one thought everything that is outside Western thinking is wrong.
CHAPTER 6: THE BEGINNING OF A NEW JOURNEY
(The Ending)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

During my stay in Korea, I learned many a new things, ranging from new faces, to new sounds, smells, different kinds of food, drinks, places, people, and many more. I have also made a lot of discoveries about myself that I believe I would not have made if it was not for this chance to live among Korean people for more than four years. There are probably many more things to discover about this interesting culture and also myself, and I am thankful for the opportunity I was granted to have this experience.

To conclude my reflections on my understandings concerning Korean culture, I would just like to give a brief overview of what I have written. I would also like to give my understanding and input on how I think the Narrative Pastoral Counselling approach can have an influence on the Korean culture and also how it can be implemented.

6.2 A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF MY WRITINGS

Based on my questionnaires, my discussions with the focus groups, the interviews with my co-researchers and my own observations, I came to several new understandings about the Korean culture and their understanding about counselling and the counsellor.

Firstly, one has to recognize and come to appreciate Koreans’ very prominent and long history. The fact that their history can be dated back to about the 2nd or 3rd century B.C. (Choi, 2000:s.p.), shows that Koreans have a much older culture than most people from other countries, especially in the Western world. Not only was their history was filled with a lot of important inventions, for instance, a printing press, a sun dial, a rain meter and many others, they also had a history full of hardship and pain. Even their present history, with all its prosperity and economic growth shows the scars of their difficulties, with the separation between North Korea and South Korea.
Another important aspect that one has to note about the Korean culture is the influences that their ancient religion (Shamanism) and other religions (Taoism and Buddhism) and philosophies (Confucianism) have had on their culture: “The religious strains now include Shamanism, Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Ch’Aandokyo, and lesser influential religions (Park & Klopf, 1997:147). Listening to members of the Korean culture, it seems that it is probably Confucianism and Buddhism that have played the most important roles in their culture’s thinking and behaviour.

These days, as Korean culture is increasingly influenced by Western culture, Christianity is also starting to play a very important role in Korean thinking and behaviour. Just from my personal experience, I remember the first Christmas (2002) that we spent in Korea: it was a huge anti-climax, because, except that it was a public holiday, nothing special happened. By comparison, last Christmas (2004), there were many more Christmas decorations in the windows; Christmas music was heard most places and more and more people were actually sharing gifts.

Taking Korean history, religious background and life philosophies into consideration, I also reached a better understanding when dealing with Korean psychology. One has to realize that the Korean culture is a haan-ridden culture, and because of things like che-myun, Koreans do not share personal problems. It seems to me, that they are not interested in other people’s personal problems. That is who they are, that is their culture. Although this aspect of their culture is very prominent, they would sometimes choose their best friend (preferably of the same sex), their spouse, their parents (preferably their mother or one of their siblings), to share personal problems with.

As noted in the Climax chapter, although I would have hoped to discover a way to help Koreans to share their personal problems, my biggest discovery was the fact that there are different cultures. Korean culture does function in a very different way from Western culture. This does not mean that Koreans are not as educated or as advanced, as members
of other cultures sometimes think they are. For me it only means that there are different cultures that have different paradigms and that operate differently from each other.

As a counsellor and a researcher, I believe that it is very important to recognize differences, and, instead of trying to change the other person, to rather come to a better understanding and greater empathy. Also, one has to realize that there are times when it is difficult to come to a full understanding of another culture or a person’s paradigm for that matter.

Is there a place for a Narrative pastoral counselling approach in Korean culture?

6.3 HOW CAN A NARRATIVE PASTORAL COUNSELLING APPROACH INFLUENCE KOREAN CULTURE AND HOW CAN IT BE IMPLEMENTED

Taking into consideration that a Narrative pastoral counselling approach is set in a social-constructionist or post-modern paradigm which acknowledges that the individual, group, family or culture is the most important and most knowledgeable in that research or dialogue (Müller et al. 2001).

A Narrative pastoral counselling approach allows the individual, group, family, or culture to share their life stories. It also allows the counsellor or pastor to share his or her life story, which also consists of the Christian story.

Taking this into consideration, I do think that the Narrative pastoral counselling approach can play a very important part in the sharing of personal problems by a Korean person or persons. The fact that a Narrative pastoral counselling approach respects the individual, group, family or culture will firstly prevent any coercion of anyone by anyone else. It will not force a person to change his or her culture, to adopt a new school of thought, or even to share his or her life story if he or she does not want to.
I also think that a Narrative pastoral counselling approach can influence Korean culture, because it allows the culture to lead the pastor or counsellor, rather than the opposite. As has been indicated, a person might share a personal problem with a close friend, and a Narrative pastoral counselling approach does allow such a relationship to develop: a relationship were the life story teller has the confidence that the pastor or counsellor is interested in developing a true empathetic understanding of the person, his or her culture and his or her paradigm.

As a Christian I think it is very important to come to the realization that friendships are the essential ingredient of any successful relationship.

As for the future of Korea, I believe that Christianity will play an important role in it, as is already the case. To what extent it will influence Korean culture, only time can tell. The same goes for a Narrative pastoral counselling approach – only time can truly tell. But I truly believe that if it follows its empathetic approach, Korean culture will accept the counsellor or pastor as a friend and then the counsellor or a friend can be a constructive facilitator.

On a personal note, I would like to express my gratitude to all the Korean people that have helped me to come to a better understanding of their culture. Not only did they share their life stories with me, but I have also become very good friends with many of my co-researchers. I also hope that the part of my life story that I have shared with them has had the same impact on their lives as theirs have had on mine.
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