

ACADEMIC SERVICES
ROOM 261
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
SENATE HOUSE
MALET STREET
LONDON WC1E 7HU

WOMEN, TELEVISION, AND EVERYDAY LIFE

KOREAN WOMEN'S REFLEXIVE EXPERIENCE OF TELEVISION
MEDIATED BY GENERATION AND CLASS

YOUNA KIM

*Department of Media and Communications,
Goldsmiths College, University of London*

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is about how television intersects with the everyday lives of women in transitional Korea, and how the experience of television is further implicated in the formation and transformation of identities. Within the larger socio-historical context of Korean modernity, it explores how women deal with social change and make sense of their lives and identities with the cultural experience of television in everyday life, mediated by generation and class. This empirical work overall demonstrates the reflexive workings of popular television culture in its multifold manifestations. It reveals how critical ordinary women are in their engagement with television and how reflexivity actually operates in the variegated settings of their everyday lives. The thesis therefore argues for reflexivity at work: Reflexivity is constitutive of the experience of modern television. The practice of reflexivity is a defining characteristic of the experience of television, and television culture today has become a critical condition for reflexivity. Specifically, the thesis emphasizes the social dynamics of different forms of reflexivity with which to organize the project of self-identity, and the significant role of television as a resource for reflexivity. Reflexivity is organized around the axis of generation oriented toward different directions, which are the tradition-directed, the inner-directed, and the other-directed. The dialectical nature of the reflexivities of each generation is a push-and-pull of different tendencies towards modernity. Tradition in everyday life is now under threat, beginning to dissolve by the experience of modernity. As a consequence, the reflexive organization of the self becomes an inevitable unfinishable project to be worked at, and television, as historically-situated cultural experience, is integrated into the project of the self. Television is an important resource for reflexivity in modern everyday life, which stimulates ordinary women to research their own lives and identities for a journey of hope.

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This thesis is dedicated

to

Soan OH and Jeil OH

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Chapter 1 Women, Television, and Everyday Life

This thesis is about how television intersects with the everyday lives of women in transitional Korea, and how the experience of television is further implicated in the formation and transformation of identities. This study initially evolved out of my observation and personal reflections on the historically unprecedented rate of divorce and the social fear about the dissolution of the traditional family system with the coming of modernity.¹ The Korean divorce rate is rising rapidly, although it is still low as compared with Western countries. It has increased from 5.8% in 1980, to 11.1% in 1990, 16.8% in 1995 (KWDI, 1998), and today, one out of three married couples is divorcing (KBS News, July 1, 1999). It is a dramatic indicator of the crisis of identity, both individual and social, in the push-and-pull of different influences of modernity. The identity crisis basically posed a question: How do people deal with the continuous, unsettling social transitions around them, and what kind of role does media play in this process? This question consequently arising from the social conditions of modernity prompted me to explore in detail women's changing lives and identities in relation to the impact of the most popular media culture in everyday life – television.²

Specifically, how do Korean women perceive, interpret, and use television in the course of everyday life, in the creation of identity? Does television intersect with imagining different lives and identities for women? What are the distinctive features of women's relationships to television? Are women's relationships to television significantly influenced by their age and class position? I am primarily concerned with the ways in which different generations of women relate to television, however, the dimension of class will also be considered to see if cultural patterns of television experience are determined by class differences.³ Overall, the objective of this study is to understand how Korean women deal with social change and make sense of their everyday lives and identities with the cultural experience of television mediated by generation and class. Women's experience of television in everyday life cannot be separated from its links to the larger socio-historical context in which television is received and understood. Importantly, this study therefore approaches women,

television, and everyday life in the historically-specific social conditions of Korean modernity.

For the framework of this study I mainly refer to Western theoretical and empirical work on women as audiences. This is because, in examining relationships between women and media culture, Korean feminist television studies have been predominantly concerned with the issues of women as “representations” and women as “creators”, but have not approached women as “audiences”. Despite the fact that Koreans spend 4/5 of their leisure time on television consumption (KBI, 1996), hence, television is an integral part of everyday leisure life, any exploratory research on what people do with television is largely absent. The absence of audience reception studies inevitably leads me to rely on existing Western knowledge. In an attempt to identify how my work can intervene and bridge the gap of knowledge, in this chapter I will fully review both Korean literature and Western literature, mostly Anglo-American studies on television and women audiences.

Section (1) on the review of Western literature traces a historical context within which feminist television audience studies have developed, and assesses their evolving perspectives about women as audiences. How have they perceived, and situated, women as audiences? I intend to recognize each study’s strengths and unique contributions to collaborating and cumulating knowledge, and at the same time, point out their collective weaknesses and limitations. In this section I will highlight three crucial limitations. First, existing feminist audience studies have not comprehensively considered the conceptual frameworks on women as audiences embedded in everyday life, therefore, the questions as to the specific ways in which television is related to women’s everyday social lives and experiences remain under-researched. They have not closely approximated the day-to-day lived experiences of audiences to provide the kind of vibrant knowledge for understanding the complex phenomena and specificities of women audiencehood embedded within larger socio-historical contexts. Second, this limitation raises questions about the politics of feminist research. How can existing knowledge contribute not only epistemologically, but also crucially, politically? Finally, insufficient attention to women of color and differences is a general tendency that can be found throughout the history of the Western feminist researchers’ monolithic perceptions of, and imaginative analyses of, women as

audiences. This is precisely the point where my study intervenes. The consideration of these limitations, together with the strengths of existing Western studies to be addressed in this section, forms the basis of my study and leads it to a ground work which has not been extensively explored.

Section (2) on the review of Korean literature emphasizes a different paradigm, which means that the development of feminist scholarship in Korea is relatively recent, compared with the established legacy of Western scholarship, and a dominant model of television media research is a political economy approach. Since emerging around the mid 1980's Korean feminist television studies in general have not moved beyond textual and production analyses. Based on the limited existing literature, this section therefore attempts to draw a descriptive sketch of the relationship between women and television in South Korea. It will introduce the Korean television system, and explain the representation of women and two popular genres – Korean drama and Western movies – that are particularly enjoyed by women audiences. Although there exists a productive body of knowledge on the socio-economic position of women as I have reviewed in Chapter 2, Korean feminist scholarship has not critically incorporated the parameter of popular media culture into the overarching paradigm of gender relations, and not yet specifically examined how women's lives and identities are intersected with the everyday experience of the most popular media, television, from sociological and cultural perspectives.⁴ No attempt has been made to explore such cultural phenomena through the integrative framework drawn upon by women's studies, television media studies, sociology and cultural studies. Given the substantial limitations of existing literature, my study can be placed as an original work. It is my hope that this thesis with the inevitable import of Western knowledge – but carefully, not blindly – will open a dialogue and bridge a gap between the Western and the non-Western imagination towards each Other's Other.

Section (1) Western Literature

From text to audience

To show the historical context from which feminist television audience studies have emerged, it is necessary to address questions arising from the earlier feminist media

studies on the texts of women's magazines, advertising and film, and mark a shift from the predominantly text-based analyses to the need for empirical investigation of the audience in the real world. To begin with magazines, a key influential work was originated by Angela McRobbie in the late 1970's.⁵ Her pioneering work, *Jackie: An Ideology of Adolescent Femininity* (1978), analyzes an internal structuring and signifying system of the text as a bearer of the ideology of adolescent femininity. McRobbie argues that *Jackie*, through a unified system of connoting codes of romance, personal/domestic life, fashion/beauty and pop music, shapes teenage girls into a claustrophobic mould of feminine knowledge which is predicated upon future roles as "wives and mothers". The text asserts a kind of false unity that assumes a common experience of womanhood or girlhood, and teenage girls are subjected to an explicit attempt to win consent to the dominant order in terms of femininity, leisure and consumption, at the level of culture. A similar argument is raised in Janice Winship's work, *A Woman's World: Woman – an Ideology of Femininity* (1978). Drawing upon Althusser's theory of ideology and Marxist critique of commodity capitalism, Winship also perceives women's magazines as the work of ideology organized through an imaginary relation wherein it produces false consciousness. She argues that this ideological production constructs a feminine subjectivity of "motherhood" as a universal female experience and champions the needs of the patriarchal and capitalist structure.⁶

Underpinning both McRobbie's and Winship's works is the dominant ideology thesis with its assumed textual determinism – the relatively limitless and unmediated power of the text to influence a universal feminine subjectivity. Two empirical questions arise here. First, are girls/women audiences subjected to the ideology of femininity in the preferred way as the dominant discourse hails or interpellates them as wives and mothers? As McRobbie (1991: 131) later states, "Until we have a much clearer idea of how girls read *Jackie* and encounter its ideological force, our analysis remains one-sided". Second, given the pessimism of the ideology thesis premised on the imaginary relation and false consciousness, how can we explain the apparently simple fact of pleasure in the women's reading of popular media? Does the notion of pleasure not have any significance beyond it?⁷

Among the early feminist studies on advertising, perhaps the most sophisticated and complicated use of the theories of ideology is Judith Williamson's analysis, *Decoding Advertisements: Ideology and Meaning in Advertising* (1978). Incorporating Marx's idea of commodity fetishism and structuralist semiology (Saussure, Barthes and Levi-Strauss), Williamson deconstructs the ideological process wherein objects acquire symbolic, cultural exchange value by creating structures of meaning capable of transforming the language of objects to that of people, and in so operating, advertising functions not only to sell products but also to perpetuate social, political and economic ideology of capitalism. As advertisement images translate the world of objects (e.g. diamond) into human statements (e.g. eternal love) through the exchangeable partnership in signification and interpellate us as a certain kind of person, the structures of meaning establish an individual identity. Williamson thus argues that the ideology of advertising is selling us something else besides commodities, it is selling us ourselves – an imaginary and false sense of real selves. However sophisticated, Williamson's decontextualized analysis is based on the assumption that all meaning is ^{beyond} "in" the text – in the mythology of the signifier and the structure of signs – and the text solely determines the meaning of advertisements. It shows a "dictionary fallacy" (Pateman, 1983) whereby we audiences are not invited to interpret the meaning of advertisements, but only advertisements enter us to mean.

Crucially, Williamson's textual analysis of ideology to the exclusion of socio-cultural contexts runs the risk of reproducing deterministic and universal claims. Her conception of femininity is monolithic, gendered and fixed, transcultural and even Eurocentric. Here are specific examples. First, Williamson analyzes that the meaning of Chanel No. 5 perfume is based on what the face of Catherine Deneuve means to us, and Chanel only has the meaning that it shares with Deneuve signifying "glamour and beauty" as a *fait accompli* (1978: 25). However, for those outside Europe (e.g. Asian women) who hold no prior knowledge or familiarity with Catherine Deneuve or who possess a different set of aesthetic criteria, this signifier of French glamour and beauty may mean something different or even something meaningless to them. Second, in another advertisement Williamson analyzes a female picture with the meaning "as a woman", who wears a slinky blouse with her lips parted invitingly and her facial expression geared to a male spectator (p. 58-59), hence, the femininity signifies precisely "sexiness". However, this image of sexiness embedded in the sexually-

oriented Western culture may not be taken up in the same way by those women who have socially, culturally acquired in their construction of femininity more principled and repressed notions of female sexuality and more rigid standards of sexual morality. Is sexiness a transcultural, universal meaning of femininity? Finally, Williamson's semiological textuality based on the dichotomous hegemony of gender does not permit female spectatorship and pleasure: "Her dress is unbuttoned provocatively, indicating beyond doubt that the invisible character *is* male... She is doomed to see herself through *his* eyes" (p. 80). It raises a question, whether and how are female spectatorship and female pleasure conceivable?

The question of pleasure was a key object of feminist film studies within psychoanalytic frameworks. Laura Mulvey's influential essay, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975), conceptualizes the ways in which gender identity and pleasure are constructed in the film texts. From a feminist viewpoint, Mulvey conceives the pre-existing phallogentric order as a root of women's oppression, and the use of psychoanalytic theory as a political weapon to demonstrate the way the unconscious of patriarchal ideology has structured visual pleasure. Conditions of screening and narrative conventions give the spectator an illusion of looking in on a private world, both producing a sense of playing on their voyeuristic fantasy and allowing them to identify with powerful ego ideals produced on the screen. In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, however, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male/look-at-ness and passive/female/to-be-looked-at-ness, argues Mulvey. The active male protagonist becomes the ego ideal with whom the (male) spectator can identify, while the passive image of the female figure functions as an erotic object for the gaze of the active (male) spectator. It is thus inferred that female spectatorship and pleasure are inconceivable within the theoretical order of patriarchal ideology.⁸

Two problems arise here. First, early feminist film studies, like Mulvey's, focused too excessively on the male psyche and pleasure and left little room for theorizing female spectatorship and pleasure. Are female voyeuristic fantasy and identification structurally impossible? Can a female not look at a male figure as an erotic object and take up an active spectator position? According to Mary Ann Doane (1982), this reversal remains locked within the same logic: For example, a male striptease or a gigolo signifies an "aberration" whose acknowledgement simply

reinforces the dominant system of sexual difference, and identification with the active hero entails “masculinization” of spectatorship. Second, even if active female protagonists are made to control the cinematic fantasy one question still remains. Would women spectators in different socio-cultural contexts (e.g. race, class, individual history, sexuality) identify with, and derive the same sort of pleasure from the White images of femininity prevalent in Anglo-American film?

Feminist film studies importantly draw attention to the notion of pleasure, nonetheless, they tend to be essentialist. Prior to the workings of socio-cultural determinants, the experience of visual pleasure and identification is already doomed to be predetermined according to gender difference – the binary oppositions between male and female, activity and passivity, masculinity and femininity. The ahistorical, universal, deterministic and powerless perception of female subject/spectator/pleasure is a common tendency of the early feminist approach to the text-based analyses of women’s magazines, advertising and film.⁹ Feminist textual analyses had the proclivity to explain how mass-mediated cultural forms work to audiences, who were assumed as textual subjects, positioned in and produced by the text. But where is the evidence?¹⁰ A significant shift away from the preoccupation with media texts as sole producers of meaning for audiences was marked by the emergence of television audience studies in the early 1980’s.

Theoretical inception

There was not any intensive feminist work on television until the early 1980’s both in Britain and America as television cultural studies had difficulty in being accepted as a legitimate academic subject, whereas film was able to gain such acceptance through its claims to be “art” (Kaplan, 1992). The status of television programming, especially soap operas popular among women audiences, was perceived as the very epitome of low culture and received with disdain by the popular press and “serious” academics. “Given the antipathy of most literary critics to mass culture in general, television more specifically, and soap operas in particular, it is hardly surprising that it was not until the 1980’s that soap operas began to be taken seriously as texts” (Allen, 1995: 6). Throughout the 1970’s feminist scholars made significant advances on theorizing film, but involved relatively little with critical writings on television. The lack of

intellectual enthusiasm was in part due to the condition that “the low academic standing of television, together with the frequent disregard in which American programming was held, made women – who already had a difficult time getting ahead in academic humanities departments – reluctant to engage with the form” (Kaplan, 1992: 249). However, in the wake of the maturation of film studies in the early 1980’s female film scholars pioneered critical analyses of popular women’s television programs such as soap operas, and feminist television audience studies finally burgeoned within film and British cultural studies tradition.

Tania Modleski’s (1979) pioneering work *Loving with a Vengeance* is not an audience-focused analysis, but I consider it as a starting point because her insightful dissection of the textual inscription of a female subject/spectator in American daytime soap operas triggers curious questions for feminist audience research. Contrary to the classic Hollywood film analyses which essentially privilege masculine desire and pleasure (Mulvey, 1975), Modleski argues that soap operas construct woman-oriented narrative and pleasure. The narrative patterns and structures of soaps neatly accord with the rhythms of women’s domestic work as an endless sequence of repetition and interruption, and the soaps’ preoccupation with female skills in dealing with private and familial matters is meshed with the qualities placed upon women within patriarchal capitalism. The soaps’ multiple narrative structure demands multiple identification on the part of the viewer, and thus constitutes the viewer as “ideal mother, who possesses greater wisdom than all her children, whose sympathy is large enough to encompass the conflicting claims of her family (she identifies with them all), and who has no demands or claims of her own” (1979: 92).

However, Modleski’s conception of ideal mother as a textually inscribed position, does not assume or open up any possibilities for a variety of reader responses. The assumption of the all-powerful text and the creation of feminine passivity disregard the ways in which the text could be interpreted differently by different socio-economic categories of women in broader ideological frameworks. For example, the spectator position as ideal mother may imply the image of a (White) middle-class married woman, to whom the daytime domestic life can be exquisitely or idly pleasurable in line of expectation and waiting “whether for her phone to ring, for the baby to take its nap, or for the family to be reunited shortly” (1979: 88). Would

the actual audiences, such as working-class single mothers, necessarily take up this position constructed by the text? Who would be likely to accept the intended textual meaning and who would not? Can the soap text not be enjoyable to women other than housewives and mothers? As Modleski argues, if soaps position their female readers differently than male-oriented texts and deliver different pleasures and meanings, then specifically what would be those "different" pleasures and meanings experienced by women audiences? As Modleski's inspiring work stimulates curious theoretical and empirical questions, I take it as a point of departure toward feminist television audience studies.

Extending Modleski's notion of ideal mother, Charlotte Brunson further develops the conception of female audience in her extra-textual analysis of British soap opera *Crossroads* (1981, reprinted in 1997). Brunson emphasizes the notion of competencies by arguing that the soap text foregrounds the traditionally feminine competencies associated with the responsibility for managing the sphere of personal life, so in order to experience pleasure from the radical discontinuities of the text, female viewers are demanded to engage extensively with the text and have competencies to make sense of it. Such competencies are not biologically pre-given, but women are socially constructed to possess such skills through inscription in the ideological and moral frameworks, the rules, of romance, marriage and family life (1997: 17-18). However, some questions can be posed regarding the working of competencies in the actual viewing context. Do women audiences necessarily need the competencies to derive pleasure? Can soap opera viewing not be pleasurable without exercising the competencies (e.g. the uneducated, distracted female or male, first-time viewers)? To what extent are the competencies and viewing pleasure related with each other? The operational definition of competencies is uncertain and needs to be further investigated.

Like Modleski, Brunson also recognizes the text's ideological construction of subject positions, however, her underlying argument about the text-audience relation is dramatically different in that the only possible positions inscribed by the text may not be occupied straight, since female viewers or "social audience" (Kuhn, 1984) use skills and competencies in the extensive engagement with the text and have a potential to produce their own meanings, including differential and resistive ones.

“We can usefully analyze the ‘you’ or ‘yous’ that the text as discourse constructs, but we cannot assume that any individual audience member will necessarily occupy these positions. The relation of the audience to the text will be determined not solely by that text but also by positionalities in relation to a whole range of other discourses – discourses of motherhood, romance and sexuality for example”. (Brunsdon, 1997: 13)

In Brunsdon’s argument, several advances can be found on the perceptions of women as audiences: Audiences are not in an isolated relationship with one text; audiences in different social and discursive positions may have acquired different extra-textual skills; each audience occupies a different subject position in a different social context; and audiences may interpret the text differently as their referential discourses change over time. These theoretical advances allow a better understanding of the audiences’ relationship to the text which is not fixed and definitive, but conditioned upon their different socio-cultural contexts. Contrary to Modleski’s textual determinism (film theory), Brunsdon recognizes the significance of the inter-discursive character of audience interpretation (British cultural studies).

Empirical collaborations

Since the early 1980’s there has been an increasing interest and development in feminist approaches to television audiences, and this would have been impossible without earlier researchers’ endeavors. “Research is always collaborative, always cumulative: an understanding of prior arguments is essential in order to comprehend new ones” (Kaplan, 1992: 250). It is precisely in this intent that I will attempt to identify collective weaknesses and limitations of existing research for the coming new fellows to further complement, augment and “empower” knowledge of feminist audience studies. Before doing this, I will first highlight the existing works’ conceptions of women audiences, their main arguments and unique contributions to feminist television scholarship.

The first feminist qualitative study on television audiences was conducted by Dorothy Hobson (1982) who investigated the production and consumption of the soap opera *Crossroads* in Britain. Although her work covers more about the institutional conditions of program production than about audience interpretations, I nonetheless find Hobson's empirical audience research useful to test the theories proposed by Modleski and Brunsdon. Similar to Modleski's analysis, Hobson's study demonstrates that women's domestic work is closely intertwined with soap opera viewing and the women audiences incorporate enjoyment of the program into their hectic household activities by creating space to follow the soap narrative. However, contrary to Modleski's textual determinism, Hobson's women audiences "do not sit there watching and taking it all in without any mental activity or creativity" (1982: 135). Hobson argues that the women audiences are not passive recipients of the program but active creators of the text, to the extent that "they strip the storyline to the idea behind it and construct an understanding on the skeleton that is left" (p. 136).

Consistent with Brunsdon's argument, Hobson's women viewers bring their knowledge and competencies to augment the text: "Viewers are critical, in that the viewers possess a level of knowledge about the storylines, the sets and the characters which few professional critics would be able to match" (1982: 126), and "viewers have a remarkable amount of knowledge of what has happened in the serial and make judgements about it" (p. 129). However, Hobson's empirical study reveals that the extensive engagement with the text is not a necessary precondition for deriving pleasure from viewing *Crossroads*. Clearly, even though the women audiences – housewives and young mothers in this case – cannot give the program their full attention due to their domestic childcare roles, they can still enjoy it.¹¹ The original contribution of Hobson's study lies precisely in the accentuation of the domestic "dynamics" of women audiences, who are not to be delicately examined in a tranquil academic setting, but are unpredictable, fragmented in the frantic domestic context. Despite the distracted environment, women audiences still make their own meanings, as Hobson argues that "there are as many different *Crossroads* as there are viewers" (p. 136). The detailed exploration about those meanings and pleasures is, however, largely absent in Hobson's work.

The exploration of the complicated nature of pleasures in popular serial viewing was the focus of Ien Ang's work *Watching Dallas* (1985). Her research data are forty-two letters from Dutch *Dallas* viewers solicited through an advertisement in a woman's magazine, hence there is no referential contexts about those audiences except for their names and addresses. Despite the material absence of the actual viewing contexts, Ang's symptomatic reading of the women letter-writers elicits a perspective challenging the widely-held derogatory belief that women are unable to distinguish soap opera fiction from real life. A unique strength of Ang's analysis is found in the identification of women audiences as not simply being nestled in fantasy or escape, but being caught in complexity, contradiction and ambivalence. Such verbatims as "real", "realistic" and "taken from life" are surprisingly mentioned by many women audiences in their viewing of the extravagant and glamorous *Dallas*, because they perceive the stories and judge the characters not in terms of empirical realism but in terms of "emotional realism", as Ang argues that "what is recognized as real is not knowledge of the world, but a subjective experience of the world" (1985: 45).

Contrary to the "false consciousness" thesis, Ang argues that women are critical enough to discern the symbolic pleasures of soaps at an emotional level from the circumstances of real life at an empirical level, thereby they derive quite complex emotional pleasures. For example, some women audiences do not always associate with the inscribed subject positions but constantly alternate identification with the text, or distance from it, depending upon the negotiation of multiple tensions; other women audiences do not enjoy *Dallas* at all but take ironic and contradictory pleasures in watching the program in order to condemn and ridicule it (1985: 96-102). According to Ang's symptomatic analysis, women audiences' contradictory position between recognizing the dominant ideology of mass culture and at the same time experiencing pleasure from it is resolved in an ingenious manner through employing mockery or satire, which is an ironical and ambivalent sense of subversion.

Women audiences' subversive readings of dominant ideology may suggest a progressive potential to feminist socio-political activities, and some enthusiasts of (post)modern subcultures studies put forward such an ambitious claim that the pleasure of television viewing often comes from resisting dominant ideology, from

defining one's self or one's subculture as different, and in this sense television reinforces the power to be different and therefore, the possibility for change (Fiske, 1989). However, such liberating discussion on the politics of pleasure and the possibility for change has no substantial foundation on empirical evidence. It is fraught with an overly optimistic assumption that women audiences are fully autonomous, critical and competent in constructing their own meanings. Empirical evidence for the women's critical ability to contest dominant ideology is still very sparse. Oppositional and negotiated readings require more work and competencies of viewers than do dominant readings, so the likelihood of these types of decodings can be more difficult and less common (Budd, Entman and Steinman, 1990).¹² Here arise some sociological questions. Who is likely to accept most elements of dominant ideology, while who is likely to resist it? How do women in different socio-economic positions interpret television? For example, are there any significant differences in interpretation by working-class women and middle-class women, or by an older generation of women and a younger generation of women? Do their critical readings or resistive pleasures, if any, go beyond the text and spill into the fabric of everyday life? Women audiences may not be passive, but it is equally important for feminist researchers to be cautious, rather than holding a romantic faith, that women may not be necessarily critical readers against the society's dominant ideology. In the absence of concrete evidence about the ways in which women's actual readings take place in the ongoing social life, the political implications of semiotic resistive pleasure remain abstract.

The actual process of reading in the ongoing social life of women was accentuated in Janice Radway's work *Reading the Romance* (1987) in America. Although this is not about television audiences, I want to include it here because Radway's conceptual transformation deserves close attention, and the consequent progress from that flexibility has enabled her to produce, in my view, the most extensive work among existing feminist empirical studies. Coming from a literary criticism background, Radway originally conceived of reading in a limited fashion as differential interpretation of texts, but her field research informants "surprised" and taught her by repeatedly talking about the meaning of their romance reading as a social event in the familial context. This accidental discovery transformed Radway to develop the conception of women readers as individual, social and cultural entities

(1987: 7), which eventually came closer to the perspectives of the British television studies by Brunson and Hobson.

Radway's women readers – predominantly middle-class wives and mothers – view their act of reading as a declaration of independence that claims time and space away from their primary roles as family caregivers.¹³ Women's reading pleasure can be seen as a hidden protest against the dominant structures of everyday life, but at the same time, as Radway argues, fulfillment through heterosexual romance eventually restores women back to the patriarchal status quo. Radway made a significant contribution in terms of perceiving the women readers as situated in the actual social processes of reading activity. However, I still view her study incomplete because the romance phenomena concerned are generally analyzed without considering in a detailed way the everyday real-life conditions under which the romance is received. In other words, there are not detailed descriptions on the women's real-life relationships with their husbands and children which indeed are closely interrelated with their pursuit of pleasure in the romance reading. Her study offers no vivid picture about the women's actual domestic lives as an important context within which the specific meanings and role of the women's reading pleasure can be better understood.¹⁴

How is women's reading pleasure related to their actual domestic lives and family relationships? Some adequate insight can be gained from Ann Gray's (1987) research on women watching VCR together. The useful perspective which Gray contributed to feminist audience scholarship is the conception of women audiences in relation to the domestic gender-power issues. Her study shows the impact of domestic power relation on women's viewing pleasure in that men (husbands and sons) downgrade the kinds of films and soap operas pleasurable to women, and drive these women to consume the programs in secret or with other women during the day when men are out of the house. Gray's research is similar to David Morley's (1986) which focuses on the effectiveness of gender as an influence on viewing behavior. Morley explains that women seldom have control over the television set to view their favorite programs, such as "nice weepies", so they can only feel free to indulge in viewing when the rest of the family is not there. Gray argues that women's viewing together "forms an important part of their friendship and association in their everyday lives and gives a focus to an almost separate female culture which they can share together

within the constraints of their positions as wives and mothers” (1987: 49). Gray importantly recognizes the women audiences as situated in social and familial contexts, however, her women audiences are homogeneous – housewives and mothers with school age children, presumably of middle-class. This is the typical sample considered in feminist audience studies. Then, how do women in a different social position and different domestic environment construct meanings?

Having realized the academics’ tendency to study predominantly middle-class audiences, Ellen Seiter *et al* (1989) focused on how working-class women (albeit all White) engage with television programs in the twenty-six interviews with American viewers. Rather than limiting the audience choice to the specific shows (e.g. *Crossroads*, *Dallas*) for the research ends, Seiter *et al* took a more “real-life” approach by allowing the audiences to determine the texts from their own perspectives and by focusing on meaning negotiations generated through an entire genre of television programming. By testing Modleski’s theory that the pleasure of watching soap opera comes from viewers’ internal contestation between sympathy for the ideal mother character and the villainess as an outlet for feminine anger (1979: 97), Seiter *et al* reveal that this ideal mother position is consciously resisted and vehemently rejected by the working-class women. Working-class women audiences criticize the ideal mother character for her powerless suffering despite her middle-class privileges; on the contrary, they express pleasure in watching powerful female characters who attempt to transgress, subvert or destroy the dominant patriarchal ideology of television texts (1989: 237-240).

Women’s class position was also a central focus of Andrea Press’s (1991) research on American viewers of the prime-time serial *Dynasty*. Yet her conclusion reveals a difference from Seiter *et al*’s in that working-class women are non-critical as they speak mostly about similarities and very little about differences between the show characters and themselves, whereas middle-class women often adopt a critical viewing style by questioning the morality of the upper-class wealthy characters. Besides the class variable, Press also examined generational differences between older women over the age of sixty and young women under the age of twenty-nine, although her comparison was based on the unbalanced sample size; six older women and twenty-three young women (p. 208). In comparing the cultural meaning of

television reception, Press suggests that older women respond more positively to the images of women at the workplace because their own experience in non-traditional careers has been limited; on the contrary, young women exhibit a sharply emotional response to television's idealized family images due to their relative lack of real life experience in the happy family. Press's work is unique in terms of analyzing the women's different reception of television determined by the sociological differences of class and generation. However, Press confessed that "some interviews yielded little information of value for the study, unfortunately, in part because of the open ended format I used" (p. 180). This confession reveals a problematic issue in doing qualitative research. If the real data were poor, what was the basis of her analysis?

So far, the existing studies have mainly perceived women audiences within the domestic, immediate viewing context. Dorothy Hobson's (1989, 1990) later projects, however, recognize the trajectory of television talk from the domestic to a social set of workplace. She documents the ways in which British soap opera viewers take pleasures in collaborative readings of the television text with colleagues and bring their interests of the private sphere into the public domain. Women audiences interweave the narratives of programs with their own lives and interests, and the lives of their families and friends, and in so doing "form the basis for sharing their experiences and opinions and creating their own culture within their workplace" (1990: 71). In a similar vein, Mary Ellen Brown (1990, 1994) theoretically conceives of women's soap opera gossip network as a locus of empowerment where women can fully discuss their own personal and social issues, express their own brand of pleasure, and resist aesthetic hierarchies affected by male domination. Brown argues that the gossip network provides the social support to carry out women's issues in practice, therefore, "politics can be reconceptualized on the level of culture where soap opera gossip networks can be thought of as not only political but perhaps even subversive" (1994: 171).

Here, I want to emphasize a potentially significant role of "TV talk" which is an important insight gained from Hobson's and Brown's works. TV talk can be a crucial forum for experimentation with identities as it is possible to say things in TV talk which would be otherwise difficult or embarrassing (Gillespie, 1995). I assume it highly plausible that women's talk about television content can serve as unique

resources for the “reflexive” exploration of women’s central preoccupations that intimately concern their lives. Crucially, women’s TV talk can reveal clues about which meanings in the television texts are being mobilized in their everyday lives. However, I want to equally emphasize that theorizing coherently the issues of whether and how TV talk has a liberating political potential for women, not simply at the spontaneous and fleeting “gossip” moment but in the substantial and sustainable terms, must entail more than sporadic anecdotal evidence. “The relations between textual experience, social experience, and subjectivity are perhaps the most methodologically inaccessible; but theoretically and politically, they are among the most important of all”, argues John Fiske (1989: 67). To be precise, is it methodologically daunting, or is it due to the academic researchers’ disposition to imagination and lack of experimentalism to engage closely with “ordinary” people outside in a real world?

Limitations

The existing feminist audience studies have crucially failed to approximate the day-to-day lived experiences of audiences and to provide the kind of vibrant knowledge for understanding the complex phenomena and specificities of women audiencehood embedded in a broader social context. A substantial limitation in the conceptual frameworks of feminist audience studies is, if I adopt Roger Silverstone’s terms, “an absence of a sense of the individual as located within a political, economic and ideological world which is neither necessarily visible, nor expressed in daily patterns of interaction” (1994: 145). Much of the existing research has tended to neglect what Silverstone (1990: 174) calls “the embedded audience”, or similarly what John Thompson (1995: 38-39) describes as a “situated, mundane character of receptive activity”, a routine, practical activity which individuals carry out as an integral part of their everyday lives in social-historical contexts. The neglect of the social contexts within which women live out their everyday lives, therefore, the substantial absence of integrative frameworks on the embedded audiencehood, is a crucial limitation that can be found throughout the history of feminist television audience studies. Reviewing throughout the feminist approaches to “women as audiences”, I reach the conclusion that there are not explicit and detailed descriptions on the ways in which women’s particular social positions and experiences intersect with their construction

of meanings from television viewing in the course of everyday life, and the ways in which women's viewing pleasures are further dispersed into the fabric of everyday lives and practices. In other words, none of the exemplary feminist researchers have adequately and comprehensively explored how the process of making sense of and taking pleasure from television intersects with women's particular socio-cultural and historical conditions, and whether and how viewing pleasure is integrated into the shaping and re-creation of women's lives and identities. Existing feminist audience studies have collectively failed to explain the nature of women's relationships to television embedded in the social context of everyday life.

In my view, part of the reasons for that failure and limitation can be ascribed to the original purpose of the audience studies tradition. Early feminist studies on women audiences predominantly focused on uncovering the kinds of different pleasures and meanings that women derived from the immediate viewing of popular gynocentric forms, and were sympathetically concerned with validating the notion of women's pleasure which had been largely scorned, trivialized and neglected in a mainstream. In a strict sense, the departing point of feminist audience research was not from women (audiences) as diverse and unique individuals, but from popular genres (e.g. soap opera, romance fiction) or programs (e.g. *Crossroads*, *Dallas*, *Dynasty*) overwhelmingly pleasurable to women. Such tendencies directed the focus of feminist audience research to lean towards understanding the reasons for the popularity of those forms and the pleasurable or unpleasurable characteristics of the texts, simply through borrowing the voices of women audiences. "I hoped that they [women audiences] would indicate the reasons for the popularity of the program [*Crossroads*] and also areas where they may have been critical" (Hobson, 1982: 105). Ang's main inquiry was "why do people watch *Dallas*? What are the characteristics of *Dallas* that organize the viewer's pleasure?" (1985: 9). Radway's goal was that "in order to understand why romances are selling so well, we must know what romance readers make of the words they find on the page" (1987: 11). More recent audience research carried out by Lyn Thomas (1995) also centered on a highly successful British television series *Inspector Morse*, and female and male fan cultures surrounding it. The enormous commercial success of particular television texts and the feminist concern with ordinary women's pleasure initially sparked feminist researchers to unveil a variety of pleasures and meanings that women audiences

constructed straight from the popular texts. Yet their research quest did not extend further to embrace the fine-grained intricacies of women audiencehood in relation to the broader social context of their lives.

This crucial limitation leads me to question the politics of feminist research and viability of existing knowledge. What are the ultimate goals of feminist approaches to women audiences? What has been gained in our knowledge of the phenomena feminist audience studies claim to explain? Who would eventually benefit from such inquires as to why this particular television genre or program is popular among female viewers and what kinds of pleasures or displeasures are experienced by the primary audiences? How can this type of knowledge be beneficial on behalf of “ordinary” women or various feminist groups? Or would this type of academic research more serve the needs of the media institutions which produce those popular programs and plan new clones? In the media institutions’ point of view, feminist qualitative studies on women audiences may be received as value-added, free and fuller information that can complement their quantitative audience demographics. In this way, academic feminist audience research runs the risk of being perceived as complicit with the television media institutions and as colonized by the influence of their institutional point of view about audiences.¹⁵

To avoid such risk, it seems necessary for academic audience researchers to go back to the fundamental question: What is an audience? What are the conditions to be adequately defined as an audience? The term “audience(s)” should not be taken as a conceptually unproblematic and self-evident category. The original usage of the word “audience” was referred to an individual act of hearing in face-to-face verbal communication where a producer and a receiver of sound were co-present in a shared physical space. This term was later adopted by the electronic media as an aggregate label for their consumers who are geographically dispersed and embedded in multifaceted settings. The boundaries and conditions of audiences become infinite, unstable, and as a consequence, the task of defining audiences is conceptually insuperable if not impossible. Then, how have we come to accept and use this elusive and inexplicable concept so naturally in the modern society? John Hartley (1987) argues that the term “audiences” is the invisible fiction produced by institutional systems for imaging the unimaginable and for controlling the uncontrollable:

“Audiences are not just constructs; they are the invisible fictions that are produced institutionally in order for various institutions to take charge of the mechanisms of their own survival. Audiences may be imagined empirically, theoretically or politically, but in all cases the product is a fiction that serves the needs of the imagining institution. In no case is the audience ‘real’, or external to its discursive construction”. (Hartley, 1987: 125)

The concept of audiences has been a keen interest of television media institutions, and constructed from their institutional point of view in imagining the existence of such identifiable objects. However, the reason I am quoting Hartley’s provocative statement is not to advocate helpless or cynical rejection of the phantom concept of audiences, but to foreground the latent admonition; to pose critical questions about the institutional views of audiences to the academic researchers who attempt to investigate women audiences for their own specific purposes. Against the institutional point of view which constrains and sets limits to the substance of knowledge about audiences, as Ien Ang (1991) later encourages, what we need are ethnographic understandings of the social world of dynamic audiencehood enacted by women in their everyday lives, their multifarious experiences, and the complexity of the social, cultural and historical practices. I intend to propose that the essence of women audiencehood in everyday life is to be a key search in feminist television audience studies. Are feminist studies also limiting the pursuit of knowledge about women audiences? How significantly are their conceptions about women audiences different from the television institution’ point of view? What does the existing body of feminist knowledge tell about the fine-grained intricacies of women audiencehood in their everyday lives?

Since the early 1980’s feminist audience studies have sympathetically attempted to recognize the existence of women’s invisible subcultures and make them a legitimate part of history, yet pressing questions have remained unresolved. How can academic audience studies contribute in favor of overarching feminist issues and movements? If the feminist quest is centered around the immediate television-audience viewing contexts, what is the significance of understanding women’s semiotic pleasure right off from the popular texts? What relevance can such

understandings have outside the epistemological realm of feminist scholarship, and how can we effectively pursue the political and cultural meanings based on the existing understandings of “plausibly but relatively impotent transcendent pleasure” (Silverstone, 1994: 146) that women in a patriarchal society derive from popular culture? Or is each notion of “popular pleasure” and “feminist politics” non-related, mutually exclusive?¹⁶ How can audience studies be more adequately related to feminist politics? In short, how can existing knowledge contribute not only epistemologically, but also crucially, politically?

I suggest that if we are interested in the way in which the politics of pleasure operates, then we must go out and scrutinize any possibilities of the workings of pleasure in the alive, contested, day-to-day context within which women struggle to craft their lives and identities. Without evidence, talking about the politics of pleasure around an academic table is purely theoretical. Feminist audience research needs to critically examine whether and how these symbolic, semiotic pleasures are being released, mobilized and even perpetuated in the specific social contexts within which women live out their everyday lives, and equally importantly what kinds of contradictions, tensions and negotiations that women in particular social positions experience when trying out oppositional, subversive meanings against dominant ideology. This appears to me to be the key task scarcely tackled by the prior feminist audience research, hence left for new inquisitive fellows. Judging from the historical assessment of feminist audience studies, I argue that what is fundamentally missing is a detailed and dauntless empirical engagement with the dynamic specificities of audiencehood enacted by different, individual *womans* in their social contexts of everyday lives.¹⁷

Unfortunately however, the neglect of women of color and differences has been a pronounced tendency throughout the history of the Western feminist scholarship’s monolithic perceptions of women as audiences. The definition of women as audiences assumed by prior feminist researchers is homogeneous, domestically confined and even “claustrophobic” (Nightingale, 1990: 28) like the television institution’s view of audiences, which means “women as housewives and mothers”. The women audiences included within the imagination of Western academic researchers are predominantly “White middle-class housewives and mothers”.¹⁸ Women of color are excluded,

almost non-existent as an empirical phenomenon. Are the White middle-class housewives and mothers presumed representative for women audiences, or is it due to the researchers' complacent disposition to contact easily available samples within their imaginable scope? I would dare to infer that such claustrophobic perception may be a cumulative net result of the ivory-tower researchers' lack of experimentalism to engage closely with ordinary people outside in a wider world. The failure to contact women of color for the interviews is a serious limitation of the existing audience scholarship. I am thus tempted to question whether differences really matter to Western feminist (audience) knowledge, and if so, then why the exclusion of women of color happens as a normative research practice. All-White bias is not something that just happens, as Jacqueline Bobo and Ellen Seiter (1991) rightly criticize.¹⁹

“In cultural studies work on audience, samples have tended overwhelmingly to be white. This fact deserves a closer look: it is too frequent an occurrence to be shunted aside or excused by the brief apologies which attribute white samples to limited funding or scope. It is not something that ‘just happens’, not simply a case of sampling error, nor of the failure of individual researchers to be sufficiently diligent in making contacts, although these are certainly factors that contribute to the problem”. (Bobo and Seiter, 1991: 287)

In searching for the essence of colorful women audiencehood socio-politically differentiated from the limited institutional knowledge, new feminist audience research should avoid the problematic assumption inherent in the existing studies that women (audiences) are one aggregate, universal category distinguished from men (audiences), hence, “gender” itself is a key sociological parameter that determines meanings and dynamics of women audiencehood. The existing audience studies' exclusive preoccupation with gender may have been historically affected, in my view, by the feminist movement's overall tendency to emphasize the “commonalities” of women's oppression against dominant male ideology, and this collective and strategic emphasis has resulted in the neglect of “differences” among women and their different relationships to television determined by other important sociological parameters. Feminist approaches to women audiences can be more effectively pursued by “employing the somewhat discredited discipline of sociology for the understanding of communication in particular socio-cultural contexts”, as proposed by

David Morley (1989: 40). I would forcefully argue that it is important to consider a more sociological dimension and input – a limitation inherent in cultural studies. In conjunction with the sociological perspective, a more sensitive ethnographic approach, as importantly recognized and practiced by Marie Gillespie (1995), can provide detailed data about the micro-processes of women's everyday lives which are crucial to our understanding of the ways in which television impinges upon, and becomes integrated into, the lives of women. New feminist audience research, which intends to understand differences among women and their different social realities and relationships to television media, can benefit from an integrative framework drawn upon the more differentiated critical feminist scholarship, the sociological perspective and the ethnographic cultural approach. The conceptual framework integrating television media studies, critical feminist studies, sociology and cultural studies can allow us to expand the monolithic perception of women as audiences, to recognize differences among women as constructed through different socio-cultural and historical contexts, and to deliver the fine-grained intricacies of colorful women audiencehood as enacted in their everyday lives.

Section (2) Korean Literature

Dearth of research

The penetration of television in South Korea is 99.9% and television occupies a high proportion of Koreans' everyday leisure life. On average, Koreans' everyday leisure time is estimated around 4 hours, among which television viewing occupies 3 hours and 12 minutes (KBI, 1996). This means that Koreans spend 4/5 of their leisure time on television consumption, hence, television is an integral part of everyday leisure life. Comparatively, more women than men, and lower-income families tend to rely on television as a main source of leisure enjoyment. According to Korean women's leisure patterns, media consumption at home constitutes the majority of leisure activities – watching television and video (52.3%), reading magazines or newspaper (10.7%), and listening to music (10.7%). On the contrary, women's out-of-home leisure is substantially low, as shown in their most favored activities such as mountain hiking (3.3%), movie/concert/art going (2.5%), and exercising (1.5%). In short, the

majority of Korean women have a “cocooned” home-centered leisure life, in which they consume television most of all.

Despite the apparent phenomenon that television consumption is a major leisure activity among Korean women, there is a dearth of research on television media in relation to women audiences. Academic research on women and television in Korea emerged around the mid 1980’s, but its focus has been largely limited to the analyses of television texts and production conditions. The most dominant research is a somewhat simplistic form of content analysis on the representations of women on television programs, including drama, advertising, and news. In-depth exploratory research on women and television is virtually hard to find, and audience reception studies from this qualitative approach are almost absent. Korean feminist television media studies have not taken a diversity of starting points when examining relationships between women and popular media culture. They have been mainly concerned with the issues of women’s representations and women as creators, but failed to approach women as audiences. In short, the existing Korean television studies have not yet moved beyond textual and production analyses. Based on the limited existing literature, this section therefore attempts to draw a descriptive sketch on the relationship between women and television in South Korea. It will introduce the Korean television system, and describe the representation of women and two popular genres – Korean drama and Western movie – that are overwhelmingly enjoyed by women audiences.

Korean television system

Korean television has developed under the strong influence of the state, and the state is still a major force in media control today, although its power has gradually decreased with the emergence of big capital and the television companies’ increasing dependence on advertising revenue (Park *et al.*, 2000). Korean television has historically developed in symbiosis with the state’s political power, representing its dominant ideology and ruling structures. Since the establishment of the Korean government in 1948, television has been actively appropriated as a propaganda tool for social integration and legitimization of the state power. In the post-war conditions, the imperative role of television was assumed to rebuild the nation. Since the early

1960's television has been used, in the guidance of the state's modernization policy, as an important educational tool for achieving rapid industrialization, economic growth, and modernization of everyday life. In this political context the Korean television system of public broadcasting service was established, operating under national principles. It was only in the late 1980's that the state's absolute control over television started to weaken, in the face of both the rising public voices for political liberalization and the strengthening of the monopolistic capital power and television finance's inevitable attraction to advertising income. The Korean television system is primarily national, government-controlled, and financed through some combination of taxes, license fees and increasingly, advertising income (Jun and Kim, 1995).

In 1991 when the government finally licensed commercial television companies, two major public broadcasting – KBS1 / KBS2, and MBC – started to contend with a newly introduced commercial channel SBS that covers the Seoul metropolitan area. Eight other commercial channels were launched throughout the nation between 1995 and 1997. Twenty-nine cable channels were launched in 1995, providing 24-hour services covering the vast global entertainment of movies, travel, music, sports, and home shopping. 44% of the total households of 11.5 millions in South Korea subscribe to the cable television services, and 4% are estimated to be equipped with satellite broadcasting facilities (KBI, 1994). Starting with the introduction of Japan's BS-2 satellite in 1989 and Hong Kong's Star TV in 1991, there are eight satellite channels including CNN and BBC (Won, 1993). Besides, there is a terrestrial broadcasting for the transmission of American popular culture, which is AFKN (American Forces Korea Network) launched in 1957 after the Korean War.

Among all television networks mentioned above, three major Korean terrestrial broadcastings – KBS1 / KBS2, MBC, and SBS – dominate the television market as they are overwhelmingly popular among Korean audiences. Although there exist many television channels in Korea, in terms of viewership, Korean television has been maintained by a small number of nationwide major networks, and an intense competition for ratings between the major networks has produced a supply of similar programs, thereby a homogenization and standardization of culture (Park *et al.*, 2000). The major Korean television networks are largely conservative in their leanings

towards dominant ideology. Although the social role of television, especially public broadcasting, is expected to provide channels through which diverse groups can claim their status and identity, Korean television has not adequately represented the voices of different ideologies, including the voices of women.

Representation of women

The Korean television system is a male-centered organization, operating in an extremely traditional social environment without being strictly regulated by anti-discrimination laws (Yong-sang Park, 1987). In the absence of detailed investigation into the inner world of television, statistics alone show that the structure of human resources in the mass media is evidently male-powered. The ratio of men and women in the television companies is 88.2% (15,957) to 11.8% (2,131), and women's participation in the media-related governmental committee is minimal as only 5 seats out of the total 121 go to women (Hyo-seon Kim, 1997). A study on the status of female employees in three major television networks reveals that: (1) women make up 8.3% of all employees in KBS, 9.8% in MBC, and 15.4% in SBS, (2) the percentage of female producers, reporters and announcers is 10.2%, but women are rarely positioned in the important sections dealing with political and economic issues, and (3) female staff in an executive position are almost nonexistent (He-yeong Lee, 1994). The age of female employees is heavily concentrated "between 21 and 30", meaning that the professional sustainability of women in the television media is substantially low. This is mainly due to the women's demanding "dual role as a professional and housekeeper" (Yong-sang Park, 1987).²⁰

The male-centered institutional character of Korean television can be held partly responsible for the sexist content produced, as prime-time television dramas and commercials visibly demonstrate. Despite a changing trend in the women's social and economic position, images of television commercials present an extreme level of sexual and occupational stereotyping (Leung, 1995). Women are usually presented in the home as mother and homemaker and rarely portrayed as professionals and workers.²¹ This, however, does not mean that Korean men are usually depicted in occupational settings with non-domestic association. It is interesting to note that contemporary Korean commercials tend to present men, as obvious breadwinners,

more often at home than in the workplace. A possible explanation for this presentation is that Korean men increasingly find no time to fulfil their role as husband and father due to the long-working hours and consequently come to lose their position in the modern family, so the imaginary commercials project men's yearning to be at home with the family. This represents a small shift in contemporary commercials, but the traditional gender-role stereotyping has shown no significant change.

The representative images of women in prime-time dramas have virtually not changed over the last decades. Common findings can be summed up as follows (Yoo-jae Song, 1984, 1990; Yong-sang Park, 1987; Sun-nam Kim, 1997). First, women appear in far smaller numbers than men and their roles are not central enough to constitute an important factor in the story development. Second, contemporary television drama persistently revives the traditional gender-role image that paid work is for men and the proper place for women is in the home. Women are always shown chattering about personal and family affairs, and men engaging with non-personal social affairs. By depicting an ideal female image in the matrimonial context, television highly emphasizes the traditional female role of raising children and managing a household. Third, although more and more working women appear on television drama, their images are seriously distorted in the sense that unfeminine and selfish images of professional women are the norm. Finally, male characters tend to be presented as reasonable, independent, strong and dominating, while female characters are portrayed as emotional, dependent, weak and obedient. The existing studies overall show that Korean television drama – the most popular genre among women audiences – continues to reproduce and reinforce the traditional female roles in the family context.

Korean drama

The most watched program genres by Korean audiences are news and drama (KBI, 1994). According to 1-5 scale research, news (4.1) and Korean drama (3.7) are ranked as the most favored, followed by foreign movies (3.4) and sports (3.4), comedy (3.3), and variety shows and entertainment (3.1). Korean drama is most preferred by older women over their 50s, while foreign movies are overwhelmingly enjoyed by younger women in their 20s and teens. Korean drama has recorded the highest rating over the

seasons, yet why it is consistently achieving a phenomenal success has remained unexplored. The popularity of drama is reflected in the program allotment schemes by major television networks (KBI, 1999). Korean drama accounts for about 20% of all programs aired by major television channels, except for the public broadcasting channel KBS1 which prioritizes news (30%) and documentaries (14.5%). The proportion of drama goes far higher during the primetime, occupying 41.7% in MBC and 36.5% in SBS.

<Program allotment (%) by major television networks: 1999>

	KBS1	KBS2	MBC	SBS
Drama	10.0	19.9	24.1	20.1
News	30.0	8.7	23.4	12.1
Variety show	6.6	12.4	11.3	13.6
Living info.	10.0	12.3	7.0	16.2
Sports	5.7	5.9	6.1	12.3
Documentaries	14.5	10.0	5.4	4.0
Movies	2.7	3.8	3.8	3.1

The most popular and dominant type of television drama in Korea is the so-called “home drama” or “family drama”. Home/family drama was first introduced in the 1960’s in the context of public enlightenment to educate and sustain the cultural significance of the home and family. In 1976 the Korean government intervened in the drama content and scheduling by specifically requiring that sound and healthy “home/family drama” should be aired for the entire family viewing in the prime time of 8:00pm (Choe and Yu, 1999). Home/family drama has been established as a leading genre in Korean television, with the intervention of the government politics and the growth of the national economy. The economic factors such as the growth of GNP and (female) consumer buying power and the increase of advertising revenue have contributed to the development of drama production. Even today, home/family drama is broadcast in the most prime time; at 8:30-9:00pm every weekday and at 8:00-9:00pm every weekend, followed directly by the most watched 9:00 News. The nationwide popularity of the primetime home/family drama is overwhelming as its

remarkable rating of 50% testifies. The primetime drama is deemed most crucial by the major television networks because of its lead-in effect that influences the rating of the following 9:00 News. Therefore, Korean television networks are competitively attuned to the production of primetime drama.

Besides home/family drama, another popular format of Korean drama is the so-called "mini-series drama". Since mini-series drama was first introduced by MBC in 1987, it has been enormously popular particularly among a younger group of women audiences (Hee-ae Kim, 1992). This new variation consists of 12-16 episodes, running for 2-3 months in the primetime after the 9:00 News. Unlike the home/family drama centering on the everyday domestic lives of housewives and mothers, mini-series drama presents a variety of modern themes by introducing more and more working women and addressing women's changing roles and desires. A recent good example is a feminist voice raised by a lawyer character in *The Last War*.²² This small yet significant change in the themes of television drama has occurred only recently since the 1990's, with upcoming young women writers labeled as generation-X (ChungAng Ilbo, 17th September, 1999). Since the 1990's a younger generation of women writers in their late 20s and early 30s have started to lead Korean television drama. Nowadays, the percentage of women writers in television drama almost triples that of men writers, 75% to 25% respectively (Yoon-kyung Jung, 1998). Although men still make up 80% among the senior writers aged over 50, the total number of men writers has been dwindling, while that of women writers is steadily increasing as more and more educated young women are entering the field of drama writing.

However, young women writers are not autonomous as their work conditions are heavily influenced by the control of senior male producers (Yoon-kyung Jung, 1998). This implies that the overall orientation and content of drama are still determined by the dominant frame of patriarchal ideology. A more fundamental issue of control lies in the fact that both female writers and male producers of drama are influenced by the extremely competitive television networks' key concern with the audience rating and advertising revenue. Working under the tremendous pressure for the rating and the capitalist market principle, women writers are often requested to change the theme and content of drama in order to meet what the "general (women) audiences" want. Then, what do the general women audiences want? The answer is

found in the dominant proportion of romance drama and its phenomenal popularity. Recent good examples of popular romances are *All About Eve* and *Legend of Love*. Melodrama of love and romance is still predominant, making up more than 80% of all dramas aired by major television networks (KBI, 1999). Despite the public criticism against romance drama for its lack of realism and perceived low-quality, it has been thriving, enjoyed overwhelmingly by women audiences. One study reveals that 40% of Korean women audiences criticize and ridicule romance drama, but at the same time they admit that they have not missed a single episode (Soon-sik Choi, 1996). Yet the question of why women continue to derive pleasure from romance drama has not been hitherto explored in Korean television studies.²³

Western movies

Contemporary Korean television is a mixture of traditional and Western forms. The most popular Western form is movie, mostly American, which is favored particularly by young women in their 20s and teens (KBI, 1994). According to one early study (Hee-dong Kim, 1985) on the Korean university students' reception of an English speaking channel, the most watched Western programs are movies (34.5%), followed by variety shows and entertainment (18.8%), and their strongest motive for watching Western programs is "to learn the English language" (42.5%). Today, more and more Korean young people routinely watch Western programs to satisfy mere curiosities in different cultures and to learn international languages (Woo-hyun Won, 1993).

Korean cable channels depend heavily on imported American movies due to production cost. About 55% of all cable programs in Korea are imported, among which almost 80% come from the West; America (61.2%) and Europe (18.5%) (KBI, 1996). Indiscriminate transmission of low-quality Western programs with the themes of sex and violence is pointed out as a key problem of Korean cable broadcasting (Gyu-yeop Lee, 1996). In contrast, the major television networks, KBS1 / KBS2, MBC, and SBS, are producing an increasing proportion of their own programs, hence, the percentage of the domestically-produced programs in the primetime reaches 90% (Straubhaar, 1997: 294). However, in the case of movies, these major networks also heavily depend on imported movies from America (80%) and Europe (15%) (Tae-hyun Kim, 1991).

Although imported American movies have long established a steady presence in Korean television since the early 1960's, this genre has not attracted large audiences. Except for the occasional popularity of Hollywood blockbuster movies at weekend nights, most imported movies on Korean television rarely record a high rating (Tae-hyun Kim, 1991). In the history of Korean television, there is no single foreign-produced program that has won an overwhelmingly larger size of audiences than indigenous products.²⁴ The consumers of imported Western programs, however dubbed in the Korean language, are largely limited to young age groups. The majority of ordinary Koreans are not familiar with the English language, so the viewers of satellite broadcasting or English-speaking cable channels are a small segment of audiences, who tend to be the urban, young, higher-educated with higher-income. They consume satellite broadcasting or cable channels mainly for foreign movies, and the length of their viewing time on average is one hour and 40 minutes daily (KBI, 1996). However, in terms of the comprehension of the content of English-speaking movies, 54.5% of actual viewers "understand only partly", and 28.6% of actual viewers "do not understand the English language but just watch the screen picture" (Gang-sik Shin, 1995). This finding means that over 80% of the actual viewers do not fully understand English-speaking Western movies. Nonetheless, Western movies – either dubbed or original – are well received among Korean young women. Questions as to why they are attracted to Western movies and what specific meanings they derive from their viewing remain unexplored.²⁵

As I have emphasized in the beginning of this chapter, it is important to recognize that any study of the experience of popular media culture must be explored in relation to the historically situated social and cultural contexts within which it is received and understood. The following chapter will therefore situate my study within the historical and sociological context that constitutes the women's experience of television in everyday life.

Chapter 2 Socio-Economic Position of Women in South Korea

This chapter attempts to historically chart continuity and change in the socio-economic position of women in South Korea based on a review of existing literature. It surveys the parameters of women's lives in the contexts of traditional Confucianism, modern education, work, marriage and family, and sexuality. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a historically informed socio-cultural context for a more adequate understanding of my research data. I intend to situate the subjects of my research within larger social structures and integrate the analyses of the micro data into the macro-political dimensions. As I have argued in the previous chapter, to be a valuable cultural analysis – both epistemologically and politically – women's accounts on the experience of television in everyday life should not be left to speak for themselves, but be grounded in the historical and sociological context within which they are embedded.

Specifically, in this chapter I explore how Korean women's lives have been historically influenced and constructed by the determining force of the traditional gender roles inscribed in Confucianism. This is to infer the embracing implications of the traditional gender performance in the changing lives of women in contemporary Korean society. To what extent have the traditional normative values been penetrated, materialized, contested and contradicted with modern meanings of womanhood, in everyday lives of Korean women embedded in the transitional flux? The overarching goal of this exploration is to demystify the perceived reality of women's changing position by dissecting *both* the socio-economic structural changes, which promise to provide the improved materialistic condition for women, *and* the cultural continuity and dislocation of the traditional Confucian values in modernized Korea, thereby causing a disparity between traditional norms and modern expectations, an identity crisis, and assumed subordination of women in the multifaceted intricacies of everyday life.

Among the nations in North-East Asia including China and Japan which have been historically under the influence of Confucianism, South Korea is recognized as

the nation with the strictest adherence to the Confucian ethical tradition (Palley, 1992: 787). To borrow Benedict Anderson's (1991) terms, it can be said that the modern nation Korea, which proclaims itself homogeneous (e.g. language, lineage, race, culture), is an "imagined political community" rooted in the Confucian cultural system of the Chosun dynastic realm (1392-1910) and transformed by an engine of historically specific processes of modernizing - to adopt Anthony Giddens's (1990: 139) metaphor, by a powerful "juggernaut in which there is a tensionful, contradictory, push-and-pull of different influences". As my literature review throughout this chapter will indicate, the current location of Korean society is complex and ambiguous in the sense that "traditions have not yet disappeared and modernity has not completely arrived" (Canclini, 1995: 1). There is a complex interplay and co-existence of tradition and modernity. Precisely, it is this complex cultural context of modernization within which my research inquiry on women's experience of television is situated. In a broad sense, women's cultural experience of globalizing television media in everyday life is embedded within the historical specificity of Korean modernization.

Therefore, my discussion will emphasize the historical specificity to differentiate South Korea from other Asian nations. Although there is a fairly strong movement for binding Asia into a single massive entity by two camps - anti-Western nationalists who want to overcome their dependence on the Western force, and the global capitalists who think that endorsing Asian solidarity will help open up new markets - Asia, or Asian women, cannot be categorized into a single homogeneous unit (Hae-joang Cho, 1997). Western academics, without a proper historical understanding, tend to hold universalistic and totalizing assumptions about Asian women and subordination.¹ The assumed homogeneity of Asian women is a deeply problematic and inadequate understanding, therefore, the irreducible socio-cultural differences and historical specificities within Asia should be recognized and confronted for a better understanding of the lived experiences of women today.

In the following, I start by discussing Confucianism to proceed the deconstruction of the historical specificity of Korean society and women's socio-economic position. As two sets of Western eyes have rightly observed, "In fact, a discussion of Korean society would be *incomplete* without some understanding of the

moral code that is associated with Confucianism, and more specifically, an understanding of the changing roles and status of women in Korea requires some sense of the centrality of this moral code in the evolution of that society” (Gelb and Palley, 1994: 3. *Italics, my emphasis*). In *Korean Women Today*, a publication of the Korean Women’s Development Institute, it is critically argued, “Because of the wrong socialization process in our society which has continued for too long not only men but also women themselves tend to recognize the inferiority of women, at least unconsciously. This is what remains as the major obstacle to achieving equality between men and women” (Chong-ui Kim, 1988). My literature review problematizes the traditional cultural ideologies and patriarchal social structures that have long influenced Korean women’s lives and identities, and at the same time recognizes such consequences as the taken-for-granted assumptions among women themselves.

Section (1) Confucianism

Fewer societies have had more rigid restrictions on women’s social positions than the Chosun Dynasty (Yi Korea: 1392-1910) driven by Confucian male politics for five centuries, hence, this period can be called as the “dark ages for women” (Rowe and Kim, 1997). Confucianism was adopted not merely as a moral principle but as an ideological basis for the political, social and economic formation of the society. It stressed a rigid hierarchical order of human relationships based on age, sex, and social status, in which men were associated with the notion of *heaven* (superior) and women with *earth* (inferior). A woman was defined as a semi-adult, and required to learn the Confucian ideal of “self-sacrifice”.² With the inventions of metal printing in 1423 and of *han-gul* (the Korean alphabet) in 1446, books for domestic education were widely distributed to women (Jeong-shin Han, 1996).³ The key features regulating women’s everyday lives in Confucian education can be summed up as follows (Yun-shik Chang, 1983; Eui-young Yu, 1987; He-sung Koh, 1987; Deuchler, 1992; Kyung-won Cho, 1994; Elizabeth Choi, 1994; Jeong-shin Han, 1996; Young-hee Sim, 1998).

(a) Woman’s place in the domestic sphere

Confucianism constructed a patriarchal gender definition by emphasizing *Namnyo-yubyol* (sex-difference) and *Nae-Oe-Beob* (woman’s place in the domestic sphere /

man's place in the public sphere). This segregated women from men in their social activities throughout the lifetime. Specifically, from the age of seven a girl was not allowed to sit with a boy in the same room, and from the age of ten she was not allowed to move at will outside the house. Should a girl go outside, she should walk on the left side of the road, as a boy walks on the right side. She should not stroll in her garden or venture out during the daytime, and outside the house she was required to veil her face. Although a woman had a right to manage household finances, her influence on public affairs was always transmitted through the male members of her family – her father, husband and son. Confucianism strictly limited the legitimacy of women's social roles by separating the social domain of women from that of men.⁴

(b) Marriage and patrilineal family system

Until the twentieth century women did not have any say in their choice of mate as marriage was arranged by their parents. The meaning of marriage was a joining of a bride to her husband's family under the patrilineal system, and the three-generation family was the Confucian model. The married eldest son and his immediate family lived together with his parents and younger siblings until his parents died and his siblings married out. The father, and after his death the first-born male, served as a legal family head, with absolute power and control over property and family members. Individual rights and equality were secondary to values emphasizing the primacy of the family.⁵ Although married women often faced inhuman treatment from their mothers-in-law, they could not return to their natal families as the society was structured under the principle of patrilineality. Women had to endure and survive within their husbands' families by directing their lives "through and for their sons".

(c) Motherhood and son preference

A woman was regarded as an instrument to bear a son who would continue the patrilineal family system, hence, the absence of a son meant the termination of the family. A failure to give birth to a son became a sufficient condition for a husband to divorce his wife.⁶ A woman who could not bear a son was socially categorized as a "non-person". Producing a son was a chief means for a woman to achieve social status, and the birth of additional sons further enhanced her status. A woman's life-

goal was to produce as many sons as possible and exercise power mediated through her sons. Confucian patriarchy had two paradoxical features – an extreme suppression of women, and an extreme idealization of motherhood, “mother power”. Only through the identity as mother could women be recognized in the society.

(d) Filial piety and obedience to parents-in-law

Filial piety was upheld as the foremost ultimate virtue in Confucianism. As one’s body was seen as originating from one’s parents, one did not act on one’s own behalf, but on behalf of one’s parents. A son’s loyalty to his parents was expected to supercede his loyalty to his wife, hence, the relationship between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law was a complicated one between two women to whom one man’s loyalty concurrently was called upon. A daughter-in-law was always required to obey her mother-in-law. *Naehun*, the first book for domestic education wrote: “Although a son falls for his wife, if his parents are displeased with the daughter-in-law, the son should abandon her”.⁷ The government made it a policy to reward one’s outstanding act of filial piety by building an arch or raising a flag before one’s house, and giving tax exemptions and a raise in one’s class status.

(e) Chastity ideology and prohibition on remarriage

Confucianism stressed chastity and a woman’s faithful devotion to one husband as the greatest of womanly virtues. Women’s adultery was considered as the most unforgivable disgrace to their families.⁸ Victims of sexual violence were also considered as having lost chastity. When a woman confronted a male assailant, she was educated to commit suicide with a “silver decorated knife” which she carried all the time. A strict prohibition on remarriage of widows was legalized in the fifteenth century to enact the chastity ideology. The government praised chaste widows who remained unmarried, by establishing a monument gate, or granting the exemption of taxes and the reception of pension. Sons of remarried women were legally barred from entering any public officialdom, which meant a permanent loss of the opportunity for the family’s class prosperity. In 1894 the prohibition on remarriage and the class system were abolished.

As indicated so far, traditional Confucianism defined an ideal woman in terms of a filial daughter, faithful wife and dedicated mother, who was expected to sacrifice her life to make her three men – father, husband and son – recognized in the public sphere. In fact, the notion of “sacrifice” has a remarkably long history. It can be traced back to the self-disciplined image of bear-woman in the mythology of the birth of the Korean nation: According to this myth, Hwanung, a son of the heavenly lord, descended on earth to rule a human world. One day a bear and a tiger were eager to become a human and asked Hwanung to realize their dream, so he ordered them to live in a dark cave for one hundred days. Only the bear endured and was transformed into a human – a woman! This bear-woman married Hwanung and begat Tan’gun, who founded the oldest Korean nation (putatively 2333 B.C.). The bear-woman is an ideal image of self-sacrifice imposed on Korean women throughout the long history, and women themselves have internalized the notion of sacrifice.⁹

Section (2) Education

Formal education for women started in the early 1870s when Chosun Dynasty (1392-1910) opened its doors to the United States, England and Russia. Many schools were established from that time to the early 1900s, and women’s education was transformed from traditional Confucianism to a modern style. Two factors contributed to this transition – the influence of various religions and the editorial argument in a major newspaper (Jeong-shin Han, 1996). With the introduction of Western religions, including Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, women started to participate in religious ceremonies held in the public sphere.¹⁰ Women’s equal access to education was voiced by the editorials of *Dok-Rip-Sin-Mun* (Independence Press) established in 1896. Its editorial argument was that if women were not given education, their ignorance would jeopardize future generations and national well-being.

In 1886, the first women’s school Ewha Haktang was established by an American Christian missionary.¹¹ The schooling for women was perceived to threaten traditional Confucian values, so Korean parents did not send their daughters to school. Only one student came to Ewha in the first year (Rowe and Kim, 1997: 47), and Ewha experienced extreme difficulties in getting women students. Today, the name of the

institution has remained Ewha Womans University – “Womans” rather than “Women’s” – to serve as a historical testimony to the struggle for each individual woman to obtain education.¹²

Under the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945) women’s education faced another change. As Korean children were forced to become subjects of the Japanese emperor, Korean leaders came to believe that education for both boys and girls should be the key to emancipation of the nation. More girls were encouraged to enter the formal educational system, but they were educated to become a “wise mother and good wife” as a means of saving the nation (Jeong-shin Han, 1996). Since 1945 traditional structures have been weakened by a series of socio-economic and political events; Korea’s liberation from Japanese colonization (1945), Korean War (1950-1953), industrialization and modernization starting from the 1960’s.

It is worth highlighting that education has been a driving motor of Korean modernization, a central constituent in the building processes of the nation and economy (Myung-hye Kim, 1995). The Korean way of modernity has been developed based on the super-education system. In 1961 when the Korean government launched The First Five-year Plan for Economic Development as the beginning of a full-scale modernization project, top priorities included education. Six-year elementary school education has been compulsory since 1953, and illiteracy has been virtually wiped out with a literacy rate of 99% (Rowe and Kim, 1997) – among the total population of 46,430,000; 23,033,000 women and 23,396,000 men. The government’s investment in education is a marked feature of Korean modernization.

In 1965, only 33% of females and 51% of males attended middle school (age 14-16), but today these corresponding rates have increased to 99.9% for females and 99.9% for males (KWDI, 1998), and enrollment rates in high school (age 17-19) are 95.3% for females and 95.9% for males. Educational inequality between sexes is almost non-existent up to the level of high school education, however, it becomes pronounced at the stage of entry into a (two-year) college and a (four-year) university. In higher education, male enrollment almost *doubles* female enrollment. As of 1998, 55.5% of females and 92% of males enrolled in a college and a university. Although this is a significant improvement compared with the rates of 21% for females and

47% for males in 1985, a traditional tendency to educate a male child remains in the attainment of higher education.

Koreans are highly educated people with intense educational zeal, especially for university education (Rowe and Kim, 1997). The majority of students think that they must go to university. Why? Girls' academic failure is not criticized due to the traditional perception that women's lives are dependent on marriage, not on academic achievement. Boys in the same situation, however, tend to be socially categorized as a "loser/failure".¹³ Korean parents, regardless of class position, goad their sons to go to first-class universities and to succeed in their careers, but do not express such a desire for their daughters. The traditional femininity continually exerts a negative influence upon the educational aspirations of girls (Kyung-won Cho, 1994).

Today, traditional Confucian values come into conflict with women's modern education and new expectations. In the co-existence of tradition and modernity, women experience ambivalence between two powerful contradictory forces – the modern philosophy of equality and autonomy, and traditional culture embedded in everyday life. Confucianism has taken a central role in the historical development of Korean society, and continues to influence the gendered structure of school practices. For example, the most emphasized precepts for boys' schools are "creativity", "progressive spirit", "independence", whereas those for girls' schools are "chastity", "spirit of public service", "humility" (Jeong-shin Han, 1996). School textbooks reflect male superiority as they are designed and distributed by the Ministry of Education wherein men are predominant policymakers (Kyung-won Cho, 1994). Male politics also requires different compulsory courses for boys and girls in high schools: Boys must take industrial and technical courses, whereas girls must take home economics predicated upon "women's work" (Jin-joo Chung, 1997). Although the concept of equality was written into the 1948 Constitution, the problem of gender inequality in education is not in the official policies, but in the traditional culture that is operating in the process of education.

The traditional Confucian culture is more deeply imbedded in working-class families, and working-class women's education is substantially determined by gender and sibling order (Jin-joo Chung, 1997). When dividing limited economic resources

for children's education, the parents' perception about *the value of the different sexes* becomes the most decisive factor. The first son is generally provided with the best opportunity for education, but daughters lose out. This is due to the working-class parents' belief that any future for the family's upward social mobility would be dependent upon their investment in the education of male children (Myung-hye Kim, 1995). Consequently, 44% of working-class sons have graduated from two-year college or four-year university, while only 8% of working-class daughters have the same educational level (Jin-joo Chung, 1997). Working-class women's lower educational qualifications affect the nature of their work. "Although education alone does not determine women's job prospects, educational levels do limit the nature of jobs that women can potentially obtain and hold" (Jin-joo Chung, 1997: 57). It all points to how profoundly *gender* has shaped the history of women's education and occupational opportunities. While it is true that educational opportunities for women have quantitatively increased over the past decades, the social structures in modern Korea founded on the underlying Confucian assumptions reproduce the traditional ideology of gender performance.

Section (3) Work

South Korea has transformed the nation from a primarily agrarian economy into an industrializing urban society since the late 1960's. In contrast to early European industrialization, the process of industrialization in South Korea has been intense and rapid in only three decades, on the basis of export-oriented industries depending on low wage labor. This "rush-to-industrialization" necessitated the participation of a greater number of workers, including those who were not traditionally considered as "workers" – women. Young working-class women started to migrate to cities and participated in the newly emerging export-zones of light consumer manufacturing sectors – textile, garment, footwear, toy, electronics industries. They were labeled as less skilled, paid poor wages, relegated to the poorest working conditions, and had no opportunity for upward mobility (Jin-joo Chung, 1997). They constituted a cheap and disciplined labor force, the main competitive advantage of the Korean economy in the 1970's – precisely what international capitalists were seeking during this period. These young women were believed to have greater patience for tedious jobs, docility and submissiveness, nimble fingers, and low expectation of rewards. The powerful

couplet of the traditional patriarchal system and the international capitalist division of labor has intimately affected the position and experiences of women in modern Korea (Hagen Koo, 1987). South Korea's economic miracle was achieved in large measure because women worked at the poorly paid jobs predicated by the labor-intensive, export-led industrialization (Mihye Roh, 1994).¹⁴ Korean conglomerates have absorbed more and more women into factories, but not welcomed women into corporate offices, except as secretaries (Gelb and Palley, 1994).

As Korea became a newly industrialized nation in the 1980's, women's labor force participation rapidly increased. According to the 1986 International Labor Organization (ILO) data, 43% of Korean women were economically active, which was commensurate with the labor force participation in advanced countries – France 43.1%, Japan 48.7%, the United States 51.7%. However, since the 1990's Korean women's economic activity has not reached the average level, 64%, of advanced countries, but remained at the level of 48.7% (Ro *et al*, 1998). Two factors can explain this. First, as the national economy has transformed its stages of development, from light export-driven industries to heavy and high-technology industries, it has required different types of labor – men. Women are particularly vulnerable to the politics of the labor market. Korean women's participation in the labor force remains almost at *half* the rate for men. Second, despite women's increasing educational attainments and new expectations, traditional gender-role practices are still pervasive in the Korean labor structure and organizational culture, specifically in terms of (a) occupational sex-segregation, (b) differential employment status, and (c) married women's labor participation.

(a) Occupational sex-segregation

In the corporate sector, women's economic activities are heavily concentrated in traditional "women's work", sales and services, low-paid manual labors, while women in managerial and professional positions form a small minority (Ro *et al*, 1998). The public sector is more reluctant to incorporate women, especially in the field of teaching. Female students make up 60% in teachers' universities (Tae-hong Kim, 1996), but the enrolment of female students at teachers' universities has been restricted, in response to complaints against women teachers for "feminizing

schoolboys". The Ministry of Education has never limited the number of male students at teachers' universities when their proportion was predominant. Currently, two-thirds of the employees in teaching occupation are male.

Government employment is the area where women's access is most limited. Women hold only 1.5% of all high government positions (Bong-Scuk Sohn, 1994), and they are most under-represented in the field of law and politics. The average number of women representatives in past legislatures has been, at most, 2%, and the number dwindled to 1% in the Fourteenth Congress (1992-1996). In local legislatures, women represent 0.9% of the total (KWDI, 1998). Women's low political representation is due to the problems of the male-bond political structure combined with the socio-cultural characteristics that are unique to Korean society. The rigid definition of Confucian gender roles has assigned men to the public sphere and women to the domestic sphere, and this gendered performance still flourishes in contemporary politics. The prevailing perception of the public is that it is "not womanly" to have any interest in and participate in the political processes (Bong -Scuk Sohn, 1994: 266). Women tend to regard political women as "unfeminine", and often exclude themselves from the political world by conceding men the right to rule their own life destiny.

(b) Differential employment status

Women are often discriminated against since most employers prefer men. For example, 38.3% of employment advertisements want only males, 22.8% solicit both males and females, and the rest 38.9% offer no sex specification assuming that only males need apply (Rowe and Kim, 1997). In the major big companies' annual mass recruitment, over 90% of jobs are offered to male university graduates, while application forms of female university graduates are usually refused (Pil-wha Chang, 1994). Employed women are paid an average of 40% of the men's wage for equivalent work (Ro *et al*, 1998), and female university graduates have a wage differential of 68.4% (Mihye Roh, 1994). The wage gap is justified by traditional sex-roles: Women are not primarily defined as breadwinners and women's wages are considered as supplementary to men's in the family economy, hence, women are passed over for promotions at work (Kim and Chun, 1996). The ratio of males and

females who hold high managerial positions is 97.4 to 2.6 (Ro *et al*, 1998). Male employers tend to justify their discrimination against women in terms of “preserving and protecting feminine qualities” (Phil-wha Chang, 1994: 25): Women cannot be sent to foreign countries for training or superintendence because it is not proper for women to be abroad on their own; women cannot be placed in managerial positions because they have to work like men until late at night, which is “not feminine”. The concern to preserve women’s femininity is prevalent in the workplace as women are primarily identified with domesticity, as “wise mother and good wife”.¹⁵

The Equal Employment Act was enacted in 1987 with the principles of equal recruitment, equal pay and maternity protection, however, it has not been actually implemented. “Often, discrimination does not spring from legislation but from practices originating in the psychological and cultural environment” (Elizabeth Choi, 1994: 203). One survey reveals that 82% of major companies “think” that they are employing many women, although a small proportion of women are employed, and when asked why they employ women, 54% answer that “because there are many simple and supplementary tasks” (Tae-hong Kim, 1998). Other studies reveal why companies discriminate against women: Women cannot fully discuss labor issues with male colleagues because they are more concerned about their children left at home (Mi-ha Kim, 1994), and women have difficulties in dealing with work, especially drinking with clients (Rowe and Kim, 1997).

In truth, if one of the cherished truisms of Western feminism is that access to education and thus work will improve the position of women, this is not necessarily the case in the Korean context. Korean women with higher education do not have equal opportunities to hold jobs commensurate with their academic background and qualifications. This is evidenced by a study on the graduates of Ewha Womans University, the oldest and most prestigious women’s higher educational institution in Korea (Rowe and Kim, 1997). From 1973 to 1996, an average of 80% of the Ewha graduates were employed. This is a remarkable achievement compared with the national figure of all female university graduates employed, only 29.8% in 1985. However, such a rosy figure is misleading because almost all of the Ewha graduates are employed in the area of non-managerial jobs unrelated to their specialties – office workers (18.9%), teachers (18.2%), pharmaceutical workers (17%), and the majority

of the remaining as receptionists, typists, telephone operators, or other positions requiring little or no skills and certainly no university education. This finding echoes the inequalities of the sex-segregated labor force, and casts doubt on the universal notion that women's education will promise opportunity and improvement in the women's socio-economic position. Despite the statistical fact that many Korean women have achieved high educational levels, there is an inverse correlation between the level of education and employment, as female university graduates have difficulties in finding positions appropriate to their educational qualifications. This is further evident in the data that the unemployment rate for all Korean women in 1990 was 1.8%, while that of female university graduates was 5.3% - an inverse correlation between the level of education and employment. It is easier for women high-school graduates to find employment than it is for women with university degrees. Although educated women are "lucky" to get employed, they become dissatisfied with under-employment, and leave the job market when other means of financial support and status maintenance become available - most accessibly, marriage.

(c) Married women's labor participation

Women's employment patterns are largely determined by a series of life events such as school graduation, marriage, first childbirth, last childbirth, termination of child-rearing, and elementary schooling. The "discontinuity" in women's employment due to these events shows a typical M-shape pattern (Yook-young Mun, 1998; Tae-hong Kim, 1997): The women's economic activity rate before marriage is 55.5%, but drops to 27.7% right after marriage, showing that more than *half* of working women leave the labor market after marriage. The job involvement rate after the birth of the first child is 26.4%, the lowest employment rate in women's life stages. Women's economic activities start to increase afterwards, yet there is not much difference until the birth of the last child. After the birth of the last child, women's economic activity rate increases by 11%, and reaches 44.2% right after the elementary schooling of the last child. Such increase continues until the graduation of the last child from elementary school, almost recovering to the rate of 54.3%. In short, the pattern in women's economic activities by life stages shows that most working women exit the labor market at marriage, and then return to the labor market after the birth of the last

child. This M-shape pattern demonstrates the importance of the family, motherhood and childcare over women's work.

Such "discontinuity" in women's employment poses two serious disadvantages to women. First, because Korean personnel management systems are structured based on the years of "continued" employment it becomes difficult for women to be promoted in salary and status (Yook-young Mun, 1998). The second problem is, then what kinds of jobs will be available to returning married women? They are limited to either part-time, temporary positions, or self-employed and unpaid family work.¹⁶ In the unavailability of secure full-time job opportunities, married women participate in part-time employment, hoping to earn money for their children's education. Increasing educational expenses for children prompt housewives to earn money to supplement their husbands' income (Mihye Roh, 1994).

Discontinuity in women's employment at marriage is the typical work pattern in modern Korea. It can be argued that instead of effecting an expansion of women's lives in the public economic domain, Korean industrialization has created a "temporary and transitional stage" for women between a relatively free and flexible life with *father* and a life with *husband* where the taste of freedom becomes limited due to the role of childcare. The working of traditional Confucianism still prohibits modern women from continuing with paid work after marriage. University-educated women are not socially expected to work after marriage, and certainly not after childbirth, because middle-class gender roles define men as successful breadwinners whose status can be publicly demonstrated by their supportive non-working wives. This gendered performance is often assumed by wives themselves.

Section (4) Marriage and Family

The rising educational opportunity for women, rapid industrialization and women's economic participation since the late 1960's have shaken the basic fabric of traditional social structures. However, the cultural dislocation of the Confucian ideology comes into conflict with women's new aspirations for career achievement and the traditional values still permeate in everyday family life. This is indicated in the fact that the majority of women – 73.4% of women of age 15 and over – get married and 66.1% of

all married women remain full-time housewives for child-rearing (Hyoung Cho, 1994: 170). According to the 1987 Korea Gallup Polls' comparative report on lifestyles and value systems of housewives in six nations (Korea, Japan, USA, the UK, Sweden, Germany), Korean housewives show the most traditional, family-centered gender role attitudes. As to the survey statement, "Women should have only a family-oriented life, devoting to bringing up their children and supporting their husbands", 83% of the Korean wives agree, and 72% of the Japanese wives agree, while only 10% of the UK wives and 18% of USA wives agree. As to the statement, "A husband should be a breadwinner, and a wife should look after home", 71% of the Korean wives and 71% of the Japanese wives agree, while 26% of the UK wives and 34% of USA wives agree. As to the statement, "If one cannot find happiness and satisfaction with one's partner, it is better to get divorced", only 24% of the Korean wives agree, and 27% of the Japanese wives agree, while 79% of the UK wives and 68% of USA wives agree (Byong-suh Kim, 1994). These responses indicate that the traditional sexual division of labor continues to confine Korean women to the marriage-bound family, and many women still believe that they should be good wives and mothers.

However, the marriage pattern reveals some change among the young generation today. The average marriage age has been pushed upward by an increase in the number of years women spend in school education. Women's average age at their first marriage increased from 19 years in the 1955-1960 period, to 24.5 years in 1987, while men's corresponding age increased from 25.4 years to 27.3 years. As of 1997, the average age of Korean women at their first marriage was 25.9 years, and men's age was 28.7 years (KWDI, 1998). There emerges a consensual voice among educated young women that marriage is an individual choice. The social questioning "marriage, a matter of choice, or a must?" was covered in a national newspaper and debated in a national TV forum during the summer of 1999, which means that the changing socio-economic position of young women today is becoming a heated national agenda. On the contesting TV forum among four panelists, when an educated, single, professional woman in her early 30s freely expressed the joy of leading an independent life, a traditional mother in her 60s associated with a housewives' group sarcastically attacked this single woman, "You must be an extraordinary queer species" (*i*TV, August 13, 1999). This anecdote reveals a facet of

identity contestation between the old and the young generations of women in contemporary Korea.

The young generation of women desire to pursue an individualized lifestyle, which is reflected in a changing view about marriage and an increasing divorce rate. The Korean family has traditionally shown a high degree of stability with a low divorce rate, but now it is experiencing a rapid increase of divorce, particularly among young couples without children. The divorce rate has increased from 5.8% in 1980, to 11.1% in 1990, and 16.8% in 1995 (KWDI, 1998). Currently, one out of three couples is getting divorced (KBS News, July 1, 1999). The increasing divorce rate signals a rupture between traditional gender roles and modern expectations. According to one survey, 80% of Korean single women state that women do not necessarily need to marry (*Hanguhre* Daily Newspaper, July 26, 1999), and this is predominantly stated by women *aged under 25* (79%) and by educated professionals (79%), which means middle-class singles. However, this seemingly liberating picture may be deceptive if one closely examines the survey finding that such an individualized attitude is expressed predominantly by middle-class singles *aged under 25*. A pressing question is, then what happens to single women *aged over 25*?

“One of the most crucial social pressures is toward marriage in Korea. Not only women but also men are expected to get married at *honki* (marriageable age) in order to settle down and have a baby through women’s young and healthy bodies. *Many unmarried women, especially in university, say that they will not get married and will not give birth even in marriage. Nobody takes this kind of young women’s comment seriously.* At *honki*, women get tremendous pressure to get married directly and indirectly, and at the same time, many women are afraid of being left out as a single person. Women in their twenties usually get married. Others study in graduate schools and work in companies and experience unequal treatment with their male colleagues and frustration in discriminating working environments. *Gradually, these women are forced to accept marriage as a proper and safe place. Honki is still powerfully working for women to be proper and normal*”.

(Eun-shil Kim, 1995: 54. *Italics, my emphasis*)

The young women's desire to pursue an individualized lifestyle may turn out to be more a dream than a reality. "Since the family is the basic social unit in Korea, a woman has been given social status and honor by her family. A woman, however, as an individual or as a member of society often does not possess self-identity beyond a family existence" (Hoo-jung Yoon, 1986). Therefore, many women eventually get married and struggle to shape their identity through the institution of family.

The family is a historically created institution. The Confucian legacy has constructed Korea as a "family nation", and socio-political instability has further reinforced the idea of family life. For example, the experience of The Korean War (1950-1953) made an enormous impact on families and the role of women (Ministry of Political Affairs II, 1995). Women had major responsibilities to maintain their family structure by tending to the care and survival of family members in the absence of their husbands during the war. Family values with an emphasis on the role of women have continually been used for political stability in modern Korea. It can be inferred that when a society is struggling for bare survival, offering little protection to its members, people try to survive on their own as tightly consolidated family units. The persistent existence of family values throughout the history of Korea can be interpreted as an indication of the relative weakness and instability of the politics of the public sphere (Hae-joang Cho, 1996). The ideology of family has been further reinforced by the rapid industrialization of Korea. The family is subject to the cycles and stages of the national economy for the reproduction of collectivistic resources (Myung-hye Kim, 1995). The rapid industrialization has been conditioned on a sexual division of labor in the nuclear family – a breadwinner husband and a full-time wife and mother.

Today in Korea, 80.5% of households are composed of five or fewer people (Myung-hye Kim, 1995). Due to the success of the governmental family planning campaign, the total fertility rate has decreased from 6.0 persons in 1960 to 1.48 persons in 1997 (KWDI, 1998), but small family size has not extinguished the desire for sons. The traditional ideology of son-preference reached a peak in infants in their first year of life in 1990, when there were 114.7 boys to every 100 girls (KWDI, 1998). The ratio of male birth has been high as a consequence of women's choosing to undergo ultrasonic scans and aborting their female fetuses. 52% of women of

childbearing age have had at least one abortion, and 63% of women aged thirty-five to thirty-nine in the second or the third pregnancy have had abortions (Davis, 1994). The government has enforced a ban on pre-natal sex determination, however, such enforcement is to protect the rights of males to get married and have offspring necessary for continuing the family. As the male child population has grown disproportionately, finding a woman to marry is expected to be a problem when the current preschool generation reaches marrying age.

Given the significance of family values, the changes in the family structure may not necessarily promise any positive improvement in women's lives. Despite changes in the organization of the family, the traditional Confucian ethics continue to influence the gender division of labor and the women's roles within the family. Instead of liberating women from the traditional gender roles, cultural shifts that affect the modern family system have more rigidly inscribed the traditional cultural definitions of womanhood. How are they structurally interwoven in everyday family life, in the construction of women's identity?

In terms of household income, although women's economic activities have increased men are primarily expected to support their families. 78.5% of men are primary breadwinners, while only 15.5% of men live on women's income (Hyoung Cho, 1994). In the case of full-time working couples, the wife's income is no more than half of the husband's income (Mi-ha Kim, 1994: 209). The proportion of women-headed households has increased, but the income level of major breadwinners differs greatly according to gender: The average income of male breadwinners is almost *three-fold* that of female breadwinners (Hyoung Cho, 1994), so women-headed households are much worse off than men-headed households.

A male breadwinner, however, is not necessarily a manager of the household economy in Korea. Women are usually in charge of the management of household expenditure. It is worth highlighting that Korean middle-class housewives do not necessarily consider themselves as powerless and subordinate. This is found in one study on the dual forms of domestic power of middle-class housewives in Korea – structural disempowerment and constructive empowerment (Hyoung Cho, 1997). Full-time housewives are structurally disempowered to have no advantageous power

resources vis-à-vis their husbands, but this does not mean that housewives are deprived of power throughout their lives. Certain power resources can be created while they perform domestic tasks, for example, in twenty years of married life, they would find family's financial management and often their own separate accounts, and emotional dependence of their husbands and children. Middle-class women enjoy power within the domestic sphere, without challenging the patriarchal ideology in the society. One architect has made a similar point that the physical space of contemporary Korean housing is "over-dominated" by women, and there is little room left for men (Hae-joang Cho, 1997: 137).¹⁷

Another unique feature in the Korean family is that all married women are expected to perform housework *regardless of their employment status outside*. Full-time housewives spend 8 to 12 hours a day on domestic work, and the worth of their domestic labor is 22.8% of GNP (Ro *et al*, 1998). Surprisingly, working wives spend 5 hours on domestic work out of a total of 14 working hours a day (Hyoung Cho, 1994). Yet only 45% of husbands participate in domestic work, 1.3 hours on average a day. Then, what kind of domestic work is shared by husbands? Korean husbands almost never participate in three types of domestic work – cooking, dishwashing and laundry (Hyoung Cho, 1994: 183).¹⁸ They only help with childcare, although childcare here does not include infant care but helping children with their homework. The most frequent parent-child interactions in Korea are watching TV (69%) and homework (33%) (Sun-yuel Choe, 1994: 263).

Working wives want to get paid domestic help, but this is becoming an unrealistic solution as service payment amounts to about one half the average household income. Also, Korean families make a subtle demand on the "personal touch of wife/mother" (Hyoung Cho, 1994). The cultural value of the personal touch of wife/mother is perceived as incomparable to goods and services purchasable in the modern capitalist market or by paid domestic helpers. Women's "personal touch" is most demanded when it comes to childcare. 79% of Korean mothers take care of their children without others' help, and the families where the husband takes responsibility for childcare are only 2% (Sun-yuel Choe, 1994).

Why do Korean men not participate in childcare? Besides the universally profound ideology of women's mothering on the reproduction of femininity and masculinity (Chodorow, 1978), it can be explained by the unique context of the Korean labor market. Since overwork is the rule rather than an exception, Korean men's working hours tends to be extremely longer than their Western counterparts', thus, male breadwinners usually do not have time to participate in childcare or housework. Korean men work 66 hours weekly (Mi-ha Kim, 1994). Employers take the best advantage of human resources by increasing the working hours of men to make up for any shortage in the labor force. Korean men suffer long working hours, which is related to the tragedy that more and more men in their forties and fifties are dying from the strain of overwork. The young generation of male writers sarcastically reflect this social problem on their popular books titled "*You die if you go to the company*", "*Salaried men, do as you like*" (Hae-joang Cho, 1997).

Korean women work 60 hours weekly (Mi-ha Kim, 1994), yet it is solely women who are in charge of childcare and housework. A study on full-time working couples reveals that: (1) it is usually wives who have to be absent from work to look after their sick children, (2) husbands' mothers discourage male participation in childcare, (3) as husbands have not obtained skill and knowledge in childcare, children themselves come to demand the mother's care rather than the father's, and (4) eventually wives distrust the capability of their husbands in childcare, hence, do not request their husbands to share childcare (Mi-ha Kim, 1994). Women have moved into the public sphere, but men have not moved into the private sphere, therefore, Korean women have two jobs – domestic and paid.

In terms of government policies, recognition of the necessity for childcare facilities remains at a burgeoning stage and the law-making for such issues has not been fully realized. There are 820,000 children who need the care, but there are only 2,323 day-care centers, accommodating 73,300 children – only 8.7% of those who need the care (Mihye Roh, 1994: 251). A great demand for childcare facilities is registered by working women, however, a fundamental problem is the traditional perception that childcare is the responsibility of the mother with her "personal touch". It can be claimed that the politics of childcare with an egalitarian role arrangement within the family is more crucial than the politics of creating jobs for women in

modern Korea. The possibility of women's economic activities in the public sphere is preconditioned on the gender-role revolution in the private sphere.

Korean women's "personal touch" is further extended to the care of parents-in-law. The nuclear family in Western societies is based on the assumption that an adult male is liberated from the tutelage of his parents and takes on his own responsibilities by seeking wage work and supporting his own family. This is not the case in the Korean context. Despite the structural shift from the extended family to the nuclear family, the care towards the husband's parents remains women's crucial duties. Living apart in separate residences, women's commuting time simply becomes an added burden. Mothers-in-law are still a dominant power figure and their intervention in the social activities of daughters-in-law is a source of everyday conflicts. The traditional roles of women remain intact as women's place today is still expected to be within the family.

Insofar as indicated, Korean women's identity is embodied in the family not in the individual self. Women's self-identity is sought through their existence within the institution of family, and women have largely internalized their instrumental position. According to the Gallup Polls on the meanings of the family among Korean women, the word "family" is most frequently associated with a "blood tie" (48%), followed by "cooperation" (23%) and "love" (22%). When asked about what child-rearing means to them, 48% of Korean mothers state, "To continue my family lineage" (Sun-yuel Choe, 1994).¹⁹ Family relationships take precedence over all other social relationships in Korea (Byong-suh Kim, 1994). An individual cannot become independent of the family, and the collective identity based on the family has been reinforced through everyday linguistic expression: Koreans tend to use "our" instead of "my" to describe one's belongingness – "our home" instead of "my home", "our wife" (which means "our person in the family") instead of "my wife". Married women are expected to enhance family honor and solidarity, thereby conforming to the modern ideology of "a successful husband and a beloved wife" (Myung-hye Kim, 1995).

Overall, Korean women's lives and identities have been historically constructed through the powerful discourse of marriage-motherhood-family. Korean women who resist performing the traditional gender role of mother and wife are

socially categorized as a “non-woman”.²⁰ The determining force of Confucian patriarchal ideology does not legitimize the lives of single or divorced women. It is only through the identity as mother and wife, otherwise, women’s lives do not have legitimacy at a biological and socio-cultural level. The life experience of an “infertile” woman articulates this point.

“A woman needs a husband and a son even though she is good enough to make it on her own. Everyone looks down on a woman who lives alone without a dependable man. A woman can’t be treated as a whole person if she has not given birth. The best thing for a woman is to marry and give birth to a child. All other things are secondary for her”. (Eun-shil Kim, 1998: 60)

In terms of feminist politics, the identification of women through the discourse of marriage-motherhood-family poses a stumbling block to women’s rights movements in Korea. For the majority of mothers, it is not motherly to feel oppressed, and it is even less so to complain about one’s own hardships and to struggle for one’s own rights. Especially, young women hesitate to join women’s movements because they feel that they are not yet fully-grown persons *until they get married and become mothers* (Hae-joang Cho, 1996). Korean mothers’ power within the family is tremendous, but such powerful energy has not formed an identity as an autonomous agent. Each individual woman’s empowerment within the domestic sphere has not been transformed into collective social power to change the patriarchal system, but rather resulted in a conservative and defensive “anti-feminist” force (Hyoung Cho, 1997). In this particular Korean context, social change cannot easily be envisaged.

Section (5) Sexuality

Discourses on sexuality in South Korea began to appear in public only from the end of 1980’s. In 1988 the first sexuality conference was held, organized by the Women’s Studies Department at Ewha Womans University. Prior to that time it was not possible to discuss sexuality openly in a public forum. “Although women are becoming emancipated, apparently sex is a taboo topic in many of Korea’s homes and schools, where it is considered a subject unfit for the well-bred ears of properly raised young women until the wedding day” (Hyde, 1988: 242). Nowadays sexuality is

discussed on television talk shows, and sex education is offered in primary schools. Since the 1990's sexuality has become one of the center fields in humanities and social sciences (Joo-Hyun Cho, 1997), and discourses of sexuality including women's desire and pleasure have been proliferated in popular culture. However, traditional ideologies are still deeply embedded in modern life, which should not be overlooked or overshadowed by the current changes. This is especially the case in the realm of sexuality where traditional moralities and modern desires are ambivalently intertwined. The young generation of women want an individualized lifestyle and resent anti-feminist beliefs, yet ambiguously follow a path somewhere between imagining a free, independent life and accepting traditional ideologies (Shim, 2000). The traditional Confucian ideologies that still powerfully influence women's sexuality in modern Korea are the double standard of sexual morality, and the chastity ideology forced upon women only.

Sex in Korea is viewed as a special relation which can be allowed only within the boundary of "marriage" (Shim, 1998). The normative sexual relationship means sexual relations between married couples for procreation and pleasure, and such morality excludes sex outside the marriage system (premarital sex, extramarital sex) as socially illegitimate. The "legitimate" sexual practice is limited to legally married couples, hence, marriage is publicly acknowledged as the only legitimate site for sexual conduct (Pilwha Chang, 1997). Naturally in this context, heterosexuality is taken as normal while homosexuality is highly condemned as socially unacceptable. Sexuality can be better understood by considering the interplay of two separate, yet internally linked sectors wherein sexual relations are actually taking place – the formal/legitimate and the informal/illegitimate (Pilwha Chang, 1999). Sexual relationship is legitimized only within the formal marriage system, however, the informal system operates on the opposite rules of temporary relationships or commoditization of sexuality. Here, the double standard of sexual morality implies that men may have access to both sectors, but women are pushed into only the formal/legitimate sector. Korean men generally identify sexuality with the act of sexual intercourse which symbolically means a confirmed possession of a partner woman (Pilwha Chang, 1991). Women, as possessed by their men, are required to maintain absolute fidelity in the course of married life, while men's sexual freedom can be tolerated to some extent.

The rate of Korean men's extramarital sex is 63.6% with a significant difference by age, which means that older men in their 40s and 50s tend to have extramarital affairs more than younger men in their 20s and 30s (Pilwha Chang, 1991). The dualistic sexual morality is somewhat loose about men's extramarital affairs. When a husband is found to have a relationship with another woman, the wife usually endures the agony as family members – especially her mother – would advise that men's extramarital affair, or *Baram* (which means wind), will end sooner or later (because wind will calm down as time goes by) and men will eventually return to the family (Women's Study Group, 1995).

Interestingly, men's extramarital affairs are often justified by men themselves. According to one feminist research on Korean men's sexuality talk, most Korean men tend to view that men are "logical" while women are "emotional", and this dichotomized view helps men rationalize differences in socially sanctioned sexual practices (Elaine Kim, 1998). The majority of Korean men in this research, especially educated middle-class men, tend to believe that it is natural for men to seek variety and for women to love "only one man". This is because, according to these men's explanations, unlike men, women are so emotional that they easily transfer their affections from one man to another and are thus more likely to "endanger their families" if they engaged in extramarital activities. On the other hand, because men are logical, men are able to keep their married lives separate from their "play" by drawing a distinction between marriage/family and sex. In this way, Korean men rationalize their extramarital relations with the belief, "A woman can't get pleasure from a hundred men the way a man can get pleasure from a hundred women" (Elaine Kim, 1998: 73).

Men's extramarital affairs are socially sanctioned unless they break down the family system, while wives' infidelity is never overlooked. If a wife is found to have a sexual relationship with another man, it is commonsense knowledge that she will be punished immediately – through physical violence by her husband, and divorce. In the case of adultery, critical denunciation is always directed against women, but not always against men. As one legal case reveals, for women, even sex-related telephone talk that does not actually accompany any sexual conduct can be interpreted as a

violation of marital integrity and chastity duty as a spouse, therefore, legally it becomes a sufficient reason for men's filing for divorce (Women's Study Group, 1995). This indicates that the Korean judicial system is not free from the dual standard of sexual morality. Sexual equality, though formally inscribed in the Korean legal system, is not implemented in reality. The existing sexuality-related laws, including adultery and domestic violence, are legislated from the male point of view. Women are in a disadvantageous position by the dualistic sexual norm of everyday power that is deeply saturated in, and determines, the perspective of official power (Shim, 1995).

The marriage system operates as a dominant form of social control over women's sexuality by dichotomizing women into two categories – “good women” who experience sex within marriage and “bad women” who seek sex outside marriage (Pilwha Chang, 1997). The prevalent traditional idea of “wise mother and good wife” does not require women to function as an exciting sex partner for their men. On the contrary, sexuality is perceived as almost antithetical to motherhood (Elaine Kim, 1998). Korean men's manliness is not judged by sexiness but by their social status with an earning ability, while women are judged by their ability to take care of children with an emphasis on children's education. Being a good woman is expected to be ignorant of sex, passive in the sexual relationship, and certainly not to talk about sex (Women's Study Group, 1995).

Sex-related talk has traditionally been taboo even between married couples, which includes a discussion on contraceptive methods. Although men usually play a leading role in marital sex, 73.1% of the men avoid contraceptive practices (Pilwha Chang, 1991). Male involvement in contraceptive practices is substantially low, with an estimated condom-use rate of 8.7% and a vasectomy rate of 14.3%, compared with a female sterilization rate of 48.2% (Davis, 1994). Historically, the Korean family planning policy, inaugurated by the government in 1962 and which lasted until 1996, was a “female-oriented” strategy that was not concerned with women's welfare but with population control (Hyoung Cho, 1997). The idea of contraception was introduced and contraceptive services were provided through nationwide networks of public health and administrative organizations. Women chose to control fertility in the ways expected by the governmental implementation. Therefore, even today the

concept of reproduction and fertility control is still taken to be “women’s responsibility” rather than women’s right. In contrast to Western feminists’ understanding of birth control as part of the social movement to achieve women’s reproductive rights and individual freedom, Korean women’s reproductive control is an effect of the state politics of bio-power which has been incorporated into the larger project of modernization and economic development since the early 1960’s (Eun-shil Kim, 1995). Korean women’s bodies have not been controlled by women themselves, but regulated politically in this historical context.

Men’s low participation in contraception coupled with women’s sexual passivity leads to unprepared intercourse, which is a major cause of the high abortion rate in Korea. Unlike USA and other Western countries wherein teenage sex and pregnancy is high, abortion in Korea is mainly obtained by married women. The majority of Korean women who have experienced abortion are married women in their thirties (Davis, 1994). For unmarried young women, abortion is being secretly practiced because of the social stigma associated with the violation of premarital “chastity”. Korean traditional values are most persistently displayed in the attitude towards chastity. Koreans still highly value women’s chastity, while men’s chastity has seldom been an issue.

One study reveals that 67.5% of Korean single men would take issue about women’s premarital chastity, while only 35.1% think critically of men’s premarital chastity (Pilwha Chang, 1991). As to sexual practices, 86.5% of men have premarital sexual experiences, and 73.2% of them had it for the first time during the university/college period. Although teenagers in high school create their own self-governing space for pseudo-sex culture by consuming romance comics, magazines, popular songs, pornography or video rooms, their actual sexual practices are largely restrained. This is because high school students are normally caught in the so-called “concentration camp” for intensive preparation of their university entrance test, therefore, Korean teenagers are mainly identified as a “studying student, sexless being” (Cho Han, 1998). Under the harsh educational demands in high school, the majority of teenagers do not have time to pursue alternative cultures for sexual pleasure, nor can they afford to create any cultural space to discuss their own sexuality. Most young people in Korea come to finally have opportunities to

experience their first sexual relationship once graduated from high school or entering university/college.

Today's Korean young women show mixed attitudes towards premarital sexual relationships: "Even if I love him, I will not have sex with him but guard my chastity until marriage". "If I love him, I can have sex with him before the wedding". 44.8% of female university students show a positive attitude towards premarital sexual relations, while 26.9% show a strongly negative one (Dong-A Newspaper, April 26, 1995). Chastity is still perceived as something divine and particularly valuable. Indeed, this is even so by women themselves as women have internalized chastity as a "sexual asset" for their successful entry into the formal marriage system (Pilwha Chang, 1997). Young women's morality is often judged, by both men and women themselves, on the basis of their premarital sexual experiences.

How deeply is the traditional chastity ideology entrenched in modern Korea? This is indicated in the problematic reality as to why most women, if sexually assaulted, would not report to the police but hide such incident for the rest of their life. The rate of actual cases of sexual violence suffered by women is staggering, 222 times higher than the officially reported rate (Shim, 2000). Forced sex, rape, is socially conceived as a violation of chastity, because Korean sex culture is characterized as genitally-oriented sexuality (Chung, 1988), wherein the meaning of chastity is defined in the bodily concept of virginity rather than faithfulness or mental chastity. Therefore, women's reporting of rape is extremely low: Only 1.8% of completed rapes are reported (Shim, 1998). The social stigma associated with the violation of chastity turns out to be the main reason (88.8%) for not wanting to report. The chastity ideology is deeply supported by women victims and their families choosing to cover up. This indicates that women in modern Korea have not detached from the underlying framework of traditional Confucian culture.

In summary, this chapter has drawn up a historical account on the contemporary socio-economic position of Korean women hitherto with reference to Confucianism, education, work, marriage and family, and sexuality. It is worth highlighting that quite apart from law and economy, traditional culture based on Confucianism remains so embedded in modern everyday life that it has got a crucial

impact on women's lives and identities. The question of how this is further intersected with the women's experience of television, the most popular media culture in everyday life, is the focus of my study. In this chapter I have attempted to situate my study within the social, historical and political contexts, the constitutive macro elements that influence the micro processes of women's everyday lives, identities, and mediated experience of television. As I have already argued, to be a valuable contemporary cultural analysis – both epistemologically and politically – experiential accounts of popular media culture should not be left to speak for themselves, but be grounded in the historical and sociological contexts within which they are constructed. This chapter serves as a socio-historical ground for a fuller understanding of the proceeding chapters on Korean women's experience of television in everyday life.

Chapter 3 Methodology

Section (1) An Ethnography of Researching

Sample design

In order to explore how television intersects with the everyday lives of Korean women of different generations and classes, it was necessary to design the fieldwork research to include a varied sample of women in their 50s, 30s, and 20s, of working-class and of middle-class positions. The age range in each generation was made consistent: between 50 and 52, between 30 and 32, and between 20 and 22. I constructed six different socioeconomic categories, with seven women in each category, which means forty-two women in total. Therefore, my sample design was intended to produce six different case studies on the women's experience of television in everyday life mediated by generation and class.

	Women in their 50s (aged 50–52)	Women in their 30s (aged 30–32)	Women in their 20s (aged 20–22)
Working-class	7	7	7
Middle-class	7	7	7

Identifying the classes

How is it possible to identify working-class women, without asking directly about their occupation, income or an educational level, hence, without offending their feelings in the first encounter? My research was designed to explore six socioeconomic categories primarily by means of intensive personal interviews with forty-two Korean women living in the metropolitan area of Seoul. In an attempt to find twenty-one working-class women and twenty-one middle-class women for the research purpose, my initial concern was identifying the classes, particularly the working-class position of the women. This concern was based on the assumption that exploring their class position in the first encounter would “offend” the possibly prospective informants whose cooperation would provide the source material of the

research and determine the depths of understanding. Without their participation the research simply could not proceed. The label “working-class” is so problematic for working-class women, as they rarely speak of class and do not want to be defined as working class that is articulated through discourses of economic limitation and cultural choice; therefore, how to describe these women can be one of the most difficult dilemmas for a researcher (Skeggs, 1995: 199-201). It is recognized in feminist research on or with ordinary women that “being female undoubtedly sensitizes us to the discomforts and small humiliations which doing research can provoke” (McRobbie, 1991: 133). To identify women’s class without exploring directly, hence without provoking any discomforts and humiliations, I instead solicited the expertise of real estate agencies in the North River area of Seoul and located two contrasting apartment-complexes relevant for the research end. Overall, the information garnered through three real estate agencies revealed the property size, price, geographical location and environment, as well as indicating the residents’ occupation, income and general level of education. By drawing on those three agencies’ consensual views and estimates, it was possible to identify Jungwoo (pseudonym) apartment-complex as an absolutely distinctive working-class estate, and Shinwon (pseudonym) apartment-complex as a characteristic middle-class residence.

Graphically, the appearance of each apartment-complex and its ecology surrounding the community signaled different socio-economic conditions. Jungwoo working-class apartment-complex consisted of ten five-floor buildings in faded gray, with a total of 300 households. This old estate was located near a traditional market interlinked with a maze of narrow alleys and traditional residential areas of individual homes, and served by clusters of small shops and street vendors selling vegetables and fruits. Most of the apartment tenants, especially females, engaged in this type of small-scale sales occupation, and males in street cleaning, apartment security guarding, part-time manual works in the construction field, or they remained unemployed. The overall earnings in the working-class families were less than 1.5 million Won, monthly (900 BP). All the working-class women in their 20s and 30s contacted for my research completed high school education, while some women in their 50s did not complete high school education.

In contrast to the working-class residential ecology, Shinwon middle-class apartment-complex consisted of twenty fifteen-floor buildings in light blue, with a total of 1,800 households. This recently built estate lay at the heart of modern amenities, including a large department store, closely packed Western food retailers, saunas and fitness centers. The overall earnings in the middle-class families were between 2.5 – 4 million Won, monthly (1400 – 2300 BP), depending on the age of the male breadwinner. Unlike the working-class women's economic activity, in the middle-class families men were the predominant economic providers, engaging in professional and white-collar occupations in major corporations. All the middle-class women in their 20s contacted for my research were currently attending a university, and all the women in their 30s had completed university education, while a half of women in their 50s had completed university education.¹

Negotiated strategies: "Being there"

Why would women give generously of their time and experience to a strange researcher for intensive personal interviews? What is the ease of access to the field of others? What kinds of strategies would actually allow the researcher's "being there" (Geertz, 1988: 16), to convince readers not merely that the researcher herself has truly "been there" in contact with others, but to enable them to see what she saw, feel what she felt, and conclude what she concluded? Being there requires drawing on the interpersonal resources, communicative competencies and cultural strategies that we all tend to develop in dealing with everyday life. In the same vein, the status of research can be viewed as one of the numerous social exchanges and negotiations occurring in everyday interactions. In the following, I will describe the ways in which my strategies negotiated the initial access, and allowed the subjects of research to be known, visited and appropriated for my desire to enter experimental moments to gain knowledge.

To recruit forty-two women in two apartment-complexes selected, an advertisement was placed on the notice boards located next to the residents' mail boxes at the entrance of the apartment buildings. In designing the advertisement content, I dwelled on what to offer in exchange for the arbitrary intrusion into women's life. Offering a fair exchange, as an "access bargain" (Butters, 1975: 261),

was to negotiate an initial entry into the field, which could lead to a sufficient exploration of women in the course of research. Thus, some forms of exchange were specified in the advertisement: A session of free English lessons was offered to women in their 20s and the children of women in their 50s, and a period of free babysitting to women in their 30s. While placing the advertisement I encountered several women asking if I could teach their children English, which indicated Koreans' keen enthusiasm in English education. However, the idea of babysitting was an unforeseen problem. Later, the women in their 30s in my research, all of whom politely refused the free offer of babysitting, informed me that most Korean mothers would not feel secure about leaving their child with others except for with their close family members. When visiting the women's homes for the research interviews, I brought a basket of seasonal fruit or a gift set of fresh juice as a fair exchange for their sharing time and experience.

But can it be a fair exchange? What am I indeed offering to these women? How can this research work to their benefit? To approach and use ordinary women as informants in the pursuit of one's academic goals raised ethical questions to me. On one hand, I deeply felt obligated and indebted to these women precisely because this kind of research was predicated upon dependence on their participation and willingness to expose. On the other hand, as the outcome of research would be then contingent upon the degree of their participation, it consciously obliged the researcher to find diverse ways of negotiation and maneuver strategies in a calculating manner, in as many reciprocal contexts as possible, for the encompassing of situations and the mobilizing of their participation. The whole activity of research, of trying so hard to initiate, find, mobilize and understand, was governed by its "desire for knowledge, certainty and mastery", simultaneously, "a will to tell a truth" (Walkerdine, 1986: 198).

Initially, only two working-class women and three middle-class women, both groups in their 20s, responded to the advertisement. So the rest of the women had to be selected through the method of snowball sampling, on the basis of these young women's family and friendship networks in the same apartment-complexes. The research therefore started with these young women in their 20s, inviting one by one to my place to create a comfortable relationship in the felicitous condition. On the first

day of meeting, I did not bring up research questions regarding their experience of television, but instead shared my personal stories in reciprocity of theirs. Staging this kind of interpersonal dialogue was deemed important as a part of managing “first impressions” to sustain an extended series of interactions involving the same participants, and also because “it is on the basis of this *initial* information that the individual starts to define the situation and starts to build up lines of responsive action” (Goffman, 1969: 9-10. *Italics*, his emphasis). Such casual encounters between two women over refreshments in a relaxed home environment came close to a normal visit between friends engaging in everyday conversation. From the second meeting, I started to bring up specific research questions about television, and from the third meeting, suggested to meet at their home, a natural habitat within which television consumption takes place. This was to situate the research enquiry in the context of women’s everyday life. Most interviews were tape recorded, unless they requested otherwise, and each interview lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours, with 6-7 follow-up interviews on average (along with English lessons) to ensure a maximum flow of relevant data. Interviews usually began with a question on the women’s favorite television programs: “What television programs do you like most, and why?” The overall process of the interviews was, however, unstructured and open-ended in the sense that they were not asked the same questions but encouraged to talk and develop their particular interest and views on the subject. In this way, the direction and structure of the interviews was determined freely by the women themselves in their own words and rhythms.² Overall, the tenor of the interviews with these young women in their 20s was so chatty and lively that in most cases it was difficult for me to call an end to the meeting.

Here, it is worth noting the important consequences of the initial relationships established with these young women for the subsequent course of the research, in terms of opening access to women in their 50s and 30s. Based on the facilitative relationships, it was not difficult to get cooperation from their mothers and sisters, mothers’ friends, sisters’ friends, or acquaintances living in the same apartment-complexes. Commonly, older women in their 50s, especially working-class women, tended to perceive academic research as a socially superior investigation with a different level of language, hence, indicated a fear of being turned into an object. To overcome this problem of initial access to them, I instead asked these young women

in their 20s to approach them first and ask easy and general questions on behalf of the researcher, so that later I could follow up with detailed interviews by visiting their homes. These young women in this sense contributed as research assistants, and this voluntary participation in the academic research indicated their overall disposition to exploring, experiencing and experimenting the living world.

The prior relationships with the young women and their intimate knowledge of me further helped to familiarize women in their 30s with the unmet researcher, and to validate my status as safe in the initial entry into the unknown field. Through the young women's assistance and their mothers' wider social links within the apartment-complexes, it became easy to make an appointment to interview the women in their 30s in their homes at a pre-arranged time. The location of the interviews in the women's home environment facilitated a sense of comfort, while allowing for the perceiving and monitoring on the spot of the women's everyday life. Although the presence of their baby intermittently had a disturbing effect on the flow of interviews, the baby's intervention simultaneously acted as a catalyst encouraging a more intimate level of conversation regarding the women's key concern – their childcare role. My repeated visiting as researcher to this private context, 2-3 times on average for follow-up interviews, seemed to offer these young mothers an extraordinarily welcoming opportunity for communications with a sympathetic listener. This indicated the women's own need and desire to talk and communicate with somebody, which was not adequately met by their husbands in day-to-day living.

Throughout the research interviews with these ordinary women, full-time housewives and mothers, I consciously adopted one important strategic position – of being a “non-judgmental active listener” – which means showing respect for their choice of life, their different views, ideas and thoughts on their own lives. At the same time, this conscious positioning was intended to de-emphasize my status as a highly-educated researcher and to display a kind of “professional naivety” (Hobson, quoted in Brundson, 2000: 124) – in fact, a professional strategy “to make them feel I don't know”, thereby keeping them feel more relaxed, interested and in control of their speaking before the appreciative listener. By adopting this particular positioning it was possible to build a felt degree of trust in the research process. Precisely, this trust was built on the “non-violent communication” (Bourdieu, 1999: 608-609), on the

conscious effort to reduce, as much as possible, the symbolic violence that could possibly be exerted through the asymmetric research relationship. It became apparent that the establishment of this kind of trust based on non-judgmental, non-violent communication was crucial for these ordinary women in permitting the highly-educated researcher to enter repeatedly the privacy of their homes, and in receiving her not merely as an intrusive investigator but more as a welcome guest, or a friend with whom they could willingly discuss and share female concerns.

A normative ideal: Who could be there?

‘Why are they so nice to me?’ This was simply a curious question that was often triggered in the course of research, for it was apparent that the women’s reception of the researcher into their private sphere was welcoming, warm and hospitable and the interviews were pleasantly enjoyable. “Whether or not people have knowledge of social research, they are often more concerned with what kind of person the researcher is than with the research itself” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983: 78). Similarly, the questions of how researchers manage to form relationships when they arrive in the field and to what extent close relationships can be constructed must depend upon “who they are”, and this has profound effects on the encounter with the subjects of study (Bell *et al.*, 1993). Precisely, the points quoted here were the case with the Korean women contacted for my research. Why did these women welcome me into their world? As what kind of person was I perceived to them? What does this imply? In questioning my own position in relation to these Korean women of different socio-economic categories, I can only reflect and conjecture about how they perceived and invested interests in myself, not much as a social researcher but primarily, personally *as a woman*. Given that especially in this case it was woman to woman of different age and class, it is necessary to highlight the points of commonalties and differences that decisively mediated the exchange between the researcher and the researched.³

“When an individual enters the presence of others, they commonly seek to acquire information about him or to bring into *play* information about him already possessed. They will be interested in his general socio-economic status, his conception of self, his attitude toward them, his competence, his

trustworthiness, etc. Information about the individual helps to define the situation, enabling others to know in advance what he will expect of them and what they may *expect* of him” (Goffman, 1969: 1. *Italics*, my emphasis)

The presentation of self, as constitutive of everyday life, is also an important element of social research about living human subjects. The young women in their 20s, both of working-class and of middle-class, seemed able to quickly assess the researcher’s social status and cultural competencies by delegating the activity of investigatory looking to the unacquainted individual’s appearance and conduct. To acquire detailed information, from the first day of meeting they did not hesitate to raise probing questions and invest interests in my personal life, especially about my marriage and study in America and England. Such a different life trajectory associated with the Western world was a visible acknowledgement of the different socio-economic position. For these young women, the interview experience with the individual from the outside world seemed interesting and novel, as they characteristically displayed a great desire to explore and travel freely, especially among those of working-class position who have little social experiences beyond their immediate locality. With a pronounced desire for moving and an evolving practice of “modern travel” – by a standard definition and through the mediated experience of global television – these Korean young women can be viewed as “both natives and travelers” (Clifford, 1992: 97) living in a regional, national and global nexus and their everyday cultures perhaps as “both dwelling and traveling”. The presence of the researcher with cosmopolitan experiences was actively appropriated by them to accrue travel knowledge, undoubtedly triggering in them more questions and curiosities about the different world of the West. Precisely, this particular researcher was expected to be an authentic storyteller, who could be interpellated to play out their existing fantasy or imagination about the West. The different types of cultural competencies, including the linguistic capital of English and the attainment of Western education, were particularly magnetic features to these young women, thus my different positionality with the experience of the West played as a unique asset to facilitate the research relationship.

Unlike the single women in their 20s, the married women in their 30s were not particularly interested in the researcher’s different socio-economic status or cultural

capital. Although my experience of higher education in the West could generate enough differences to make us dissimilar, and although I could not place myself in their full-time housewifery position, these housewives in their 30s nonetheless recognized the researcher with a commonality between the positions we occupied as a “married woman”. On knowing I was married, they immediately placed the researcher as one of them – “just like us” with a normal way of life – and on explaining their everyday lives, they usually asked, in reciprocity of their accounts, what my married life was like and whether it was similar to theirs. The class status in this context was not a decisive issue, but rather our shared structural position as a married woman was of central importance to these women in their 30s, both of working-class and of middle-class. They strongly identified the researcher as a married woman of the same age, a peer, who was naturally expected to understand their everyday lives and family relationships, with whom they could safely share intimate experiences. This tendency was manifest in their frequent assertions throughout the interviews: “You understand what I mean”. “As you know Korean husbands”. It was primarily the strong identification as a married woman of the same generation upon which a free and open dialogue was developed.

A crucial point here is that the Korean women’s identification as a “married” woman was strikingly far stronger than commonly assumed. If this is the case a possible existence of dichotomy between married and unmarried women deserves a further investigation. The idea of marriage is normative, powerfully working for Korean women: A married body is a regulatory ideal, or a “normative ideal” (Butler, 1994: 1), which means that marriage not only functions as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice. To be socially proper and normal, Korean women conform to the “unspoken normative requirements” (Butler, 1991: 6) of the society. This unspoken normativity surrounding the idea of marriage and family has been recognized in Korean feminist scholarship. Since the family is the basic social unit in Korea, a woman has been given social status by her family; however, the woman as an individual or as a member of society often does not possess self-identity beyond the family existence (Hoo-jung Yoon, 1986). The following quote from another empirical research on the lives of ordinary Korean women indicates the regulatory working of marriage and its consequence, that is, a subtle division between married and unmarried women in everyday discursive practices, including “talking”.

“One of the most crucial social pressures is toward marriage in Korea... women get tremendous pressure to get married directly and indirectly, and at the same time, many women are afraid of being left out as a single person... Gradually, these women are forced to accept marriage as a proper and safe place... *Unmarried women have difficulties in associating and conversing with married women whose lives are centered around husbands and children*”. (Eun-shil Kim, 1995: 54. *Italics*, my emphasis).

Precisely, because of the assumed sameness based on the status of marriage, I did not have difficulties in associating and conversing with these married women whose lives were centered around their husbands and children. By the same logic, my identity as a married woman – the unspoken normative ideal – further provided an entrée into the welcome experience with the older generation of women in their 50s. Yet this context enacted power relations that were complex and often ambivalent. Although these women in their 50s were considerably older than the researcher, hence, a culturally specific form of authority determined by seniority could exercise power and control, they did not completely treat the researcher as a young woman next door. On one hand, they perceived me as a relatively inexperienced young woman who could thus be given freely a lengthy sermon on the proper female identity predicated on the family and motherhood: “A woman should form a family, that’s the proper life”, commonly emphasized by these older women. As the role of the family and motherhood was of pivotal concern, in a very matter-of-fact way they attempted to fit the younger generation into their definition of femininity, and forcefully sought to place the researcher *within* their experience. On the other hand, these older women tended to hold a great degree of admiration for academic pursuit. Higher education, as a hallmark of respect and recognition in Korean society, was visibly valued by this older generation of women, both of middle-class and of working-class. Unlike the women in their 30s, all of whom did not ask directly about my husband’s occupation, these older women in their 50s boldly scrutinized the younger outsider with direct personal questions. Their key interest was commonly expressed in the detailed inquiry about my marriage and husband. That I had to intentionally or unintentionally explain myself, in reciprocity of the exposure of their selves, as a woman married to a man in a higher educational institution, further impressed these older women, so they less

challenged the legitimacy of the research and the credentials of the researcher. This particular position as researcher, which was determined and enhanced by the marital status, enabled me to negotiate the exchange with the older women, and to be more acceptable and accepted into their private realm, to the extent that I was often expected to advise on their children's academic and career choices.

Here, the cases of these married women in their 30s and 50s raise one important question as to the discursive possibility of the researcher for being there. Who could be there? To put it in another way: "Which bodies come to matter – and why?" (Butler, 1994: xii) "Whose self is more important?" (Probyn, 1993: 67) As explained in Chapter 2 Section (4), almost the most significant aspect of being a woman in Korea has to do with marital status, therefore, a homosexual, single or divorced woman performing against this code tends to be socially categorized and excluded as a "non-woman", a category of an anomaly, and such exclusionary practices based on the status of one's body are the norm. This question of the body is further implicated with a wider question of why a dialogue between feminists (particularly, single or divorced women) and ordinary housewives (married women) in Korea is so difficult, or at least, there exists between the two some degree of unresolved tension or even disrespect which is neither necessarily confronted nor explicitly expressed in patterns of social interaction, but nonetheless can not be ignored. The fact that one "could be there" is a necessary condition for "being there" (Probyn, 1993: 71), and it must be emphasized that research for getting and staying "there" requires a certain type of body. Precisely, I argue that this kind of "person-specific" ethnographic research on the category of lived experience, or an intimate dialogue with ordinary women in Korea, is predicated on the taken-for-granted normativity around the culturally constituted desirable body ("married") and its operative assumptions about sameness ("just like us"). The working of the heterosexual cultural imperative, the normative ideal of the married body and its presumed unity is an unwitting regulation that governs and allows for the possibility of research. It can be therefore asserted that the extent of research on the lived experience of ordinary Korean women is contingent upon "specific dynamics of research relationship" (Clifford, 1992: 97), which are spatially bound and operating by rules and possibilities within a set of local codes and social conventions – more specifically, within a normative set of female bodily definitions and experiences

produced through the matrix of heterosexuality and marriage and its regulatory practices.

Inferring from these Korean women, I intend to ask if it would be the case that the unspoken code of normativity in a particular society and the assumed sameness in a particular group are subtly yet powerfully working in the context of doing research, both enabling and limiting the degree and pattern of exchange between the researcher and the researched. I am here drawing attention to politics and epistemologies of the body in the context of doing research – whether and how the body constructs and restrains the production of knowledge. “Knowledges are bound up with bodies and authors with effects” (Probyn, 1993: 71). What if a single or divorced woman researched these married women in their 30s and 50s, and how would its effect be different from mine? Could a homosexual researcher be there interviewing heterosexual married women, and to what extent could their exchange be enacted? Would there be significant differences between two researches, one by a middle-class woman and the other by a working-class woman, both studying the same subjects of working-class women – and if so, in what way? My questioning here is not to suggest which one is better than the other, but to pay attention to the sensitive issue – that is, the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the researched, or the impact of the researcher’s positioning within the constraints of its circumstances – and recognize the consequences, both the value and the limitations of research. “This is intrinsically neither good nor bad, but it does have consequences that must be recognized. Failure to recognize the *partiality* of any account can lead to acrimonious disputes over who has got it right” (McRobbie, 1982: reprinted in 1991: 126. *Italics*, my emphasis). Arguably, this important insight gained from feminist scholarship leads to a view of research as partial – “that research is a historically-charged practice; that it can never present more than a *partial* portrait of the phenomenon under study” (McRobbie, 1982: reprinted in 1991: 128. *Italics*, her emphasis); “that the lives and identities being chronicled are necessarily partial, fluid, performed and constituted in the context of that particular ethnographic moment” (McRobbie, 1997: 184).

This important point was recognized long ago and has been seriously taken in feminist scholarship, and it is further worth highlighting that current anthropologist debates surrounding the notions of partial discursivity and self-reflexivity bear a

striking similarity to it. To take prominent examples, there are emphases on “the partiality of cultural and historical truths – rigorous, committed and incomplete” (Clifford, 1986: 6-7), and “the transformation, partly juridical, partly ideological, partly real, of the people” (Geertz, 1988: 132). However, these leading male authors in reflexive anthropology appear uninterested in the issue of gender and ignorant of feminist work. This is clearly demonstrated in an internationally well-known collection *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus, 1986) wherein feminist and non-Western authors are significantly excluded, yet almost exclusively male perspectives and the experience of men are centered. Thus, this collection itself attests to the serious partiality of cultural and historical truths.

Nevertheless, my point here is that the partiality of cultural truths, hence, partial knowledge, is a discursive effect of the positioning of researcher. Positioning is the key practice grounding knowledge, that is then, “situated knowledge” (Haraway, 1991: 193). For example, the positioning of a married woman researcher in relation to full-time housewives and mothers may exclude a different angle of critical knowledge that can be discursively constructed in the positionality between the same women subjects and a single or divorced woman researcher, or a homosexual researcher with a different perspective of, and focus on, life. And vice versa, the focus of the latter situation may discursively exclude a different degree of intimate knowledge that can be shared by the focus of the former situation based on the assumed sameness of socio-cultural experiences. This exclusion is in any case inevitable, and there is nothing intrinsically wrong with it. “Every focus excludes; there is no politically innocent methodology for intercultural interpretation” (Clifford, 1992: 97). Research in this sense can be recognized as more of a “discursive and interpretative activity” (Geertz, 1973: 9).

Data is, then, an effect of discursive practices for understanding the human condition and experience of “ready-made, second-hand worlds, not a world of solid fact” (Wright Mills, 1963: 405). The positioning of researcher in relation to the researched and the specific context within which the research act takes place determines the status of data. Thus, I am not claiming here that my data is purely neutral and objective, representative of a whole truth, or a wholly autonomous ontological text, but the data is the result of discursive practices of research which

produces culturally-specific situated knowledge.⁴ “There is no unmediated photograph or passive camera obscura... there are only highly specific visual possibilities, each with a wonderfully detailed, active, partial way of organizing worlds” (Haraway, 1991: 190). My data is a detailed partial claim, with “objectivity as positioned rationality” (Haraway, 1991: 196), about the Korean women’s everyday lives intersected with the experience of television. It is a multi-layered partial representation of women’s everyday reality mediated by generation and class – with no aspiration to lay claim to transcendence and universal application, and with no right to be a tribune for the unheard and the unseen. “Feeling of ownership: It is I who will describe them, I who will create them – sounds not merely presumptuous, but outright comic” (Geertz, 1988: 133). The spoken testimony of these Korean women and its representation are “not taken as expressive of a full human being, but rather understood as partial, fragmented, articulations of available language codes” (McRobbie, 1997: 172). Given that a great many portrayals of cultural truths have been reflecting Western domains of White experience, my partial articulation here – in the available language of English for Western readers – about the non-Western Korean women’s experience attempts to tell and enlarge the sense of how another form of life can go with the accomplishment of television consumption. “I am not sure I can tell the truth... I can only tell what I know” (Clifford, 1986: 8). To conclude, however, “while we may never know the whole truth, and may not have the literary means to tell all that we think we know of truth... shouldn’t we nevertheless keep trying to tell it?” (Scholte, quoted in Morley, 2000: 24).

Section (2) TV Talk as a Method

The unstructured open-ended interviews on the subject of television generated a corpus of data, some of which were not directly related to television itself but to the women’s own lives. In fact, the researcher’s continuous attempt to return to, and focus more on, the discussion of television was almost in vain. This was especially the case with the older generation of women in their 50s. By virtue of the researcher’s presence with the subject of television, the women themselves voluntarily opened a discussion on their lives. Even though the informants were not asked to describe their intimate life history, such kind of narrative was naturally disclosed and readily shared in the context of interviewing. This pronounced openness, readiness and willingness

were of peculiar interest to me. Why do the women talk to a strange researcher about their personal lives? What motivates them to talk at such length, even making confidential statements? In exploring this question, I want to draw attention to, and give special credit to, the unique nature of television, its inseparability from women's everyday life: Television is deeply embedded and interwoven into everyday life (Silverstone, 1994). Specifically, in this section I will highlight the self-reflexive nature of TV talk and recognize its unique advantages as a useful method of understanding women's everyday lives.

Indeed, why would ordinary women talk to a strange researcher about their personal lives and experiences? This supposedly would be highly unlikely, unless the subjects chosen are friends of the researcher, or the friends' mothers, sisters or previous acquaintances, which is often the case in social and cultural research on the category of experience. For example, one early work (McCrindle and Rowbotham, 1977: 1) on the lives of British women reveals that "we chose this group of women from amongst our friends, our friends' mothers and contacts we have made through the women's movement. They are not supposed to be typical or representative, but simply individual women talking about their lives". Another work (McRobbie, 1978) on British working-class younger women shows that their typical reactions were giggling, shying or shunning away from the academic researcher. A recent French research (Bourdieu, 1999: 610) on disadvantaged people also states that "we left investigators free to choose their respondents from among or around people they knew or people to whom they could be introduced by people they knew". Given the problem of power and talk in asymmetrical society, my attempt here to espouse TV talk as a useful method can be particularly adept at recognizing the opportunities available in studying otherwise a hidden and muted presence of the powerless, women in particular.

Then, how does TV talk allow for such a useful method? To explain this I will first highlight the unique nature of television. Television is accessible to all, "it is there to be talked about by all" (Scannell, 1989: 155). All talk on television is public discourse, is meant to be accessible to the audience, thus this broadcast talk is "intentionally communicative" (Scannell, 1991: 1). Television constantly provides topical material for everyday conversation and functions as a shared cultural resource.

In my research about Korean women, television drama in particular was the most talked-about program, almost like a ritual social event. As existing audience research strongly supports (Morley, 1988), watching television drama was more or less an exclusively gender-specific activity to these Korean women interviewed. "Watching television drama is a woman's privilege!", was commonly asserted by the married women in their 50s and 30s. One of the key pleasures that women find in television drama is the "validation of their own kind of talk" (Brown, 1987: 22). On one hand, this validation works neatly because television drama tends to use the same forms of talk that women use among themselves in everyday life. On the other hand, the subject-matter of television drama is so familiar to women viewers that there can be a high level of confidence and pleasure in the free flow of their TV talk. The point therefore is that every woman is entitled to have views and opinions about what they see and hear on television in the routine contexts of day-to-day life, which is not always the case with most other cultural resources in other social circumstances. But television is, precisely, "a common resource and a common knowledge that excludes none" (Scannell, 1989: 155). By functioning as shared cultural and topical resources among the women audiences, by discovering the pleasures of ordinariness, and by playing a role to re-articulate the boundaries between the public and private spheres, television unobtrusively contributes to the "democratization of everyday life" (Scannell, 1989: 136).

For the Korean women interviewed, regardless of their age and class status, talking about television was an easy, interesting, female-relevant activity that did not require a high degree of cultural capital. Every woman indeed sounded like an expert on television. Television acted for the women as a catalyst to talk as it provided palatable topical resources based on a shared cultural identity – most of all, the identity of mother and housewife. Therefore, this kind of research on a common knowledge of television was perceived by these ordinary women as a less intimidating and more welcome experience, in contrast to their lack of opportunities to express their own views and opinions in this way in other social circumstances. Although most women initially showed a varying degree of anxiety about being interviewed, once they began talking about their favorite television programs, there was a significant manifestation of interest and fascination. Almost invariably they had a surprising amount to talk about on the topic of television, drama in particular, and

were able to recall the details of episodes and dialogues. While frequently relating those details to their own life circumstances and experiences, the women's TV talk unobtrusively expressed their own thoughts, feelings, desires and aspirations.

Thus, it must be emphasized that the women's reflection upon their self and world was the major component of TV talk, of the research process. Most significantly, these Korean women seemed to enjoy the process of self-reflection, that is, the opportunity to talk about television dramas with particular relevance to their own lives and experiences. Reflexivity is a key practice that occurs at the moment of researching, registering as an integral process of TV talk upon which the research interview proceeds to a partial articulation of self.⁵ As the data throughout this thesis will demonstrate, arguably, television is taken to be a self-reflexive object, and the women's TV talk is reflexively intertwined with their everyday life. In other words, TV talk as a dramatic indicator arrives at a composite illustration about the structure and substance of everyday life. Precisely, here lies the potentiality of TV talk as a method to be considered for the substantive understanding of women's everyday lives. For the Korean women interviewed, television is more or less a self-reflexive object through which they compare and evaluate their own lives in relation to others and a wider world. It is through the window of television that people often understand how the world is seen, felt, known and understood, and furthermore, they come to reflect upon their own lives, experiences, relationships and moralities, while talking about the norms and values lived by others on the television screen (Gillespie, 1995). Talking about their favorite, ritualized viewing of television programs in this way invites a self-reflexive negotiation of what ought to be both in their real lives and in the television world.

"The banality of the most ritualized talk often takes place over the most serious occasions of daily life as the only way of saying the unsayable" (Bourdieu, 1999: 384). It usually happened that women's TV talk about the ritualized viewing of their favorite dramas naturally digressed toward a reflexive articulation of their intimate personal lives, surprisingly reaching "knowledge not prefigured in one's starting paradigm" (Willis, 1980: 90). This surprising digression toward saying the unsayable took place when there was a forcefully strong point of identification with characters and their situations, tensions and moral dilemmas. Precisely, this

identification process took the form of “storytelling” (Hobson, 1989: 150): Women comment on the stories, assess them for realism, relate the incidents, and move from drama to discussing the incidents which are actually happening in their real lives. Retelling drama stories in this reflexive manner is possible as the discourse of television drama facilitates an access to common knowledge of the characteristically female patterns of social interaction and interest – the personal, intimate, emotional, and familial relationships — that women viewers can draw upon to make sense of their own lives. It provides “known-in-common cultural referents” (Lull, 1980), or “reference points for simile and metaphor in everyday language” (Gillespie, 1995: 58), through which women can articulate their own forms of life experiences and explore cultural identities. The banality of the most ritualized talk about television can surprisingly trigger and stimulate thinking: “I never thought about this before, but now I come to think...”, or “Aha! this is...”. Aha! was an explicit point made frequently by these Korean women interviewed. It appeared to be a delightful experience for them to come up with an answer at the momentary ground of TV talk and realize a fitting interpretation of something they had never thought about before.

What is the significance of women’s TV talk realized in the research context? Television, drama in particular, is a medium that draws more strongly on oral than literate modes of formal construction, hence, the status of TV talk can be part of a materially existing “feminine discourse”, which is related to the nature of women’s oral culture, especially gossip, and to the characteristics of many of women’s cultural practices, ranging from traditional patchwork-craft skills to intimate storytelling techniques, as a set of “motley moments” (Brown, 1990: 183-184). Interconnected with the quality and character of the cultural form of gossip in ordinary daily life, TV talk in the research context is a self-reflexive tool available for women to articulate the conditions of their life and experience, formerly private complaints and discontents. It sparks a rare space for the articulation of their muted presence in highly specific and detailed terms. In articulating it, they define their self. Women’s TV talk is a significant form of everyday self-articulation. This unique elaborate feminine discourse may be an “art of the weak” (de Certeau, 1984: 37), a tactical element of everyday practices, which poaches and creates surprises in the male field of vision.

Section (3) Emotion as an Effect

The unstructured open-ended interview between two women on the subject of television, conducted in a relaxed home environment, often came close to a normal conversation between friends, or even surprisingly, to a therapy situation. "Is this a psychotherapy session?", stated one middle-class young woman while discovering a fitting interpretation, Aha! The interview's effect unwittingly produced in this felicitous context was the outpouring of emotions in these Korean women. By virtue of the researcher's presence with the subject of television, the interview at times gave the women a dramatic intensity and an extraordinary emotional force that had the effect of a revelation. By and large, the research interview was an emotionally charged experience for the women participants. In this final section, I therefore draw attention to this emotional dimension of the research practice, and recognize the significance of emotion as a source of insight in the construction of knowledge.⁶

How is the outpouring of emotions possible in the context of talking about television, drama in particular? This is not to suggest that television drama can be a therapy genre, but there is a certain quality of therapeutic function in the self-reflexive way in which these Korean women talk about characters and circumstances in drama with particular relevance to the conditions of their own lives and experiences. Especially, when painful emotional issues were identified through television drama and re-articulated in the interviewing setting, it closely resembled a therapy situation. This was the most pronounced case with the working-class older women in their 50s, as they tended to grasp the interviewing situation as an exceptional opportunity offered to them to explain themselves and their painful feelings in available language codes. Not only with these working-class older women, commonly, the interviews with the Korean women across different age and class nearly elicited many affective responses – discontent and anger, resentment and frustration, pain and pleasure, uncertainty and ambivalence, envy and longing. There was an extraordinary expressive intensity and a deep emotional energy in not what women always say. The women's outpouring of emotions is a fragmented, partial, expressive mark of self. The open-ended interview, with a silent pause at times for thinking and reflecting, enabled the women to articulate their affective subjectivity, needs, desires and wishes. They took advantage of this condition, or the prompting afforded by TV talk, to vent

feelings and experiences usually kept unsaid or repressed. The women's outpouring of emotions in this sense might be painful and gratifying, simultaneously.

On such emotionally charged moments, these Korean women "enthusiastically" engaged in a process of self-discovery, and this consequence may represent a unique contribution of the research process. By "enthusiastically" I mean that far from being simple instruments in the hands of the researcher, the women respondents took over the interview themselves and gave the impression of finding a sort of accomplishment in a self-analysis, an emotional gratification, "a joy in expression" (Bourdieu, 1999: 615). With the unique opportunity afforded by the interview on the subject of television, with an extraordinarily expressive intensity at times, they carried out a self-reflexive examination on their life and identity. I would say that this kind of research can be considered as a self-discovery exercise that can prompt and sensitize the women interviewees to reflect on the way in which the ordinary circumstances of life are seen, felt, known and understood. The role of social research in this light can be seen as a complex, potentially empowering, emotional intervention in the articulation of everyday need, desires and feelings discovered through this very articulation.

Precisely, the research interview here helps create "the conditions for an extraordinary discourse, which might never have been spoken, but which was already there, merely awaiting the conditions for its actualization" (Bourdieu, 1999: 614). In this particular way the research produces an additional social value. Given that ordinary women have almost no, or very little, opportunity to have both access to and voice critically over the power, media, and macro-politics within the realm of the public sphere, this kind of research interview gives access to the women "to make the private worlds public" (Bourdieu, 1999: 1). It provides access to the inside experiences of worlds that we can identify with. This profound effect, the intensive emotional self-disclosure, was produced by supportive intimacy and caring, upon which the essential part of the felicitous condition for the interview was formed. Such caring emotionality is a necessarily occurring, rewarding reciprocity between two women, the researcher and the researched. Bearing in mind an existing dichotomy – We (social scientists) vs. They (ordinary persons) – my position as researcher consciously rejects a scientific proclivity to separate the subjects of research from the

researcher. My welcoming disposition to the supportive intimacy and caring involvement with the women respondents is not necessarily evidence of bias that needs to be eliminated in the research process. I would rather argue that this welcoming disposition to the supportive intimacy and caring involvement, which leads one to make the respondent's problems one's own, the capacity to take and understand that person in her distinctive condition, is a manner of "intellectual love" (Bourdieu, 1999: 614) which is held to be the supreme form of knowledge.

Here, although I follow Bourdieu in some important ways, as quoted above, it should be also recognized that his approach is not without flaws and my own work can be differentiated for these reasons: First, Bourdieu's work on human experience is not grounded in historical and sociological context, but uncritically accepts or essentializes certain categorizations (e.g. gender, race, class) by leaving aside questions about "the constructed nature of experience" (Scott, 1992: 25), about how subjects are constituted in the first place and how their vision (e.g. language, discourse, history) is structured. Second, because everything is already structured to Bourdieu, he rejects the idea that people are able to express politics, or empower themselves through subcultural expression (McRobbie, 2002). Finally, Bourdieu (1999: 629) seeks to represent the experiential accounts of disadvantaged people as the truth about "the social origin of unhappiness" – taking them as "true fictions", not as "partial, fragmented, articulations of available language codes" (McRobbie, 1999: 77) – so his preoccupation with veracity overlooks its inherent partiality, the inevitable "partial truth" (Clifford, 1986) of the research practice.

Nonetheless, my point here is that the relation to each individual woman of my research can be described as "a relation of affection, empathy, and the highest form of love: love that allows for intimacy without the annihilation of difference" (Jaggar, 1992: 162), and that such intellectual love is the essential precondition for comprehension and knowledge in this sense draws on "heart as well as hand and brain". I assert that to omit the personal and emotional is to omit the central intellectual and practical experience of research. It is important to recognize the personal and emotional character of social research, and to be able to reach the deep and hidden experiences of emotions without giving into sensationalism. It is a kind of empirical research that I have engaged with and intend to propose here – the research

that can share the life of the subjects under study, however in an obtrusive and partial way, invite them to reflect on how they live through and make sense of their own lives, and produce an additional social value, precisely by providing them with these extraordinary conditions for a clearer understanding of their own circumstances. Often, doing research can be ambivalent, caught between two anxieties; “one a scientific worry about being insufficiently detached, the other a humanistic worry about being insufficiently engaged” (Geertz, 1988: 15). It is useless to attempt to negate the social distance that exists between the researcher and the researched, and the power asymmetries upon which that encounter rested. But critically bearing all these in mind, an involvement of the researcher is expected in order to take and understand women under study in their distinctive conditions, and to become part of the relational field, “so that we continually do *feel* with the women we are studying” (McRobbie, 1991: 127. *Italics*, her emphasis).

The women’s outpouring of emotions in my research indicates that women experience their lived experience as feeling, and speak of self as feeling. Like experience, this emotional structure is, perhaps, constructed socially and culturally as norms, familial and relational obligations. The Korean female subjectivity or her experience of feeling is something that must be understood differently from a Western female subject or a European ego. It may be the case that Korean women operate with such emotional categories of experience, conveying internal states of feeling, but they take them seriously “in a way that Europeans do not”, and their notion of personhood and emotional structure is “quite different from the European autonomous ego” (Marcus and Fischer, 1986: 47). Significantly in this Korean case, there is an interrelationship between experience and feeling. I thus appeal to acknowledge the importance of the emotional responses of women, but the issue at stake is the absence of the language of emotion. Feeling as experience, or experience as feeling, is not recognized as a reliable source of knowledge, but women’s emotionally charged experience tends to be dismissed or simply labelled “self-indulgent” (Bell, 1993: 3). “We don’t have the language to begin to talk about the emotionally charged moments” (Bell, 1993: 29) in which women *feel* their lives with clarity, only to defy description, to be beyond scientific discourse. This absence of the language of emotion does not seem totally unrelated to the wider question, why has it been so difficult for women to be heard and known? Our task to be followed is to provide a

vocabulary in which the women's "felt" experience can be better understood, and to develop a system of analysis that can better inform the "felt", along with the "said" of, social discourse.

What is the status of emotional knowledge? There is no doubt that emotion plays a key role in doing research, and methodology which is going to think with and engage with emotion is inevitably open-ended. My obvious intention here is to recognize the emotional dimension of the research practice, and reclaim the devalued term "emotion", therefore, the devalued status of emotional knowledge from its perishing occasions as central to the articulation of women's lives. I intend to rescue emotion from its discarded role in the construction of systematic knowledge, to "restore the emotional dimension to the current conception of rationality" (Fonow and Cook, 1991: 11). In contrast to the perceived value of reason as the indispensable faculty for acquiring knowledge, emotion has been considered as irrational, private, potentially distorting and subversive of knowledge; furthermore, while reason has been associated with members of dominant political, social, and cultural groups, emotion has been associated with members of subordinate groups (Jaggar, 1992: 145-157). The emotions of subordinate groups, women in this case, should be importantly recognized because the emotions of women may enable us to perceive the world differently from its portrayal in conventional descriptions. My attention to emotional knowledge here is an epistemological strategy "for seeing from the standpoints of the subjugated in order to see well" (Haraway, 1991: 192), although the standpoints of the subjugated are not innocent positions, nonetheless the subjugated standpoints expressed often through their emotions should be acknowledged. It is my argument that emotion, as a mark of self, can stimulate new insights and conceptualize differently how the world is seen, felt, known and understood by women.⁷

In the following chapters, I attempt to make explicit the emotional, private and intimate accounts of Korean women about their everyday lives intersected with the experience of television. "Do not deplore, do not laugh, do not hate – understand" (Spinoza, quoted in Bourdieu, 1999: 1). The women's emotionally charged experience should not be humiliated or downgraded as unworthy of studying. "Who would be interested in Korean women, who will listen to Korean women?" As a researcher who has respect in the highest degree for the Korean women studied, I can

share the same kind of anxiety found in a Black intellectual who was ridiculed amongst the White audience, “What is there to say about black women!” (Hooks, 1982: acknowledgements). This anxiety arises from the undeniable truth that the existence of women of color is violently ignored and excluded. The essential vocation of interpretative research is “not to answer our deepest questions, but to make available to us answers that others... have given, and thus to *include them* in the consultable record of what [wo]man has said” (Geertz, 1973: 30. *Italics*, my emphasis). This work has striven to include and to be included.

Chapter 4 Korean Working-Class Women in their 50s

Section (1) Misery of Everyday Life: TV, Gender and Emotion

In this section I explore the use of television in the homes of Korean working-class women in their 50s. Specifically, I focus on the way in which television is used by the women in relation to their husbands. What are distinctive features in the women's use of television in the intimacy of domestic life in particular relation to their husbands? By analyzing the women's TV talk on this subject, I intend to show the way in which television is intersected emotionally with the women's domestic life and implicated in the nature of gender relations. This section highlights the points of intersection between television, gender and emotion.

All the working-class women in their 50s in my research, except for two staying-home housewives, are main breadwinners for their families. These women run a small store (e.g. clothing retailer, audio component shop, miscellaneous store) or engage in door-to-door sales as their husbands do not have a regular job. Everyday in varying degrees, these working-class women face a "double shift of duties", (Hochschild, 1989), meaning that once they return home from work late at night around 9:00pm, they then take care of housework. They must cook, clean up the kitchen and the rest of the house, do the laundry and other chores. Then exhausted, they attempt to rest until falling into sleep, by watching their favorite television programs, mostly home/family dramas. This is the typical routine of their everyday life. There is no particular holiday or weekend leisure for these women. All with relatively little or absolutely no help from their husbands, these working-class women dutifully and "unquestioningly" carry on a harsh ritual of everyday life.¹ By "unquestioningly" I mean that this generation of working-class women tend to accept a note of traditional fatalism, as one woman precisely expresses: "Woman's life is destined from her birth. If you are destined to live a good life, you are destined to meet a good husband. Woman's life is dependent upon the husband". Thus, they put up with hardships as a fact of life destiny and do not question their problematic positions. They continue to resign themselves to the traditional roles instead of seeking for change. These women themselves do not expect their husbands to share

joint responsibilities in the domestic work, and in many cases they seem to never dream of having their husbands' help with household chores: "My husband would never cook in the kitchen even if he were hungry to death". Yet they do not complain, challenge or harbor a grudge about their husbands' absolute non-participation in the domestic work and minimal-contribution to the household finance. Everyday, these women continue to perform the culturally expected role of domestic responsibility in addition to whatever viewing they can spare at late night. Therefore, their television use tends to be fragmented. Fragmentation is one dominant pattern of television use in the women's hard lives.

"I just watch a little bit of this, a little bit of that when time allows".

(Soon-hee, 52)

"I am not completely absorbed into TV. TV just passes me by". (Na-ju, 50)

"I cannot sit still watching TV even during the weekend because my husband interrupts, "bring this, bring that!" (Jung-wha, 50)

"I only watch what I like and avoid what I don't like. When the first son in *Rose and Beansprout* (prime-time home drama) was about to go bankrupt, got into money trouble, I stopped watching it. It stifles me. I avoid unhappy, dark stuff. *My life is already hard, why bother to watch another hard stuff?* When it turned funny later, I started to watch it again". (*Italics, my emphasis*)

(Soon-young, 51)

As shown above, women's television use is fragmented as interrupted by the endless domestic work and the constant care for the family, including the husband's blunt order. Television use is further a fragment of a fragment for these working-class women as the result of consciously selective viewing. This fragmented pattern of television use implies "how difficult it is for most women to construct any leisure time space for themselves within the home – any space, that is, in which they can feel free of the ongoing demands of family life" (Morley, 1988: 30). Besides the lack of material resources, these working-class women basically do not have sufficient time to enjoy any cultural activity including television consumption since they find rare

moments of “declaration of independence” (Radway, 1984) from the endless demands of day-to-day lives, both inside and outside home. These women, regardless of their full-time work status, are sparsely entitled to any socio-cultural power or leisure activity including television viewing. For them, home is not a site of leisure, but primarily defined as an extended “site of work”, so they can relax and enjoy television viewing only in fragmentation. On the contrary, the way their husbands use television in the home is completely opposite.

“My husband sits alone in the room watching TV. When he watches his favorites we have to cat-step to not disturb him”. (Min-sook, 51)

“My husband always watches TV alone. Then he shouts, ordering a cup of water!” (Byung-soon, 52)

“While he watches the news from 8:00 until 10:00 in the evening, we go to another room and watch the old small set”. (Jung-wha, 50)

Contrary to the women’s case, the home is exclusively reserved as a “site of leisure” for the Korean working-class husbands, regardless of their employment status. Home is a place they can relax wielding “cultural power” (Morley, 1988), including the control of television use, in a more uninterrupted and concentrated manner than their working wives do. They can watch television in a fulfilling way because they control the conditions and relations of the home. It appears that regardless of work status, the position of Korean working-class husbands is uncontested and taken-for-granted by these women.² If the remote control device is a “highly visible symbol of condensed power relations” (Morley, 1988: 36) in the gender relationship, the extreme level of master power held by the Korean working-class husbands is evident in the above way in which television is dominantly used in the home.

Naturally, these working-class women complain about their husbands’ exclusive use of television in the home. However, I want to particularly accentuate that they do not simply complain about the fact that their husbands exclusively occupy television alone during primetime. In fact, there is another aspect that these women more forcefully complain about, which is their husbands’ distant demeanor

from emotional and intimate life. As demonstrated in the following accounts, the women's complaints about their husbands' use of television hinge greatly on the substantial absence of emotional intimacy in the domestic life.

"Oh! He was so dominating with us. Let's say, once he persisted "this is a beansprout" we had to believe this was a beansprout even though it was not. Even though my son, daughter and I knew that this was not a beansprout, we had to obey him by saying, "Yes, this is a beansprout"... He hardly talks with us. Man and wife should discuss with each other, right? I am never involved in that. He makes all the decisions, all the rules. *We have never had something called family time. We don't watch TV together. He has never watched dramas with us. So, what's the fun in life together?"* (Italics, my emphasis)

(Min-sook, 51)

"He rarely talks with the family. His mouth inside will get cobwebby. He rarely watches TV with us. We don't watch TV together laughing together. When I watched the drama *The Last War*, he would simply watch beside me, then snore". (Kyung-ja, 50)

"Husbands of our age are all similar. They are blunt, no fun. We have never had a family time together. We have never watched TV together".

(Soon-hee, 52)

"Whenever I watch a sweet family on TV, I really envy that. Some people may try to be like that sweet family. But you just can't be a sweet family when you have lived this way for so long". (Soon-young, 51)

"Young women (on TV) get enough love from their husbands. They freely express affections for each other. They can hear from their husbands everyday, "I am sorry", "thank you", "I like you", "I love you". We never ever heard that kind of expression from our husbands for the entire life! I have never heard that from my husband!" (Na-ju, 50)

The working-class women's complaints above, in a streak of acute pain and hopelessness, reflect the "misery of everyday life" (Lefebvre, 1971: 35). One may easily assume the sources of misery in the working-class lives in terms of material conditions concerning money, poverty, hardships, oppression, and all the possible consequences of social structures. However, I would argue that for these Korean working-class women in their 50s, there is another significant dimension of misery, lived, felt and forever lurking in everyday life. This misery is found in the deprivation of emotional intimacy in the gender relationship. The above accounts all suggest that emotional intimacy is something substantially deprived of, hence, endlessly wanted and desired by these women. This misery marked by the absence of emotional intimacy is intensely experienced and most forcefully complained of by these women. Their complaints are fraught with the feelings of deprivation, anger, tension, envy and longing. In articulating the domestic use of television in relation to their husbands, these women actually reveal some degree of antagonism, discontent and unhappiness in a more extreme form of misery.

Generally, the existing scholarship indicates that television brings the family ever closer in its capacity as a unifying agent, a household cement (Spigel, 1990: 75), and that television makes men and women more likely to socialize together as they sit around the single television set in the house (Abu-Lughod, 1995: 206). However, completely the opposite is the case here. Such emotionally intimate relationship or the utopian family situation is far from the day-to-day lives and experiences of these Korean working-class women. To them, the domestic use of television produces a different cultural meaning which is decisively characterized by the absence of family interaction and family TV time. The working-class women's everyday domestic life looks rather emotionally hollow: "We don't watch TV together laughing together". "We have never had something called family time". The absence of family interaction and family TV time is largely attributed to the husbands' emotional remoteness. So deprived of their husband's endearment in everyday interaction, these women plaintively chastise the absence of intimate emotions in the "hollow man" (Duncombe and Marsden, 1998: 220). The women's TV talk appears to suggest that their husbands almost choose to live without emotions at all. This point is clearly raised in one woman's emphatic assertion: "We never ever heard that kind of (emotional) expression from our husbands for the entire life! I have never heard that from my

husband!” The women’s seemingly unachievable desire for a rich emotional life is sharply conflicted with the “men’s control of experience through suppressing emotions and feelings that might question or disturb self-identity they live out” (Seidler, 1998). This different “emotional habitus” (Crossley, 1998: 33) with the consequent feeling of misery in everyday life is the most striking complaint in the women’s TV talk about the domestic use of television.

But why would these working-class women reveal their intense feeling of misery to the strange researcher? Here, I want to particularly emphasize the role of television which allows a displacement of internal private talks into the social context of research interviewing. Television plays a safe displacing mechanism. This misery lurking in the intimate realm of emotion is exuded, consciously or unconsciously, through the women’s TV talk about their husbands’ exclusive use of television in the domestic sphere. TV talk crucially plays a surprisingly intrusive role that somehow triggers, opens up and articulates the women’s deep-seated feeling of misery. In a surprisingly intrusive mode, TV talk prompts and mediates these ordinary women to express their intimate desire kept deep inside. This deep-seated feeling of misery is released through their outpouring TV talk, whose TV talk is in fact simply about the “domestic use of television in everyday life”. The women’s TV talk naturally digresses toward the complaints about their emotionally hollow husbands, for it seems “possible to say things in TV talk which would be otherwise difficult or embarrassing” (Gillespie, 1995: 23).

These Korean working-class women show such an intensely emotional engagement with television while talking so much about their personal lives in the context of discussing the domestic use of television. To these women, television is perhaps a powerful emotional medium. At the emotional level, television most powerfully intersects with the metonymic microcosm of their personal lives. Their TV talk regarding the domestic use of television triggers the fragmented, retrospective and biographical accounts of everyday life in an endless chain of TV referentiality (Mellencamp, 1990: 242).³ Their TV talk self-reflexively unfolds specific, personal, generational accounts of misery. Apparently, the interpersonal life characterized by emotional intimacy and family TV time is an absent, unreachable, untenable, yet endlessly yearned for element to these women. TV talk subtly yet powerfully exudes

the women's deep-seated feeling of misery in the realm of emotion, which would otherwise remain in their muted biography. TV talk plays a crucial role to articulate the women's unfulfilled desire for the emotionally intimate relationship and their consequent feeling of misery in everyday life.

Section (2) Power of Everyday Life: Son as a Tactic

"It was only my son who brought flowers to me".

(Jung-wha, 50, quoting from a popular drama)

The previous section has shown that the misery of everyday life is marked significantly by the absence of emotional intimacy in the gender relationship, and TV talk prompts and mediates the women to articulate their deep-seated feeling of misery. I posed an ineluctable question in the course of research: Why do these women continue to bear such misery? This was the question, not posed directly to my working-class women but lingering inside me. The women's TV talk, however, at some point, started to articulate the answer to this unstated question. It was precisely in the context of discussing their favorite television program, particularly drama, in relation to their own (male) children that they started to articulate that answer. TV talk on drama in this context served as symbolic resources for the reflexive exploration of the women's central concern, which was their own (male) children. The goal of this section is to present that answer and analyze its underlying implications. In this section I will show how the women's everyday life is dealt with within the framework of misery.

All the working-class women in their 50s in my research have sons (one to three), except for one woman who has only two daughters. These women have an unsatisfying relationship with their emotionally distant husbands and this is one significant source of misery felt in everyday life. However, the women's relations to their own sons appear rather exceptionally special in varying degrees. The meaning of "son" is powerfully and emotionally implicated in the lives of the working-class women. To indicate the special mother-son relationship, one woman quotes a narration directly from a popular drama: *"It was only my son who brought flowers to me"*. It is children, especially sons, that occupy a centrality of the women's TV talk.

“We usually talk about our children. Some might watch TV just for fun, but we think of our children while watching TV. We watch drama and think of our children”. (Soon-hee, 52)

“We watch drama and think of our children”. This suggests that Korean drama is closely intertwined with the women’s central preoccupation that intimately concerns their lives. Television triggers and mediates the working-class women to reflect on their personal lives in particular relation to their own children. While discussing their favorite television programs such as drama and variety-talk shows, these women bring up issues concerning children in the context of their life trajectory characterized by hardships and misery. The women’s TV talk often diverts and gravitates towards their primary concern in the real life, which is precisely their children. Here, TV talk has an enabling capacity to reveal a self-reflexive narration of the women’s personal biography. Self-reflexive TV talk provides a crucial forum through which the women articulate, rediscover and reinforce a common identity as “self-sacrificing mother”. Here are examples.

“I enjoy watching *Morning Forum* (daily variety-talk show). Every Wednesday that program helps people to find their separated families. They can reunite with the families separated for 40 years, 50 years. In those old days, we were really poor. Some sent their children to orphanages or rich families. But I am quite surprised to see that even young people, about the age of my children, were also deserted by their parents! While watching those young people who have suffered for a long time, I deeply realize that the whole sacrifice of my life only for my children must be very worthy. I had a really hard time raising my three children on my own... My husband didn’t have a job... If I were not strong enough to raise and educate my children, they would be out on the street by now... *I could have divorced hundreds times, but I endured because of my children.* Children need both parents”. (*Italics, my emphasis*) (Soon-hee, 52)

“It looked like they were going to divorce (in the drama *The Last War*). Of course, they should not divorce. I have endured only because of my children.

But young women nowadays are not patient. They easily divorce. That's not a right choice if you care about the children's future... Your son will become a trouble maker". (Kyung-ja, 50)

"Frankly, is there any woman who has never thought about divorce? We have endured only for the children". (Soon-young, 51)

The women's TV talk above reveals a clue to the question as to why they continue to bear the misery of everyday life, the unsatisfying married relationship with their emotionally distant patriarchal husbands. They put up with the misery of everyday life in the fear of the negative effects of divorce on their children. In these women's TV talk about children, the notion of self-sacrifice and "against divorce" for the sake of children emerges as a consensual theme. For their children's life and education, they choose to sacrifice their own life and act against divorce, against the rupture of the family security. This generation of women tend to view that marriage is a lifelong commitment to children and that divorce can be justified only in an extreme circumstance: For example, "If your husband beats you everyday, then you might need to divorce. Otherwise you should not divorce for children". A dominant concern about the son's life is pronounced in the following TV talk. While this woman continually and extensively relates her TV talk to her own son, she reflexively reveals an overwhelming concern for her son.

"Drama makes me think about lots of things. While watching that drama (*The Last War*) I thought, 'Too smart daughter-in-law is definitely NO!' A too smart woman tends to be rude. I tell my son, 'You should not bring that kind of wife, I wouldn't approve of that type'". (Min-sook, 51)

(At other point she continues)

"When my husband was out of work, I felt like the sky was collapsing on me. I was so helpless that I even thought about killing myself. I thought, if I died quick I wouldn't have to go through this hardship any more... I couldn't die because of my son. My son would have to live forever with the memory, 'My mom killed herself'. His heart would be hurt forever. *I will live for my son...*

Even at this age I sometimes feel melancholic in my heart to see the sunset. I realize I am still alive. Maybe I still have the emotions of my girlhood. When I feel low sometimes I have a drink with my son. He is now old enough to drink with me. *My good son consoles my feelings*". (*Italics, my emphasis*)

"I will live for my son... My good son consoles my feelings". Commonly, these working-class women act against divorce, or even against suicide, for their children's lives and continue to endure the misery of everyday life. However, the inevitable misery within the framework of marriage is felt somewhat mitigated, partly due to the lifetime emotional attachment to their sons, who have grown up witnessing the emotionally distant and dominating father and sympathizing with the affectionate and powerless mother. While discussing favorite television programs in relation to their own children, these Korean women refer to their sons more substantially than their daughters. In general, their talk concerning sons and daughters-in-law is more voluntarily and extensively offered, whereas their talk concerning daughters is provided briefly only if prompted by the researcher. Thus, what these women mean by "children" here throughout their TV talk tends to imply *sons*. The interlocking mother-son relationship is further reflected in the following TV talk. This woman expresses anger at the idiotic portrayal of the son in drama, for such an image is seemingly contradictory and immoral to her own belief that "a son cannot be idiotic!"

"(In an angry tone) How can that educated son be shown as an idiotic, (financially) unable man? I am most dissatisfied with that. The drama makes up a story to give fun to the audience. How can he be idiotic? I am so dissatisfied with that. A son cannot be idiotic!" (Byung-soon, 52)

"A son cannot be idiotic!" For these working-class women, their sons are expected to grow as an alternative source of power, a hope to remove the feeling of misery in everyday life. While accepting the traditional fatalism that their hard life is already determined by getting married to the same class of males, these women pin their hope – perhaps the only hope – on their sons for social mobility and empowerment. In the long-term perspective, they hope to appropriate their sons to improve the socio-economic positions and the micro political conditions of everyday life. This underlying hope is explicitly implicated in the following accounts.

“When (male) children grow up well and succeed, mothers’ every effort can be acknowledged”. (Soon-young, 51)

“When (male) children grow up, they will thank us. I don’t care about my husband now”. (Byung-soon, 52)

“I could never raise a voice to my husband as he was always domineering. (Laugh) Now I can dare to say something to my husband. If he still tries to do things in his own way, he will not get a bowl of rice until he dies, *he will not get served by our (male) children*”. (*Italics, my emphasis*) (Min-sook, 51)

According to Michel de Certeau (1984), the powerless attempt to take some control over their lives by employing a silent, transgressive, or poetic “tactic” for the very activity of “making do” with their disadvantaged social situations in the dominant structures of everyday life. A tactic, as determined by the absence of power, is appropriated as an art of the weak, and depends on time because it does not have a place. By drawing upon de Certeau’s notion of tactic, I would argue that in the long-term perspective these Korean working-class women employ their sons as a tactic in the hope to change their disadvantaged conditions. By appropriating their sons, these women pin their hope on a “clever utilization of time, of the opportunities it presents” (de Certeau, 1984: 39) in a struggle to manage the misery of everyday life. They assume that it would be surely mothers with the lives of self-sacrifice that deserve a compensatory power and reward from their grown-up sons. There is an indication of the powerless woman’s triumphant feeling of empowerment through the clever utilization of time and opportunities: “Now I can dare to say something to my husband. If he still tries to do things in his own way... *he will not get served by our (male) children*”. The degree of women’s empowerment here is conditioned upon the emotional and economic support of their grown-up sons. The son-power ideology is persistently lurking and springing forth from everyday life. It masquerades behind the common sense and beneath the everyday. In the long-term perspective, the son-power tactic is appropriated to distort the dominant structure of everyday life. Without considering divorce, without leaving the place of misery, these women insinuate

themselves into the place with a hope to change the conditions of their lives. This change is envisaged through the tactical appropriation of their sons.⁴

The women's TV talk in this section places my previous argument about the misery of everyday life onto the other side of a contrasting diptych, which is the "power of everyday life". The women's TV talk in relation to their sons reveals a complicated "duality of everyday life", both misery and power, as conceived by Henri Lefebvre (1971): The first panel represents the misery of everyday life – its repetitive tasks, hardships, money, oppression, unachievable desires reflected in the lives of the working-class women. On the other hand, the second panel unfolds the power of everyday life – the adaptation of time, space, desire, and the ability to create something extraordinary from its solids. There lies "a power concealed in everyday life's apparent banality, a depth beneath its triviality, something extraordinary in its very ordinariness" (Lefebvre, 1971: 37).⁵ Precisely, I would argue in this Korean case that the son as a tactic is a power concealed beneath the misery of everyday life. These working-class women in their 50s lack any recognition that some change can, or indeed ought to, be made in the general patterns of life. Rather, they hopelessly feel and accept that they cannot do much about the main elements of macro-social conditions. Nonetheless, at the micro level they instead "carve a livable life under its shadow", like Richard Hoggart's (1958) observation about British working-class life, with a tactical attitude, "What can't be mended must be made do with" (Hoggart, 1958: 92). These Korean working-class women carve a livable life through the substitute love and growing power of their sons. Beneath the apparent misery of everyday life lies the son, as an extraordinarily profound, opportunistic and powerful tactic. This son-power ideology is not a new phenomenon in the present society, but the son has always been a source of unique female power, a central part of Korean Confucian tradition as described in Chapter 2 Section (1). The significance of the son-power tradition continues to be felt beneath the practices of modern life. These Korean working-class women appropriate their son(s) as a tactic, as a self-consciously political, transgressive and opportunistic source of power, to take some control over their lives of misery in the dominant structure of everyday life.

Section (3) Reading Against Primetime Feminism

In the previous section I have argued that the son-power ideology is appropriated by the working-class women, out of the perceived misery from their husbands, as a self-conscious political tactic and it is inextricably intertwined with their lived and mediated experiences. The subordinate women produce, through the everyday tactical practices, “indirect or errant trajectories obeying their own logic” (de Certeau, 1984: xviii). These women in their 50s obey not only their husbands but also their sons. The women’s son-power tactic, as the opportunistic micro-politics of the everyday, draws a paradoxical consequence: The women’s desire for the emotional fulfillment and empowerment through their sons eventually reproduces the patriarchal gender arrangement, and reinforces the women’s secondary position to men (sons) and consent to willing subordination. The women’s maneuvering of the son-power tactic remains largely invisible and unquestioned in the naturalized transparency of mother-son relationship. Nowhere was this clearly articulated. However, the effect of the son-power tactic permeated into the fabric of everyday life is perceptible here. This is clearly articulated in the women’s reading against a newly introduced feminist drama *The Last War*. This primetime feminist drama *The Last War* was often brought up by these working-class women throughout the research interviews, and this new type of drama promptly opened an interesting debate among them. Therefore, in this section I will specifically focus on the women’s reception of *The Last War*. First, I will introduce this drama *The Last War* in the context of the emerging primetime feminism in contemporary Korean television. Then, I will move onto discuss in detail the ways in which the primetime feminism is fiercely contested and rejected by these working-class women. Finally, I will show the ways in which the women’s collective reading against the primetime feminism produces a quasi-ritualized rhetoric of consensualism that rather reinforces the women’s traditional role and willing subordination to men (sons). The women’s self-conscious repudiation of feminism in this section will serve as a manifestation of the paradoxical consequence of the women’s son-power tactic.

The Last War is a newly introduced feminist drama which recorded the second highest rating (30-35%), following *Rose and Beansprout* (40%), during the period of my research in the summer of 1999. This new variation of drama, so-called “mini-series drama”, was shown after the primetime 9:00 News, consisted of twenty

episodes and ran for three months. Mini-series drama is popular particularly among a younger group of women audiences (Hee-ae Kim, 1992). This is because unlike the patriarchal home drama such as *Rose and Beansprout* centering on the lives of housewives, mini-series drama presents a variety of modern themes. It introduces the lives of professional working women and addresses women's issues in the private and the public spheres. A feminist voice raised by a married young woman in *The Last War* is a good example. *The Last War* depicts marital conflicts between the man and the wife in their early 30s, who were once class mates studying law at a top-notch university. The wife has become a successful lawyer, but the husband has remained an ordinary salaried man. This drama comically portrays the reversed, uneasy power relationship between the smart and capable wife from the affluent family background and the naïve and clumsy husband from the working-class family. This unconventional context also foregrounds constant conflicts between this middle-class daughter-in-law who fights for equal rights in her marital relationship, and the working-class mother-in-law who predominantly cares about her son's position. Overall, the framework of this drama is based on the triangular conflict between the man, the wife, and her mother-in-law. *The Korea Times* daily newspaper (August 18, 1999) comments on the secret of the skyrocketing popularity of this drama:

"*The Last War*, in its 10th episode. The wife comes out of her mother-in-law's after being rebuked for her impudent behavior. Then she vents her spite right away upon her husband, "If I knew this before, I should have rather married an orphan!" The husband instantly refutes, "You only care about your mother and family, have you ever cared about your mother-in-law? Damn it!" The audiences, men and wives together watching this drama, would hilariously champion each side, "All right! That's the way to go!" Women audiences laugh to tears and get cathartic pleasures while watching this drama... The secret of the popularity? The writer (28)'s realistic description about the lives of Korean men and wives in their 30s... In its 6th episode, the man and the wife are fighting, wallowing on the bed. Then she suddenly takes off his underwear revealing the buttocks! How clever!" (English, my translation)

The Last War is in line with "primetime feminism" (Press, 1991; Heide, 1995; Dow, 1996) capturing some of the most problematic women's issues in modern Korea. The

young woman's voice in this drama particularly attacks the so-called "Mama-boy" phenomenon interlocked in the triangular relationship between the man, the wife, and her mother-in-law. This is one of the most prevalent, naturalized, culturally-specific conflicts that complicates the working of gender politics in Korea. The Korean mother's identification with her son, or mother-son interdependency, is a mutual relationship in which "two selves merge almost perfectly" (Hoffman, 1995: 113). Although the mother is forced to recognize her son's independent status, especially after he marries and forms a new family along the lines of the Western idea, she never completely asserts her own independence from him. As I have already argued in the previous section, a Korean mother has a lifetime desire for the emotional fulfillment and power through the appropriation of her son(s) as an opportunistic tactic. As a result, the actual reality of Korean marriage often turns out to be a triangular relationship between the wife, the husband and his mother. The role of the extended family, particularly the intervention of mother-in-law, is still a decisive factor that restrains young women's freedom and autonomy, hence, one of the major causes for divorce in modern Korea (Women's Study Group, 1995).

This generational gap and conflict in the perception of marriage, family, and gender relations is the key issue raised by *The Last War*. Primetime television drama starts to be a key participant in a cultural dialogue about feminism. Primetime feminism *The Last War* renders a cultural forum in which contesting generational themes are subjected to selective readings and discussions by women audiences. This primetime feminism emerges within a televisual landscape that closed off many of the explicit feminist concerns, which include questioning traditional female roles and fighting for equal rights especially in the private familial sphere. Considering the prior silence of television on such issues, this primetime feminist discourse deserves particular attention. I would propose that the primetime feminism emerging on the Korean television landscape is a transitional symbolic object of modernity. It is a "transitional object, potential space" (Silverstone, 1994: 15) to bring the new, the modern and replace the old, the traditional. The emerging primetime feminism in the modern Korean television promises to create a potential space for change and transition. However, I would equally propose that the effect of such potential transition in the television text should be also understood in the actual site of audience reception. The question to be explored is, how do women audiences actually interpret

this transitional symbolic object of modernity? Specifically, how do women of different generation and class experience this seemingly progressive transitional image of primetime feminism?

In this section I specifically analyze how these working-class women in their 50s respond to the primetime feminist discourse *The Last War*. I would point out that “women audiences” in the newspaper article quoted above, who hilariously champion the lawyer wife and get pleasure from her feminist talk, might imply “middle-class audiences”. My research on these working-class women reveals a far different response. This is evident in the following extract of the conversation among four working-class women friends in their 50s. The working-class women’s readings are crucially mediated by the predominant concern for their sons, in their everyday encounter with the modern young woman on feminist drama. Specifically, woman A (having only two sons) becomes most fervently critical of the feminist image of the lawyer wife, and woman B and C (having both a son and a daughter) moderately agree with her criticism, whereas woman D (not having a son, but only two daughters) remains silent throughout the conversation, then finally intervenes with a defensive stance towards the feminist image. As we can see in the flow of this group TV talk, it is usually woman A who initiates and leads the conversation in moral condemnation, and woman B and C are in a complementary position, whereas woman D remains in passive defense. Interestingly, what is subtly implicated in this group TV talk is the issue of discursive power in everyday practices. Talking is crucial to aspects of power and regulation (Walkerdine, 1986: 181). For these women in their 50s, the discursive power in the realm of everyday talking is decisively determined by the micro politics of son-power based on whether they have son(s) or not. It appears that these women with son(s) are more empowered and confident to talk, on the contrary, the woman without a son is less empowered, often silent in the social interaction. The women’s group TV talk is subtly yet crucially implicated in the discursive power of everyday life determined by the micro politics of son-power, in the sense that a woman having a son is more empowered to talk than a woman without a son. Overall, through the encounter with the feminist text, these working-class women reinvigorate, in their self-reflexive terms, “what it means to be a woman”, which meaning and purpose are decisively mediated by the concern for their son(s). Crucially, the traditional son-

power ideology shapes and constrains the ways in which these audiences make definitions about women and meanings about the primetime feminism *The Last War*.⁶

A: Why does she (in the drama) always pick a fight with the husband? It's disgusting! Why does she defy her husband? She's a lawyer, so what? She is not taking good care of the household. Then at least, out of a guilty feeling she should try to be much nicer to her husband.

B: On the news currently, a married couple had a fight, and the husband was in fatal despair, so he committed suicide! Poor man!

A: I am getting worried about how I can marry my sons. Nowadays young women are getting cocky, rude. She (in the drama) often calls her husband, "you, stupid!" How could she say that?

B: What if her mother-in-law hears that?

C: You don't need to have a smart daughter-in-law. That's not necessary in marital life.

A: No matter how much Korean society is changing, there is something that should not be changed. Outside the home the husband should be in a higher position than his wife. The wife should be in charge of the home.

B: Right. Outside the home the man should be the king, inside the home the woman should be the king. If the woman is more active outside the home, it can cause domestic discord, sometimes, a divorce.

A: If the husband (in the drama) is out of work, she should be even willing to sell vegetables with her husband. Why divorce?

C: How about the children?

A: We have endured for the children. Nowadays young women are different.

C: When children grow up, they will thank us. I don't care about my husband now.

B: (Laugh) Who would care about the husband at this age?

C: My husband might be jolly, entertaining outside, but once he comes home his lips are sealed tight. He hardly talks to me, except the blunt order, "Bring a dinner!"

B: (Laugh) Then he goes to sleep, snores?

D: If I were her parent (in the drama), I wouldn't marry my daughter to such a stupid man. He is not (financially) able. If the husband is not smarter than his

wife, he should rather stay home still. Is there any law that only men should work outside?

Television is of talk of everyday life. The content of its programs, the morality of characters, the anxieties around news, provide much of the “currency of everyday discourse” (Silverstone *et al*, 1992: 26), “conversational resource” (Liebes and Katz, 1990: 7), with greater or lesser degrees of intensity. Popular drama’s narrative is directly subjugated to the terms of women’s everyday discourse, thus, it is likely to induce “active, give-and-take participation from the viewing audiences with interpretations of their own” (Press, 1991: 19). As shown in the group TV talk above, social tension and anxiety around the gender relation intersects with the women’s reading of feminist television drama. Here, television is a dramatic space that allows the women to clearly articulate the son-power ideology in everyday vocabularies. Although the positioning of television in the culture of modernity has created new options and possibilities for identities, for these working-class women in their 50s the modern television rather provides the spark for the unearthing and elaboration of their traditional identity. The modern image of the young woman in *The Last War* appears to prompt fear, tension and worry, which is well grounded on the women’s real-life concerns for their sons: “I am getting worried about how I can marry my sons”. This immediately opens up a debate about the younger generation of women, their prospective daughters-in-law, and the women’s proper role today.

The women’s specific interpretations of the feminist text *The Last War* are decisively dependent upon their son-related psycho-social predisposition, and are the ineluctable consequences of their socio-cultural experiences. These working-class women invest a great deal of energy in a process of negotiation between the feminist text and their lived experiences. They evaluate those meanings differently according to their own traditional moral values and son-related predisposition. Their collective reading against the feminist text gives rise to self-reflexive talks about the women’s secondary status and role confined in domesticity. One woman forcefully asserts, “No matter how much Korean society is changing, there is something that should not be changed”. The unchangeable rules about female roles expressed in their vigorous statements can be summed up in three points. First, woman should respect and follow her husband in any circumstance. Second, woman’s proper place is inside the home.

Third, woman should be willing to sacrifice her own life for the family. Overall, the self-reflexive TV talk shows a substantial disparity between the primetime feminism as a transitional object of modernity and the working-class women's fiercely hostile rejection based on the traditional son-power ideology. Although primetime feminism *The Last War* introduces a new perspective in the gender and familial relations, these women strongly repudiate the symbolic object of modernity.

The working-class women in their 50s arrive at *their* understanding of the feminist text by relating the modern image of young woman to the real-life concerns for their sons, and by using the "individualized socio-cultural language codes at their disposal" (Schroder, 1988: 62). The women's language here expressed on the critical viewing moment might be repeated unquestioningly in everyday life, expressing a traditional assumption of male supremacy and female self-sacrifice. The women's group TV talk mediated through the micro politics of son-power produces their own "quasi-ritualized rhetoric of consensualism", which forcefully emphasizes a proper female role for the family and the women's secondary status and willing subordination to men (sons). Their quasi-ritualized rhetoric implicitly calls for their daughters-in-law's willing subordination to their sons. This implies that the younger generation of women (daughters-in-law) is destined to live with conflicting femininity under the unchangeable rules intimately laid down by the older generation of women (mothers-in-law). The authority of mothers-in-law can act as a powerful reinforcer of the system of patriarchal control. Primetime feminism *The Last War* effectively induces and mobilizes an ethical and emotional "rhetoricization" (Silverstone, 1999: 31-33) among these women in their 50s, whose rhetoricization adopts a persuasive language that reinvigorates the traditional female roles. The women's group TV talk converts or displaces television into a kind of public space for a moral discussion related to the intensely domestic concerns. Television drama allows a public culture to emerge in which a new kind of rhetoric can be generated with particular knowledge springing from the women's own experiences and social relations. By and large, the working-class women in their 50s are not interested in the new, emerging representation of modern woman on primetime television, but instead, persistently insist on the tradition of their locality. The female roles and position inscribed in their familiar local tradition are recalled, reproduced and amplified in the women's collective TV talk against the primetime feminism *The Last War*.

What are the political implications of the women's collective TV talk and collusive rhetoric constructed from it? One of the key pleasures that women find in dramas is the "validation of their own kind of talk" (Brown, 1987: 22). These working-class women derive pleasure in "collaborative readings" (Hobson, 1989), "collective constructions" (Seiter *et al*, 1989: 233), commenting on the stories, relating the incidents to their real lives, and moving from the drama to discussing roles of women. They self-reflexively discuss the drama in ways "relevant" (Fiske, 1989a: 3) to their own everyday lives. Their TV talk produces popular pleasure, and "popular pleasure is always social and political" (Fiske, 1989a: 2). Some Western theorists (Brown, 1990, 1994; Fisk, 1989a) suggest that women's collaborative TV talk or women's reading of the popular is subversive to patriarchy and has an empowering potential. This particular Korean case, however, poses a question to such theory. How can it be empowering, to which groups of women audiences, under what circumstances? As evident in this Korean case, women-centered collaborative TV talk is active in its own pleasure but not necessarily powerful in a political feminist sense. A similar form of collusion or consent to male dominance emerges in these women's quasi-ritualized rhetoric that implies to undermine female collectivity and create generational divisions. This poses an ineluctable question: Where does women's subordination come from? This Korean case suggests that "woman herself" is the most significant contradictory obstacle. I am using the word subordination here as there seems no other way of expressing it, although I consider "subordination" is a too banal, ineffectual word because of its immediately assumed "universality", disguised general transparency, all-too-obvious connotation and effect, and thus its misleading usage, which actually obscures "particularity" of subordination – for example, particular origin of subordination, particular way of functioning of subordination, particular mode of reproducing the legitimate justification of subordination – all of which may be the case with these Korean women. "Woman herself" is a contradictory obstacle, who is reproducing and endorsing subordination in all intimate levels of everyday life.⁷ The women's own quasi-ritualized rhetoric of consensualism constructed from their collective TV talk against primetime feminism *The Last War* is a manifestation of this contradiction.

Section (4) TV Realism and Identification

In the previous section I have demonstrated that the working-class women in their 50s negatively identify with the transitional object of modernity, the primetime feminism of *The Last War*. The emerging feminist image embodied in the young, educated, modern working woman is fiercely contested and opposed by this generation of women. If this is the case, on the other hand, what kind of image on primetime television do they positively or most closely identify with? If any, what's the meaning of such identification to these women viewers? These are the key questions to be explored in this section. When juxtaposed to my previous analysis on the women's fierce repudiation with the notion of change introduced in primetime feminism, this section will then complement a contrasting and comparative diptych of identification. It will show television's enabling double capacity to articulate both change/modernity and tradition, with its dual effect that permits the degree of repudiation of change and confirmation of self-identity among the women viewers.

During the period of my research in the summer of 1999, two "opposite" Korean dramas recorded the highest ratings and were most often talked about by the working-class women in their 50s. One is a patriarchal home drama *Rose and Beansprout*, and the other is a newly introduced feminist drama *The Last War* that I have already introduced in the previous section. *Rose and Beansprout* comically features, as typical in Korean primetime drama, everyday happenings of the patriarchal extended family; traditional and conservative parents and their sons and daughters-in-law all living together under the same roof and all intimately involved in one another's personal lives. Why do these working-class women in their 50s most enjoy watching this drama? Their source of pleasure comes mainly from TV realism, as they all declare, "It's our life!" They perceive the patriarchal home drama as an extremely realistic portrayal of *their* everyday lives. Throughout the discussion on television drama, they express consensual exclamations, "It's exactly our life!", "It's exactly our reality!" This is because they perceive drama narratives and make moral judgements on characters, not only in terms of "empirical realism", the material circumstances of working-class life, but also in terms of "emotional realism" (Ang, 1985: 45), the subjective experiences of the familiar feminine world. For these working-class women, being able to imagine the character as a "real person", the

event as a “real life”, forms a necessary precondition for the pleasure of watching drama. The “life-like” acting style and appearance ensure that the distance between character and audiences is minimalized, and the illusion is created that the audiences are involved with a real person, “a person of flesh and blood, one of us” (Ang, 1985: 30). These women involve in drama from a perspective of “like-us-ness” (Schroder, 1988: 69), and this experience of like-us-ness is so compelling and pleasurable that the line between fiction and reality is simultaneously dissolving in their viewing consciousness.

“I enjoy watching *Rose and Beansprout*. She’s so real. Look at her frizzy permed hair. I heard that she had that perm in a cheap hair salon not in her regular one, to make her look exactly like a real housewife”. (Jung-wha, 50)

“Drama is based on our reality. It’s exactly our reality! What happens inside the drama is something that is actually happening in our real life”. (Na-ju, 50)

“Drama exactly shows the ordinary life we live. It’s exactly our life! So I can relate to the drama”. (Soon -young, 51)

TV realism is a necessary precondition for pleasurable identification and the exquisite pleasure of watching drama for these working-class women. The approximate realism of television drama enables them to identify closely with a particular character, who is what they term a “traditional Korean mother”. This identification occurs as they project themselves so deeply into the character that they can “feel the same emotions and experience the same events as the character is supposed to be feeling” (Schroder, 1988: 72). As one woman expresses, “I can feel *myself* there”. These women relate the character of the traditional Korean mother to their own real lives, and this referential reading is “emotionally involving” (Liebes and Katz, 1990: 100). This emotional involvement is manifest in the women’s projection of empathic energy, “She’s just like me! I see myself in her”, or in the common positional sympathy, “As a mother, I can understand her concern about her son”. To these working-class women, the traditional Korean mother is identified so intensely and sympathetically as *their* personal biography.⁸ On the viewing moment, they bring along their lived personal histories and real-life concern for their sons

while establishing a “para-social interaction” (Schroder, 1988: 71) with the character of the traditional Korean mother.

“I enjoy watching *Rose and Beansprout*, particularly the role of the mother. She is a typical type of a traditional Korean mother. While watching it, I can feel *myself* there. *I am that actress, I am doing that.* Like her, I also lived oppressed under the order of my husband. I feel like “she’s just like me!” I see myself in her”. (*Italics, her emphasis*) (Min-sook, 51)

“As a mother, I can understand the son’s mother (in *The Last War*). I can understand her concern about her son. She is a typical image of a traditional Korean mother”. (Kyung-ja, 50)

Specifically, who is the “traditional Korean mother” these women so closely identify with? She is a symbolic mirror-image of the women’s lived experience and self-identity. She is an ambivalent re-membering of a collective identity marked by self-sacrifice, whose position and meaning are in conflict with the force of modernity. It is “ambivalent” because she releases the ineluctable questioning of self-identity that is contradictory, troubled, and sometimes lost in the modern time/place, but simultaneously she desires to conjure up the contribution to the family through the continuous performance of self-sacrifice, through the cultural reinvigoration of traditional womanhood as internalized by these women viewers in their 50s. The intimate portrayal of the traditional Korean mother resembles the lived experience of these women viewers, which is commonly characterized by their perceived misery from the patriarchal husband and appropriation of the son-power tactic with an unfaltering belief, “My son is the best!” Yet her desire for empowerment and vicarious fulfillment of life through her son faces challenges from her daughters-in-law, the educated modern generation. These older women viewers, like the traditional Korean mother character, come to recognize that power never can be completely secure, hence, their desire is unrealizable. This tragic feeling yields an ambivalent soliloquy, “How have I raised my son?”

“Like most traditional moms, she (in *Rose and Beansprout*) has this mentality, “My son is the best!” Also, in *The Last War*, even though her son is not better

than her daughter-in-law, for this mom, "My son is the best!" She has not received love from her husband, so she expects everything from her son".

(Soon-young, 51)

"Because that mom (in *The Last War*) has spent her whole life raising and educating her son, she expects to be served as well by her daughter-in-law. But this doesn't work out because today's young women are different from us. When this son does not side with his mom, this mom grieves, "How have I raised you? How have I raised my son?" It exactly shows our life. Because it's so real, it's fun to watch". (Soon-hee, 52)

"How have I raised my son?" This internal contestation and unresolved tension embodied in the mother-son relationship is identified realistically by these working-class women. This identification with a recognizable inner conflict is experienced as a moment of truth about their own lives. It is a "tragic structure of feeling" (Ang, 1985: 21) that allows these women to identify with the crisis of the character, which in turn acts as a catharsis of their own tragic feelings. Primetime television drama here articulates some truth about the women viewers' real-life experience, the temperament of the older generation grappling with a profound sense of ambivalence and confusion in relation to their sons. Television drama functions as a cultural interpreter and acts to articulate the ebb and flow of popular feelings, "the main lines of the cultural consensus about the nature of reality" (Fiske and Hartley, 1987: 602). The reason why these working-class women most enjoy watching drama perhaps lies in the television's enabling capacity to package unresolved tensions of the society into the domesticated frame, and to "borrow, transform the energy of social and psychological conflict" (Gitlin, 1983: 12).

The working-class women in their 50s are most sympathetic about the character of traditional Korean mother, and a great emotional involvement emerges in the moment of identification. They are immediately called upon, acted upon a "symbolic mirror of ourselves" (Chaney, 1986). Their viewing experience is not only individual, isolated and local, but also collective, connected and national, simultaneously forming an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991). This extraordinarily emotional "mass ceremony" (Anderson, 1991: 35) of identification

may be performed in silent privacy, yet the ceremony they perform is being replicated simultaneously nationwide, incessantly repeated between this hour and that, throughout the calendar. The women's television viewing performs a social ritual. On the ritualistic viewing moment, the women's lived experiences and the precisely corresponding narration of the traditional Korean mother are fused stirring emotional impact. Through the common identification with the traditional Korean mother, the women's personal problems and unresolved tensions embedded in the mother-son relationship are shared within the national culture.

Section (5) Reinvigorating Tradition

This final section aims to explore the most salient, recurring and encompassing notion that hinges around the lives of working-class women in their 50s. That pivotal notion is "tradition", a residual category of modernity, whose relevance and significance continue to be felt beneath the practices and structures of everyday life. Continually and repeatedly, the women's reflexive TV talk reveals the pervasive existence of tradition intertwined with their lived and mediated experiences. Insofar as I have indicated in this chapter, some traces of tradition are still deeply embedded in these women's lives. Those traces are found, for example, in the women's acceptance of misery as a fact of life destiny in Section (1), the tactical appropriation of son-power ideology in Section (2), the women's fierce repudiation of modern primetime feminism in Section (3), and their close identification with the image of the traditional Korean mother in Section (4). In this final section, I will therefore conclude by focusing more directly on the role of tradition mediated through the women's experience of television in everyday life. The analysis of this section breaks modernity apart in its particular attention to the specific meanings of tradition among the women viewers. I seek to analyze the women's reflexive TV talk which overtly or tacitly reinvigorates tradition, and to infer the underlying meanings of tradition in the private lives of women. The women's TV talk clearly exemplifies the actual site and process of reinvigorating tradition through their ordinary language on the ritualistic viewing moment of modern television, popular drama in particular.

"No matter how smart she (the young lawyer in *The Last War*) is, she should behave according to the Korean custom. Korean women should behave

according to the Korean custom! Korean women should belong to the Korean home! She is a Korean woman, but what the hell is that? She should respect her husband and serve her parents-in-law well”. (Min-sook, 51)

“Is there really a woman like her (in *The Last War*)? I wouldn’t tolerate her. A Korean woman should respect her parents-in-law, no matter how crazy this world is changing. A Korean woman should respect her husband”.

(Byung-soon, 52)

“I can see in those dramas what today’s young generation thinks about. They are the young generation and we are the old generation. They prefer to live according to their own convenience”. (Na-ju, 50)

“Nowadays, many young women work outside the home. But I will clearly remind my (future) daughter-in-law of *the rule* that she must respect her husband and parents-in-law. I will remind her from the beginning”.

(*Italics*, my emphasis) (Soon-young, 51)

It becomes clear that Korean television drama is one of the primary resources that these working-class women rely on to help them make sense of the familial world and of the personal relationships. Television drama holds a distinct place in the lives of these women as it provokes them to reflect about their everyday lives in relation to their families, their sons and daughters-in-law. It continually presents contemporary struggles over gender, generation and family, hence, serves both as a terrain for reflection on their lives and as a site of moral contestation. Television’s dramatization of everyday life and its unflagging continuity of moral dilemma invoke “endless unsettling, discussion and resettling of acceptable modes of behavior within the sphere of personal relationships” (Brundson, 1997: 16). The women’s TV talk above shows such unsettling, discussion and resettling. It opens up a dialogic tension concerning acceptable modes of female role and behavior within the private familial sphere. The readily observable differences marked on modern television drama – for example, the young woman’s resistance to the willing subordination to her husband and parents-in-law – seem to stimulate the inertia of old vocabularies in these women in their 50s. “They are the young generation and we are the old generation”. This

observation of marked generational differences readily facilitates the old generation of women to express and reinvigorate the practices of tradition with its recognized rules and order. This is evident, as one woman authoritatively asserts, “I will clearly remind my (future) daughter-in-law of *the rule* that she must respect her husband and parents-in-law”.

The everyday experience of television drama establishes a significantly symbolic ritual function, through which these women of the older generation reinvigorate tradition in their own vocabularies. Watching primetime drama is a routine social practice that mediates these ordinary women to open up and articulate tradition in their everyday language. The constant presence of modern television and the way it intersects with the women in their 50s reinvigorate and amplify the naturalized yet unspecific and vague notion of tradition, to the extent where it becomes more explicit, more identifiable and more securable. “Cultural traditions do not derive from or descend upon mute and passive populations. Instead, they invariably express the identities which historical circumstances have formed, often over long periods” (Smith, 1990: 177). In the light of incoming new knowledge about the younger generation of women emerging on modern television, this older generation of women rather turn back to defend tradition. The new modern representation is received by these women with fierce resistance as they draw to a large extent upon their own stock of traditional moral capital. It can be argued that modern television still provides powerful sources of traditional moral fixity, for these women viewers fervently contend against alternative modern visions but reinvigorate tradition. This age group of working-class women is not interested in exploring different identities or experimenting with new roles projected on modern television. By and large, women’s identity remains a constricted self as they desire to control the pace and temporality of change. For this generation of women, tradition is still taken as the integral part of everyday life, as the unchangeable rule for structuring everyday practices, “no matter how crazy this world is changing”, as one woman stresses it.⁹

For a conceptual clarification, at this stage I would like to explain what I mean by “tradition” emphasized in this analysis. Here I am drawing upon John Thompson’s (1995: 184-186) conceptualization on four different aspects of tradition – the hermeneutic, the normative, the legitimation, and the identity aspects – which in

practice often overlap or merge together. To explain briefly, the hermeneutic aspect views tradition as a set of background assumptions that are transmitted from one generation to the next and taken for granted in the conduct of everyday life, therefore, tradition in this respect is “an interpretative scheme or a framework for understanding the world”. The normative aspect of tradition means that material handed down from the past can serve as “a normative routinized guide”, and such routinized practices are traditionally grounded or justified by reference to tradition. The legitimation aspect of tradition has an overtly political and ideological character, which means that tradition serves not only as a normative guide for action but also as “a basis for exercising power and authority and for securing obedience to commands”. These three aspects are all implicated in this Korean case. The appearance of tradition in these older women’s TV talk calls for younger women’s willing subordination to their husbands and parents-in-law. First, this patriarchal hierarchy of the gender/generation relation is a background assumption transmitted from the past to the present that still functions as a main interpretative framework for the understanding of the modern life for these older women. Second, this tradition reinvigorated through the women’s TV talk intends to inculcate a set of normative rules by repetition, which automatically imply continuity with the past, and are being used, or will be used in future, by these older women to routinely guide the everyday practices of younger women, their daughters-in-law. Third, the women’s reinvigoration of tradition has a political agenda or a hidden purpose, which is to exercise power and authority as mothers-in-law and secure their daughters-in-law’s obedience to everyday commands.

I am inclined to infer that by the use of tradition or “traditional knowledge”, these women of the older generation seek to reassert their control and dominance over younger women. The women’s internal compulsions towards tradition manifest in their reflexive TV talk bear such purpose. Their traditional knowledge endorses a particular rhetoric of female role and identity, which stresses young women’s willing subordination to their husbands and parents-in-law. Precisely, this “identity aspect of tradition” is the central focus in my analysis. Tradition is relevant to two types of identity formation; self-identity and collective/national identity. The sense of oneself and the sense of belonging are both shaped by the sets of assumptions, values and patterns of behavior handed down from the past, and such traditions provide some of the “symbolic” materials for the formation of identity. The process of identity

formation both at the individual and at the collective/national level builds on a pre-existing set of symbolic materials which form the bedrock of identity. This is the conjuncture where mass media, particularly television, come into play a crucial role as a “central instrument of collective/national identity” (Cardiff and Scannell, 1987), which identity continues to invent, as invented by, tradition. Such tradition, embodied in a “female identity” in this Korean case, is invented and reinvigorated through the women’s mundane experience of television in everyday life. The appearance of tradition in these women’s TV talk, by definition, means a proper female identity within the family. This tradition embodied in the female identity occupies a distinctive place and finds a concrete object, which is the home and family.

“Women should take care of the family. If a woman cares about her work and ignores home (in *The Last War*), she must not know the true meaning of life”.
(Kyung-ja, 50)

“A woman should not neglect her family because of her work. That’s the woman’s role! What’s the meaning of your work outside when the home is not going well?” (Soon-hee, 52)

“I am sick of the first daughter-in-law in *Rose and Beansprout*. She doesn’t care about enhancing harmony among the family. She only enjoys a selfish, individualistic life”. (Byung-soon, 52)

“Familial harmony is most important of all. So, each member of the family should sacrifice a little bit of their own interest to bring harmony to the home”.
(Soon-young, 51)

Television is a “cultural extension of the society” (Lull, 1988: 240), which means that the way television is interpreted by the audiences reflects the main cultural themes and patterns of the society. The women’s TV talk above can be understood as a cultural barometer that registers the cultural climate and the current experiences of national identity. It characterizes a collective female identity that is grounded on the preservation of the home and family at the cost of women’s self-sacrifice against any individualized identity. The implied notion of tradition embodied in the female

identity is constantly emphasized, in terms of the culturally-specific ideas of the home and family harmony and self-sacrifice. The audiences do not simply come to the television set with a history, but they are part of history, shaped by social, economic and cultural forces (Morley, 1980). These Korean women reinvigorate tradition by bringing the television reading their lived identity in the historical memory. Tradition is bound up with memory and has guardians with a moral and emotional content (Giddens, 1994: 63). These women in their 50s stand as the “guardians of the tradition” (Smith, 1991: 28), preserving and transmitting the fund of historical memories and moral values. They are active definers of the female identity in the modern society of continual change, and articulate the female identity in the deepest sense of keeping the home and family harmonious. I would argue that for this generation of Korean women, the home and family is the most visible object of tradition and the most solid embodiment of female identity. “Home is carved out under the shadow of the giant abstractions” (Hoggart, 1958: 104), of the outer forces of changes and uncertainties. The significance of tradition concretized through the women’s persistent adherence to the home and family is not bound to wither away in modern life, on the contrary, it is more consciously reinvigorated in their everyday symbolic encounter with different modes of female role and identity.

Why do these women so critically engage in the articulation of identity on the viewing moment of modern television, unleashing a high degree of moral and emotional energy? I would infer that the women’s fervent contestation in their TV talk is both an indicator and a symptom of generational conflicts in transitional Korea, which might not otherwise be readily recognized or directly expressed in the everyday interactions. The women’s TV talk here in high moral and emotional intensity is a dramatic symbolic evidence. On one hand, this moral contestation attests to the identity crisis and conflict among different generations in Korea. On the other hand, this is symptomatic of the women’s own crisis in identity, hence with their own need to define, reinvigorate and re-moor it. Identity becomes a particular issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is de-stabilized, on the verge of being displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty (Mercer, 1990: 43). It seems that identity becomes a particular issue to this age group of women, for they desire to keep their identity in relation to their families, particularly

to their own sons and daughters-in-law, as an unchanging reality amidst the modern society which is ceaselessly threatened by changes.

The women's reinvigoration of tradition, traditional female identity, through their everyday language of TV talk may render a significant meaning or purpose to them, precisely in the context of "contrast" (Hobsbawm, 1983: 2) between the constant changes of the modern society and the women's attempt to structure at least some parts of everyday life within it as unchanging and secure. In this context of contrast, tradition seems to acquire its modern significance in these women's lives. Tradition gains a purpose to secure a familiar identity in the context of marked contrast between the old and the young generations. With the assumed continuity of tradition being challenged by new cultural confrontations on the modern television, the most familiarized sense of tradition still provides this old generation of women with a powerful means of defining and locating their selves in everyday life. The women's reinvigoration of tradition in their TV talk is a "conscious and deliberate social practice". It is through the moral prism of tradition and its shared distinctive identity that these women are enabled to define who they are in relation to their families. On the moment of television experience in everyday life, they continue to engage in the on-going process of re-discovering and re-confirming themselves, their authentic selves moored on the traditional foundation of home and family. Such traditional identity, the long-familiar one, may be felt to "satisfy their needs for cultural fulfillment, rootedness, security" (Smith, 1995: 159) in the force of modernization that disturbs, disrupts and alters the stable patterning of the everyday, the sense of knowing who they are.

This Korean case casts a doubt on the general assumption inherent in the Western discourse of (post)modernity that with the development of modern societies and the mass media, television in particular, tradition is bound to fade away and eventually ceases to play a vital role in (post)modern life. Contrary to the imagined obsolescence of tradition, I have shown in this Korean case of women, television and modernity that tradition is an integral part of everyday life, even more consciously reinvigorated and concretized under the abstract yet gigantic imperatives of modernization and globalization today.¹⁰ This is where television plays a vital role as a mediating instrument of tradition. Although television has an enabling capacity to

bring change and modernity through its drama, this old generation of women strongly rejects it while reinvigorating tradition in their ritualistic contact with television. They gravitate to tradition in the attempt to restore their certainty of self-identity in the changing society, and bear upon them the traces of tradition. This proves that tradition continues to have a pervasive and significant presence in the women's lives, yet it has not been adequately recognized in the modern discourse of feminism and media. This further implies that the presence of the modern in Korea is partial, incomplete, and more complex than imagined.

Chapter 5 Korean Working-Class Women in their 30s

Section (1) TV Rituals, Security and Intimacy

How is television used by working-class housewives in their 30s in the intimacy of domestic life? What kind of domestic object is television in the young housewives' everyday life? The emphasis of this section is upon the women's domestic use of television in relation to their husbands. My intention here is to see if there is any significant difference in the ways in which television is used by different generations of women in particular relation to their husbands. The working-class women in their 50s in the previous chapter have forcefully complained about their husbands' emotional distance and the consequent absence of shared television experiences. On the contrary, the young women in their 30s reveal a different emotional landscape interwoven with the experiences of television. In this section I will elucidate this marked difference in two steps. First, I will highlight TV rituals as a key finding, by presenting specific cases that illustrate the ways in which the young housewives deliberately construct TV rituals as settled features of everyday family life. Second, what are the significant meanings of TV rituals in the women's domestic life? This question will be explored in terms of security and intimacy in the modern nuclear family.

TV Rituals

“My family are usually awake around 7:00 but we don't get out of bed immediately. My kids (7 and 8 years old) hate to get up early in the morning, begging me, “Just a little bit more sleep! Just a little bit more sleep!” They frown, tumble, roll with the bedding. (Laugh) These little kids say, “Mom, you wouldn't know how honeyed it is”. For me, every morning is a war. War against three men – my husband and two sons... Upon waking up every morning I turn on the TV loud so that they can get completely awake. Lying down half-sleep, half-awake, they watch TV for about 30 minutes. My husband and kids like sports programs. Then, they go to wash, eat breakfast. Around 8:00 everybody takes off to work and school”. (Sun-hae, 32)

“As soon as we are awake (in the morning), we start to fumble for the TV remote. I turn on the TV first. We don’t watch it, but just listen to the sound lying down on the bed. My husband sometimes watches the news, but I am in half-sleep beside him. It feels good to snuggle together inside the bedding, listening to a cheerful sound”. (Yeon-sook, 30)

The above extracts illustrate how television interacts routinely with these working-class families as they wake up in the morning. These ritualized viewing modes show the ways in which the domestic presence of television is integrated into the private lives of working-class women in their 30s. More precisely, it is the women themselves who attempt to construct and integrate TV rituals into the structure of everyday family life. Such integration of television into the rhythms of the everyday is something completely familiar, predictable, ritual for these women. This is a routine and regularized activity that they carry out as an integral part of domestic life. Television in this way becomes a ritualized object on its own, or “another member of the family”, as the result of its occupation of the particular times and spaces of home. Television is part of the grain of everyday life (Silverstone, 1994). TV rituals in this domestic context reveal some of the most central features of everyday family life, for these rituals embody extensions of the normative values, mental orientations, day-to-day behavior of families, and rules of family interaction and communication (Lull, 1988: 238). TV rituals created by these women in their 30s can be a manifestation of the micro-social family ecology, which is characterized by sharing experiences of television and emotionally permissive gender relations. This is in sharp contrast to the previous case of the women in their 50s whose family lives are marked by the husbands’ emotional distance and the absence of family TV time.

The routine use of television by the women in their 30s plays a significant role in the familial relationship, particularly with their husbands. Here, television is an integral part of the way the young couples’ everyday life is organized and conducted. It occupies a spatial and temporal significance in the intimacy of domesticity. Television plays a positive role in helping to constitute the routinization of contemporary family experiences and day-to-day practices. Television here more deeply penetrates the everyday. It is consumed and absorbed by the everyday

(Bausinger, 1984: 344). These Korean housewives in their 30s routinely consume this unique domestic resource of television to fulfill some desires and objectives. As a manager of the domestic world, they purposefully appropriate strategies of meaning construction surrounding TV rituals in highly private and consistent ways to advance their individual desires and family interests. Then, what are the significant meanings of TV rituals, desires and objectives to be fulfilled? Why do they deliberately establish TV rituals as settled features of everyday family life? In the following I want to explain two meanings implicated here - security and intimacy.

Security

One significant meaning of TV rituals is related to the place of television in its spatial and temporal significance, wherein TV rituals are expected to provide and sustain a sense of security. As part of the routine of getting up in the morning, the women's deliberate incorporation of television into the temporal structure of the household facilitates "control of time" (Silverstone *et al.*, 1992: 24), control of the morning-time world. TV rituals created by these housewives and routine activities followed by their family members constitute everyday life as familiar and predictable. They organize the time-space paths in such a way that certain mediated experiences are planned central features of everyday family life. The domestic use of television is habitualized and routinized in this specific way, becoming an indispensable component of the structure of the everyday perceptions and expectations. The women's ritualistic use of television here is a mark of confirmation that the morning-time world is in order, stabilized and secured.

TV rituals, as firmly integrated into the structure of everyday life, function to guarantee "ontological security" (Giddens, 1990: 92), a stabilizing sense and a structuring function for the continuity and the constancy of the surrounding domestic environment. Everyday life is sustained through the ordered continuities of routine, habit, the taken for granted but essential structures that sustain the grounds for security in daily lives (Silverstone, 1994: 18-19). Ontological security and routine are intimately connected via the pervasive influence of habit (Giddens, 1990: 98). Ontological security is an emotional rather than a cognitive phenomenon that has to be sustained in the routinized activities of daily life. The role of television in this

context is significant as it helps to define habitual routines, hence, sustain a sense of security. The minutiae of TV rituals in the Korean women's case suggest that the feeling of security may well be aroused and maintained on the moment of the everyday cozy snuggling in front of television. Television's cheerful sound and image - for example, dynamic sports program and morning news - defines its function of orienting the family to each and every morning, all combining to produce the sense of the meaningfulness, the fullness of days (Scannell, 1996: 149). TV rituals, as completely familiar, routine and predictable, play a role of a "contributor to security" (Silverstone, 1994: 19) in the visible and hidden ordering of everyday life. These Korean housewives deliberately appropriate TV rituals governed by the logic of repetition in order to establish the familiar, stabilizing and structuring function in their everyday family life, and sustain the sense of security. This sense of ontological security is achieved through the women's "fantasy of dominance" (Giddens, 1991: 194), control of time and family framework, thereby the domestic world feels as if it were fully orchestrated by the housewives themselves. Precisely, TV rituals allow a controlling mechanism for them in managing and regulating the micro-social family relations in the particular time and space of home. This controlling function for the maintenance of security is a unique capacity of TV rituals embedded in everyday life.

Intimacy

The second significance of TV rituals can be explained in a landscape of intimacy. In contrast to the perceived misery in the married lives of the women in their 50s, these young couples' willing participation in TV rituals constructs a series of renewable pleasures in everyday life. Routine events, like TV rituals, are part of the often "invisible history of everyday life", a history that is not recorded by the people who live and experience it (Spigel, 1992: 2). TV rituals constitute such invisible and biographically rooted history of everyday life, when integrated into daily family routines and accustomed patterns of interaction. Compared with the case of the women in their 50s, TV rituals by the women in their 30s reveal a different feature in the everyday life situation, that is, an emotionally intimate relationship with their husbands. The minutiae of TV rituals throw light upon a repertoire of changes occurring in the intimacy of married relationship, wherein television is in closer touch with the young couples' day-to-day existence. The young couples' emotional

landscape interwoven with the intimate use of television is sharply contrasted with the absence of shared television experiences in the married lives of women in their 50s. These young wives orchestrate moments of physical and interpersonal contact in front of the television screen to create an “intimacy which needs not be accompanied by conversation” (Lull, 1990: 38) - for example, everyday morning snuggle accompanied by television sound. Such rituals become emotionally familiar, creating good feelings and defining intimate interpersonal relationships between man and wife. “It feels good to snuggle together inside the bedding, listening to cheerful sound”, as the woman above expresses. Television here functions as a third person in the young couples’ private life and may well produce an aphrodisiac pleasure that is constantly constructed anew everyday. By deliberately constructing TV rituals, the young wives in their 30s actively attempt to make a more emotionally permissive and intimate relationship with their husbands, whereas the older generation of women in their 50s give up on their emotionally distant husbands and resign their perceived misery to the notion of fatalism.

The experience of “repeat performances”, routines and habits, provides security, intimacy and closeness in everyday ordinary lives (Berger, 1997: 162-171). In a similar vein, the experience of TV rituals in these ordinary women’s everyday life can be set into a landscape of intimacy, as the repeated act of television consumption entails a consolidation of intimacy between the couples. Rituals function to call up and induce a certain emotional magic (Crossley, 1998: 32). TV rituals in this context function to induce and sustain an emotional magic of intimacy, security, or family solidarity in the materially constrained, small and dense spaces of the working-class homes. The essence of working-class life is the dense and concrete life whose main stress is on the intimate, the sensory, and the personal (Hoggart, 1958: 104). It is worth noting that a television set in these Korean young couples’ homes tends to be placed in a private bedroom, not in a sitting room.¹ The use of television in this private bedroom may be an active attempt on the part of the young wives to save some degree of intimacy and togetherness in the married life. Not only the wives but also their husbands seem to understand the magical effect of television, thus willingly participate in TV rituals. The following example shows an interesting way in which television is employed by a husband to create an atmosphere of intimacy in the married relationship.

“My husband is under my control. (Laugh) Once we fight, it’s usually my husband who apologizes first. I don’t cook, talk until he apologizes. He goes to work without a breakfast, gets home without a greeting from his wife. I don’t sit together and watch TV with him. I don’t care if he watches TV alone, if he is bored to death rolling alone on the floor... Entering the door (from work) he talks to me naturally as if nothing happened, but I don’t look at him. He highly praises the dinner dish trying to talk to me. If I go to sleep early, he pulls down the bedding, saying, “Watch it! It’s so funny!” He lures me to watch TV. “It’s so funny! Here’s your favorite program!” If he keeps luring, I start to watch TV. He keeps laughing, talking to me about the program. While watching TV together we naturally reconcile, naturally get to talk”.

(Hee-sun, 30)

The young couple’s reconciliation of conflict above, mediated through television, is a pronounced example that gets into a deeper level of intimacy hidden behind the closed, private realm of everyday life. As an invited arbitrator, television forms a dialogical intimacy by intervening in the mundane conflict and facilitating an emotional and communicative climate. It functions as a powerful mediator for the couple’s permissive interpersonal relationship and cultural pleasure. Television has a unique capacity to create and sustain, through the ritualized appropriation, the degree of intimacy in its own right.² Television, as a connection to domestic relations and ritualistic practices, is selected and appropriated in such a highly intimate and personal way.

Overall, the minutiae of TV rituals presented in this section signify a changing nature of women’s everyday life in particular relation to their husbands and the television’s positive role within it. Compared with the previous case of women in their 50s, a significant transition is found in this emotionally intimate gender relation, and such transition is articulated in the specific cosmologies of TV rituals. Television is integrated, highly personally, intimately and pleurably, into the structure of everyday family life. The young wives in their 30s deliberately integrate TV rituals into the everyday rhythm and space to fulfill their emotional priorities, desires for intimacy and security.³

There is one sociological point to be made between the emotion of intimacy and security and the young housewives' use of TV rituals in the modern nuclear family. The younger generation of women are more likely to turn to their husbands for intimacy, with the geographical mobility and breakdown of women's support networks and communities outside the nuclear family (Easton, 1978: 30; quoted in Modleski, 1997: 46). With social and cultural changes resulting from Korean modernization – for example, a paring down of the size of the nuclear family, greater dependence on the home and an increase in the role of the family for emotional interdependence – the younger generation of women, especially the staying-home housewives in my research, are more likely to turn to their husbands for the sense of ontological security and intimacy. Therefore, it may follow that the women's use of TV rituals is not merely an issue of psychological motivations and preferences, but a structurally determined consumption which has a unique purpose to fulfil a complex set of psycho-social and emotional needs and desires. As the following example illustrates, the presence of the husband in an encounter with the evening news creates a spatially and temporally bound sense of security for a staying-home housewife living in a disorderly modern world.

“It's scary to watch the news alone. If I hear bad news, I get so afraid that I even go to the (apartment) door and check the lock again. Once my husband is home, it's OK. I feel secure”. (Ha-jung, 30)

Modern television news presents disruptions of the order and security of the public world. This is a reason why the Korean housewives in my research tend to avoid watching the news, but prefer to watch the familiar, secure and intimate world of home drama. Television news, in the conditions of modern society, captures threats, risks and fears of “a reality and a real world that has become increasingly dangerous and difficult to manage” (Robins, 1994: 466). It poses “ontological insecurity” (Giddens, 1990: 105) which is higher in the modern world than in the circumstances of traditional social life. Therefore, these housewives deliberately refuse to confront the dangerous public world of news, in order not to disturb the private and fragile sense of ontological security which is grounded and sought in their intimate experiences of familiar and predictable routines, like TV rituals. And the presence of

the husband in the modern nuclear family is expected to provide a major source of security and intimacy in the women's home-bound lives.

Section (2) TV and Childcare: "I try not to watch TV because of the child"

In the previous section I have explored the women's domestic use of television in relation to their husband. This section focuses on the women's use of daytime television in particular relation to their child. It analyzes the ways in which culturally specific rules of childcare regulate the women's television experience and pleasure. Throughout this section I will show how the general patterns and degrees of women's television consumption during the day are strongly influenced by the cultural ideology of childcare, more specifically child education, and further discuss its far-reaching implications on the working-class women's daily lives.

In Western television studies it is generally suggested that women everywhere use television as a babysitter, extending role responsibilities for managing their children and for the simultaneous fulfillment of other domestic roles (Lull, 1988: 246). Television will be consciously or semi-consciously used by the mother-figure as her own replacement while she cooks the dinner or attends, for whatever length of time, to something else, somewhere else, because the continuities of television sound and image can be easily appropriated as a comfort and a security (Silverstone, 1994: 15). Many housewives actively appropriate private time to watch their favorite shows and derive pleasure from such viewing: "The woman was serving the evening meal, feeding her five-and three-year-old daughters and attempting to watch the program on the black and white television situated on top of the freezer opposite to the kitchen table" (Hobson, 1982: 112). In short, as one Western interviewee states, "Ninety-nine percent of the women I know stay at home to look after their kids, so the only other thing you have to talk about is your housework or the telly" (Morley, 1988: 40). If this is the general picture of the daily lives of Western housewives staying home with young children, my case on the Korean working-class housewives in their 30s reveals a different phenomenology of television experience. As manifest in the following examples, these Korean housewives consciously try to distance themselves from daytime television due to the concern for its perceived negative effect on child education.

“Once I was cooking in the kitchen, but suddenly I felt my baby (two years old) was very quiet. I turned back to see what she was doing. She was sitting in front of television vacantly gazing at the screen. Just like a dull zombie. I called her, but she didn’t even look back at me. Strangely, I felt afraid. I thought, television was contaminating my baby’s pure brain, television would stop her brain. Since I saw her vacant face, I have been trying not to watch television because of my child”. (Ha-jung, 30)

“I do watch TV, but try not to watch because of my daughter (three years old)... Because TV is not good for the child’s brain. It lowers the child’s creativity. I try to read books to her, play with picture puzzles. That’s why we moms are so tired. She wouldn’t just play alone. Sometimes I feel tempted to shout, “Please play alone!” She constantly brings something to do together. I get to understand why people say, “Once you raise one child, you learn patience. If you raise ten children, you will probably become a saint!”” (Eun-kyung, 30)

“Upon hearing my kids come home (from school), I turn off the TV. I tell my kids all the time, “Don’t watch TV”. So I should not watch TV when they are around. If I do something against my words, my kids immediately retort, “But why does mom watch TV?”” (Sun-hae, 32)

These are some specificities of the different phenomenology of television experience mediated through the children in the Korean women’s everyday life. Television here registers in a different way, demanding a particular manner of consumption. The above accounts indicate culturally specific rules for the proper way in which television consumption is managed and controlled without disturbing the main demand placed on women, which is childcare or the primacy of child education. Commonly, these Korean women try not to watch television during the day for the sake of their children’s development and mental health. In the previous section I have emphasized the women’s deliberate integration of TV rituals into the structure of everyday life for ontological security and intimacy. The pleasure of television use, however, can be integrated into the women’s domestic life, only to the extent it will

not disturb or affect the women's central role of childcare, more specifically child education in this Korean context. The culturally constructed idea of motherhood crucially mediates and regulates the women's experience of television during the day.

It is argued in a Western television theory that in the ability of the child to separate from the mother, television perhaps occupies a potential space released by blankets, teddy bears and breasts, and functions cathectically and culturally as a transitional object (Silverstone, 1994: 13): However, "that ability is itself conditional on the quality of the caring environment provided for it" (Silverstone, 1994: 8-9). Precisely, whether or not television can make such a potential transitional object in the relationship between Korean mothers and their children is conditional on the quality of the caring environment of home which is determined by the cultural idea of motherhood, thereby the mothers' central concern for child education. The women's accounts above reflect a fantasy of maternal perfectability in child-rearing. They become an expert on motherhood, informed by popular ideas and some scientific knowledge about child-rearing. The cultural ideology of "being a good mother" is firmly embedded within the contemporaneous discourses of domesticity. As a consequence, the women's experience of popular television, favorite home drama for example, tends to entail a guilty pleasure derived from their acute perception of neglecting the main responsibility for childcare. To be culturally specific, the women's guilty pleasure here does not necessarily arise from neglecting housework. As one woman bluntly puts it, "What's the hurry with the housework? It will be done somehow during the day". The source of the guilty pleasure precisely lies in their "guilt of less-than-perfect motherhood". And such guilty pleasure tends to accompany self-interrogation of maternal identity, "What kind of mom am I?"

"Once I became a huge fan of the drama *See Again and Again*. I was so much drawn into this drama that my daughter even became a "go-away". I said "later, later" whenever she brought her stuff. But after watching this drama, this thought always occurred to me, "What kind of mom am I?" I felt guilty about neglecting my child. (Laugh) Then I suddenly tried to please her, saying, "Bring your video!" I turned on her favorite video and watched it together. I must have watched that boring stuff a hundred times. I tried to spend more time with her". (Hee-sun, 30)

“My husband always stresses to me that the child never grows by herself, so mom must invest all her time and effort. He says, I should feed the child’s body and mind. Not just the body but also the mind”. (Ha-jung, 30)

Women’s life and power in the public and the private spheres is subject to the rule of men – both as individuals and as represented by patriarchy (Nicolson, 1993: 202). The culturally specific rules prescribing the women’s central role for child education are further inoculated and reinforced by their husbands in the everyday discourse. The reinforcement of the value of education which pervades the cultural tradition and public policy in Korea is concomitant with a tendency towards greater attentiveness of mothers. It belongs to the main domain of mothers, whose role is expected to define a moral code of the family and shape a correspondent character and behavior for the children. Therefore, the Korean women’s main concerns here are all related to childcare, child education in particular, and at the root of the childcare issue lies an intact sexual division of labor. The men in their lives are totally left out of the concern with child education for the Korean culture tends to define this issue within the discourse of motherhood. The pervasive emphasis on the women’s devotion to child education, as a central feature of the domestic roles, produces a multiple burden for women, particularly in the lower socio-economic class. Women’s sole responsibility for child education in the daily experience of motherhood has far-reaching implications in the lives of women. The following accounts reveal some implications of the burden of child education on the actual quality of the working-class women’s everyday life: a complete absence of leisure activities, an extreme level of home-confined life, and ambivalent emotional conflicts between work outside home as an economic means for providing education and childcare inside home as an ontological base for providing security for children.⁴

“I would like to learn how to swim, it would feel good to go swimming in the morning. But if I can afford to do that, I’d rather spend more money for my kids’ extra-curricular lessons”. (Young-joo, 31)

“I don’t usually go out. Frankly, it saves money to stay in. Once you go out you are supposed to spend money”. (Nae-young, 30)

“I started running a small noodle diner. I thought, I should save money for my kids’ (higher) education. With my husband’s salary alone, that’s impossible. But I had to close the diner in two months. Because my kids did not listen to anybody but mom. They were getting spoiled. What’s the use of working outside if the kids are getting worse?” (Sun-hae, 32)

“I can’t leave my daughter to others’ care. I don’t feel secure about that. What if she falls? What if she is burnt by a hot thing, or pricked by a sharp thing?” (Eun-kyung, 30)

“My daughter often cried and didn’t go to others. What if that affects her personality? I was worried. Even now (at the age of three), my daughter shows her “dislikes” about my going out. If I take out my clothes from the wardrobe, she treads on my clothes. If I say, “Don’t do that. Mom will wear this today”, she brings my (housewifery) blue jeans instead. She is afraid that I may go out”. (Hee-sun, 30)

Overall, child education in Korea imposes a sole responsibility on mothers, which generates a multiple level of material, psychic and emotional burden for the women of lower socio-economic class. These working-class women in a sense consent to the cultural ideology that mothers are the primary care-givers for the family and mothers alone shoulder the burdens and problems concerning the everyday upbringing of children. This burden is further aggravated by the women’s increasing feeling of insecurity about leaving their children to others’ care in a modern society.⁵ A similar vein of fear is also found in the women’s repudiation of daytime television which is assumed in a Western theory as a transitional object to play a role of a babysitter, a replacement of mother. Television is rather perceived by these Korean mothers as a detrimental object for children’s mental development. The cultural ideology of child education, defined as the women’s primary domestic role, is critically implicated in the women’s conscious distancing from daytime television consumption and their guilty pleasure otherwise as a consequence.

Section (3) Fantasy of Dominance

So far I have demonstrated in Section (1) that the women in their 30s deliberately construct and integrate TV rituals into the structure of everyday life to fulfill their desires for ontological security and intimacy. On the other hand, in Section (2) I have also shown that these women consciously distance themselves from daytime television to manage their role of childcare, child education in specific. These findings imply that the women desire to control their everyday family life, including the domestic use of television, from their vantage point. In this section I will further show the ways in which these working-class women wrestle for control to assert a fantasy of dominance. How does this happen and what are consequences? Specifically, I will analyze two cases involving the contestation of power and control in the relation of gender and generation, respectively. The first case illustrates a woman's tactical appropriation of her child as a negotiating mechanism to assert her control over the husband's dominant use of television and regulate him to be more participating in the emotional level of everyday life. The second case illustrates a woman's strategic appropriation of popular television drama as a controlling mechanism to educate her husband about the women's domestic problems, daily conflicts with her mother-in-law in particular, thereby gain her husband's better support and assert a fantasy of dominance over the mother-in-law's authority.

Case One

“Whenever my husband comes home for dinner, the first thing he does is to turn on the television. He says, he wants to rest absentmindedly lying down in front of television, and absorb into television without having to think about anything else. I felt a little dissatisfied. Because the dinner time is the only chance I can see and talk to my husband. After the dinner, by the time I finish washing the dishes and other stuff he is already ready to sleep. He works late, gets home late, and then turns on the television first. When he is absorbed into television, he doesn't even answer my questions. I feel ignored, angry. But the real reason was our child. His total absorption into television seems to neglect our baby. Once I exploded, “Do you think this home is a diner, and I am the owner of the diner? What do you think our poor baby is?” I suggested to my

husband, “Instead of watching television, will you please look at me and the baby?” Surprisingly, that worked. If we didn’t have the baby, my husband might have simply thought I was nagging him out of boredom. Like a staying-home housewife nagging the husband for nothing, just out of boredom! “I am working so hard outside, but what are you doing inside? Just complaining?” He might have got angry at me. But he seems to understand me because he cares about the baby”. (Ha-jung, 30)

This case enables a close look at the way in which the woman subverts the field of tension in everyday life and creates a stage of dominance over the husband. Specifically, this woman asserts her control over the husband’s absorbent contact with television by appropriating her child. The centrality of child in the woman’s daily life produces a unique opportunity to negotiate rules and practices for watching television at home. The child here is one of the infinite local tactics that the woman often makes use of in order to fulfil her desire for a more emotionally intimate and interactive family life. The woman’s purpose here is to disrupt traditional patterns of family life and women’s correspondent lives inscribed in the gender-based domestic labor. The child, as a primary mechanism for control, subsidizes a negotiating power in the conflictual gender relation, hence, allows the woman to disrupt the normalized living condition. It can be inferred that the woman’s tactical use of the child and momentary fantasy of control over the husband are “evasive pleasure” (Fiske, 1989a: 8) that invert the social norms and male power established in the dominant structure of everyday life. Apparently, it is common that these Korean housewives in my research often appropriate their children as the most effective negotiating mechanism to relocate their disadvantageous social positioning. Another housewife in her 30s similarly alludes to the micro-political power of the child played out in the minutiae of everyday negotiations.

“Whenever I have something to say to my husband, I make this excuse, “It’s for the child, it will be good for the child”. Then he accepts my words”.
(Nae-young, 30)

The responsibility for childcare in the modern nuclear family weighs heaviest on women. However, these Korean women create a bargaining force out of it to assert

control over the domestic rules and practices, including the everyday use of television. I have already indicated in the previous section that these Korean working-class women in their 30s live out everyday life in a multiple level of material, psychic and emotional burden entailed by the sole responsibility for childcare, child education in particular, for the Korean contemporary culture still defines the childcare role only within the discourse of motherhood. Motherhood, however, is not always felt oppressive or powerless by these Korean women. This is partly because the women's inevitable confinement at home for the childcare role and assumed experiences of powerlessness within this social structure, naturally and always, leads to the possible creation of, what Anthony Giddens terms "a fantasy of dominance" (Giddens, 1991: 194). In order to achieve a fantasy of dominance, the powerless women appropriate a controlling mechanism, or as one Korean woman here calls "a negotiating weapon", which emerges on the weight of real problems in the women's everyday life. By appropriating forms of "tactic" or "strategy" the powerless fantasize to attack, transform, or subvert the normal circuit of power in the quotidian, and turn it into "opportunities" (de Certeau, 1984: xix). Precisely, this Korean case shows the use of the child as an opportunistic tactic that allows the women's fantasy of dominance in the gender relation. This case further implies that the powerless women, the full-time housewives and mothers, do not simply remain passive in their disadvantageous social positioning. The culturally constructed and imposed role of motherhood can be turned into opportunities as the powerless women actively seek possible forms of "mastery over life circumstances" (Giddens, 1991: 192). This can partly explain why the women's everyday life is bearable and sustainable to some extent.

The Korean housewives in their 30s actively seek possible forms of mastery over everyday family life, especially to save the emotionally intimate time and space with their husbands. Due to the extremely long working hours in the Korean public sphere, their husbands come home normally after 9:00pm, sometimes nearer to midnight. As embedded in the different frameworks of everyday life, these men and wives can share only a sparse leisure together, unless the wives actively utilize every opportunity available for family interactions and communications. For the men, switching on television in the evening means relaxing from work tension and throwing off the burden of responsibility, while the women can hardly have such a possibility of throwing off the burden of responsibility, the endless care-role and

domestic work. A large degree of psychological or physical stress in the public world of work leads to a greater degree of dependency on leisure activities in the home, and television particularly has the task of lowering the level of stress engendered by hard work (Rogge and Jensen, 1988: 95). Television absorbs the attention of the Korean working-class men returning from hard work, as a consequence, this becomes a major obstacle to their staying-home wives' desire for a communicative and intimate relationship. The intervention of television every night, when solely occupied by the husbands, provides a source of domestic tension.

In contrast to the older women in their 50s who mainly complain and give up on their husbands' dominant sole use of television, the young women in their 30s actively attempt to resolve such discontent and tension surrounding television. These women attempt to influence control over their husbands' sole preoccupation with television during the primetime, and orient them to be more participative in a shared family life. The women in their 30s desire to regulate their husbands' sole absorption into television viewing, however, at other times these women routinely integrate the joint-viewing of television into the structure of everyday life for security and intimacy, as described in the previous section on TV rituals. Commonly, it is said by these women, "I wouldn't like my husband to watch TV alone, but I do like to watch together". The control over the husbands and the general patterns of television use indicates that the Korean women interweave television, from their vantage point, into the emotional level of everyday life. Primarily, this control is facilitated by the women's appropriation of the child, as described above, and the private domestic life including television use tends to be under the women's control.

"A man watching TV looks quite silly. If a man falls for TV, that looks really idiotic. He needs to go to a mental hospital. Only the man who has nothing to do in life would fall for TV". (Yeon-sook, 30)

This housewife satirizes men's fascination about domestic television with great clarity. The extraordinarily active use of television by men is often ridiculed by these Korean housewives. Television, according to these housewives' views, is the women's possession, not the men's object, because the cultural location of television is in the domestic and the domestic world is orchestrated by the housewives,

supposedly the minister of the interior. This view follows a cultural rule about the distinctive sexual division of labor, whereby men belong to the public world, outside the home and television. Television consumption in this condition is mainly defined as a womanly thing. Television use is a multi-dimensional activity which encompasses a range of social interaction, purposes and patterns contingent upon culturally-specific conditions (Dahlgren, 1998: 304). In this Korean case, it is often the women who define, to a large extent, the circumstances and patterns of television use with a view to asserting a fantasy of dominance over the day-to-day family life.

Overall, the women's fantasy of dominance is implicated in the micro politics of everyday life. The women in their 30s actively negotiate the gender relation and the television use, whose micro political effect is often contingent upon the tactical appropriation of the child. The tactical use of the child is a culturally-specific and common phenomenon among the women in their 30s and the women in their 50s. However, there is a significant generational difference in that the young women directly confront their husbands, attempt to disrupt the man-and-wife power relation and replace the traditional pattern of family life with more emotional intimacy. On the other hand, the older women maneuver the same tactic of the child to effect some degree of power in their perceived misery from their husbands, yet they keep the basic frame of gender relation unchanged. The women's tactical use of the child, no matter how effective and uplifting temporarily in improving the micro political conditions, operates within the limits of existing sexual division of labor and functions to sustain the established patriarchal structure. The women probably get something out of everyday life by appropriating forms of tactic, such as child and television, but the weight is nonetheless on their shoulders; everyday life weighs heaviest on women (Lefebvre, 1971: 73). It is a fantasy of dominance through which powerless women assert control over the meanings of everyday life, a control that is normally denied in the dominant social structure.

Case Two

The second way in which the women wrestle for control to assert a fantasy of dominance is through the use of popular television drama. Television drama is used by the women in their 30s from their vantage point to manage generational conflicts

with their powerful mothers-in-law. Whereas women in their 50s complain most about their emotionally distant husbands, these young women complain not much about their husbands but about their mothers-in-law. Their complaints about the mothers-in-law somehow overshadow gender problems, the unequally structured labor relations and power between men and wives. The content of their complaints is commonly related to the mothers-in-law's "son-superiority" attitude and intervention into the young couples' married life. This is the very heart of generational conflicts between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law in modern Korea.

"Just like most mothers-in-law, my mother-in-law only cares about her son. Her son is the king of the world! I am a devoted servant. To my mother-in-law, her son is the heaven and I am the earth. She calls me sometimes during the day to spy on whether I am feeding her son well, whether I am taking good care of his health during this hot summer, whether I am keeping the house tidy, whether I am going out for shopping or idle chatting. She takes me as a servant. I think, frankly, the enemies in the world are mothers-in-law, the same women". (Young-joo, 31)

"Usually, many trivial fights between men and wives are caused by mothers-in-law. All my friends who have problems in their married life say the same thing. Mothers-in-law even say, "Divorce my son!" Mothers-in-law live under an illusion as if they were living their son's life". (Yeon-sook, 30)

"We (young women) wish, please mothers-in-law leave us alone! We want to live our own life". (Hee-sun, 30)

"I wish my husband and I alone could live on a remote island, just the two of us could live freely (away from the mother-in-law)". (Nae-young, 30)

These complaints show a culturally-specific repertoire of women's problems based on the hierarchic social locations of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law in the Korean culture. Although the nuclear family as a cultural symbol is now rooted in modern Korea, the traditional rule governing the extended family and the powers of mother-in-law still permeate through everyday practices. This consequently generates latent

and patent sources of generational conflicts. The everyday life of the Korean women in their 30s presents different experiences and expectations in relation to their husband, child, and extended family-in-law. If the Western women viewers of television drama, or daytime soap opera in specific, are looking at and perhaps longing for a kind of extended family, the direct opposite of their own isolated nuclear family, with the fantasy of community (Modleski, 1997: 46), such fantasy is evidently not the case with the Korean women viewers. On the contrary, these Korean women desire a complete break from the tradition of extended family, especially an escape from the authority of the mother-in-law.

The authority of mothers-in-law laden with the typical attitude of son-superiority exercises a profound influence on the lives of daughters-in-law, hence, such authority is often criticized in the moral education that these women in their 30s deliberately use through television drama. In the following I will present one specific case that illustrates the way in which a woman uses popular television drama as a controlling mechanism to educate her husband about women's domestic conflicts, thereby asserting a fantasy of dominance over her powerful mother-in-law. To begin with, this woman attempts to initiate her husband's participation in the shared viewing of the particular home drama which is intentionally selected by herself.

“While watching the drama *Rose and Beansprout*, I get to realize how closely she resembles my mother-in-law. She talks just like my mother-in-law! I am surprised to see how closely the narratives of that drama resemble our real talk. One day, this thought occurred to me, “My husband should watch this drama!” Whenever I complain to him about his mother - how unreasonably, selfishly she treats me – he doesn't understand. I thought, “Definitely he should watch this drama!”” (Hee-sun, 30)

Then, how does this woman make her husband watch, together, home drama, notoriously labeled as women's genre? Everywhere in all cultures, dramas or “weepies” are favorites of women, while men prefer sports, action-oriented programs, and news (Hobson, 1980, 1982; Morley 1988; Rogge and Jensen, 1988). Men who choose stories that are popular with women are classified as “sissies”, and they are accused of “going soft”, “becoming half woman” if not interested in the male genre

such as sports (Gans, 1962: 188; quoted in Lull, 1988: 248). This differential pattern of viewing preferences between men and women is not an exception in the Korean homes. The above woman in this case also says that her husband usually does not watch drama, but prefers sports, (Western) action movies, thrillers, and children's cartoons. Nevertheless, this woman actively endeavors to make her husband watch women's drama together and grasp a vivid picture of day-to-day subtle conflicts between her mother-in-law and herself. The following longer extract shows her strategic use of popular television drama for moral education.

“Rose and Beansprout is broadcast at 8:00pm (at the weekend), so I try to finish the dinner before then, around 7:00pm. I don't want to watch it over the dinner because we can't focus. In-between time (7:00-8:00pm) I try to boost my husband's mood... I recommend, “It was very hot today. Why don't you take a cool shower?” When he comes out of the shower, I turn the electric fan toward him. I bring cool slices of watermelon, or ice cream. In fact, what my husband likes most is a very cold beer right out of the refrigerator. With a cold beer, he's already in heaven. When he is in a good mood, he does me all the favors. We can then watch the drama together”. (Hee-sun, 30)

While watching together, this woman deliberately activates meanings of the television drama to advance her own interests. She goes onto say:

“While watching the drama with my husband, I keep saying about the mother-in-law character, “She's just like your mother! Your mother says exactly the same thing!” That mother-in-law only cares about her son... While watching this drama, my husband laughs a lot. He says, “Korean (old) moms are all the same! Unstoppable!” Really, it's fun to watch the drama with my husband. He can peek at the trivial yet complicated women's world... If I find other dramas about mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law, I want to watch them with my husband. But I shouldn't make him watch many dramas. Just one or two are enough. (Researcher: Why?) Then he may think, I force him to watch together because I want to complain about his mother. I want him to understand how we women live everyday at home, why we wage a nerve war. I want him to

understand “my life at home”. If I make him watch many dramas, he will get fed up. Just one or two are enough, like a little homework”. (Hee-sun, 30)

This illustrates the way in which the woman strategically uses popular television drama to manage the prolonged tensions and conflicts in the relationship with her mother-in-law. With hidden objectives, she intentionally makes her husband watch the women’s drama with her, like an assigned homework, and uses the realistic images and narratives of television drama as a visual tool to educate her husband about everyday domestic life, or what she calls “the trivial yet complicated women’s world”. The mother-in-law character in the drama and its dramatic tension of power and morality are appropriated as “known-in-common cultural referents” (Lull, 1990: 37) to clarify the issues that she intends to discuss in the intimate viewing with her husband. She not only identifies with the familiar television discourse, but also actively makes use of its meaningful content for her own purposes through a strategic application. As the couple’s intimate viewing of the drama naturally leads to discussion about the woman’s daily problems with her mother-in-law, television in this context allows her tensions to be ventilated. Television drama is used as a controlling mechanism to facilitate the husband to understand a constant nerve war between two women and better support the powerless wife’s position over his powerful mother’s. It enables the powerless daughter-in-law to maneuver the micro political power over her disadvantageous generational relation. She thus creates a fantasy of dominance over the powerful mother-in-law through the deliberate use of television combined with the husband’s moral support. Such fantasy of dominance produces a vicarious and victorious pleasure.

“She (the young lawyer in *The Last War*) doesn’t hesitate, but speaks out her opinions to her mother-in-law. That’s cool! I feel like she is talking about what I am tempted to talk about. She talks on behalf of all daughters-in-law”.

(Yeon-sook, 30)

The woman’s particular way of using popular television is not made in a social vacuum, but is the consequence of her particular social positioning in relation to the mother-in-law. Television use can be seen as a consequent everyday practice that is highly tactical, purposeful yet unpredictable in character, taking place behind the

closed door of the private realm. The art of popular television culture is said to be the art of making do (Fiske, 1989a: 4). This means that the powerless consume popular television for its meanings and pleasures, and involve the struggle to activate meanings that are particularly relevant to their everyday lived experiences, with a view to advancing the interests of their subordinate conditions. In the same logic, this powerless Korean daughter-in-law uses popular television drama as a tactic to assert a fantasy of dominance over her powerful mother-in-law. She uses television, among domestic objects, precisely because its drama is particularly relevant to her everyday experiences.⁶ Korean television drama, for example *Rose and Beansprout* or *The Last War*, closely articulates culturally-specific conflicts present in modern life, day-to-day generational conflicts between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law. Precisely because television drama offers identifiable meanings that are particularly relevant to the women's lives, it is most enjoyed and talked about by these working-class women. As a multifaceted resource in the domestic, television has a unique capacity to allow the women to make relevant meanings that serve to fulfil personal desires and create a fantasy of dominance over everyday family life.

Section (4) A-ha! Emotion: Reading the Popular

The women's experience of television in everyday life pivots on the family and personal relationships, which is demonstrated in particular relation to the husband in Section (1), the child in Section (2), and the mother-in-law in Section (3). The working-class women in their 30s use television to fulfill their personal desires for security and intimacy and assert control over everyday family life. In this final section, I will conclude by focusing on the decisive way in which the centrality of the family and personal relationships generate interesting consequences for the women's reading of Korean popular drama, in contrast to Western programming. It is consistently found in my research that Korean drama evokes tremendous popular pleasure among the working-class women in their 30s, while Western programming on television is largely disregarded by this category of viewers. Why? I will explain this contrasting viewing pattern in terms of what I call "A-ha! emotion", an emotional resolution and closure in the experience of the relevant and recognizable forms of popular culture.

Korean drama fascinates as its familiar and recognizable form meets the socio-psychological needs and desires of the women viewers struggling to make sense of the human conditions in modern life. For the Korean working-class housewives in their 30s, central human conditions are related to their husband, child, and mother-in-law, as discussed in the previous sections. Drama, as a “masticator of social realities” (Silverstone, 1994: 16), constantly makes strong and identifiable reality claims on the relational human conditions, which in turn provides a point of recognition, identification and pleasure to its women viewers. Thus, popular pleasure is first and foremost a pleasure of “recognition” (Ang, 1985: 20) that is deeply rooted in the women’s everyday common sense and closely relevant to their everyday reality.

Richard Hoggart (1958: 120-126) offers one of the most insightful and pertinent explanations in this respect. According to his description of the central characteristics of working-class popular pleasure in the British context, the first pointer to an understanding of working-class popular pleasure is the overriding interest in the “close detail of the human conditions”, which means that ordinary human life is fascinating in itself. What makes cultural forms popular with working-class people is not something that suggests an escape from ordinary life, but rather reflects or articulates the minutiae of everyday life. It has to deal with “recognizable human life”, a presentation of “what is known already”. Therefore, if the cultural presentation is really homely and ordinary, and has a felt sense of the texture of life with a considerable accuracy in its particulars, it will be interesting and popular to working-class audiences. These characteristics written from the British context are equally found in this case of Korean working-class popular culture.

The content of Korean popular drama provides some of the most recognizable and relevant material that allows the women viewers to build a felt sense of the self. This means that through deep engagement with the meaning of television drama and its integration into the everyday, the women viewers can better find the “means to understand their social roles, their relations to others and the possibilities for social action” (Dickinson, 1998: 260). The following two extracts precisely show the Korean working-class women’s tremendous interest in the detailed presentation of ordinary human life, through which they can better make sense of the relational human conditions in their own lives.

“I completely sympathized with this drama (*The Last War*). While watching it I often felt, “It’s so real! It’s so right!” I can see in this drama, it’s the positional difference as a daughter and as a daughter-in-law. “Because she is my daughter-in-law, I should order her to do lots of things”. This is the mother-in-law’s typical mentality. This is mother-in-law! Mother-in-law thinks, because she is a daughter-in-law she should do lots of housework, contribute something for the family-in-law, but she is not doing enough! Mother-in-law finds faults with her daughter-in-law. Mother-in-law would not do that to her own daughter. That’s exactly our reality! That’s why people enjoy watching this drama. It’s so real!” (Eun-kyung, 30)

“How could she (the young lawyer wife in *The Last War*) despise her husband? She is very rude, self-centered. Women should respect their husbands. If the husband is not respected at home by his own wife, how can he be respected by others outside? In this drama, she’s very rude to her husband. I don’t enjoy watching this drama... (In a follow-up interview, she however expressed great pleasure). It was a great fun. Toward the end of this drama I enjoyed watching it. One thing particularly touched my heart. This man and wife quarrel cat-and-dog all the usual time. They throw dishes, high-heel shoes. (In a deeply moved tone) But when they face a really tough hardship they become a support to each other. When they are about to divorce, they suddenly miss each other. When the wife gets into a trouble at work, her husband tries to help her. While watching this drama, I thought, “A-ha! This is man and wife! An inseparable tie”. I felt, “A-ha! That’s why man and wife live together long, even though we quarrel all the time”. I felt good to see that kind of love between man and wife. I realized, that’s the real love in the man-and-wife relationship”. (Ha-jung, 30)

“A-ha! This is man and wife!” “This is mother-in-law!” Drama is more popular among the working-class audiences because it offers “more direct, more immediate satisfactions” (Bourdieu, 1980: 239). A-ha! emotion is a point of immediate recognition of popular drama that is particularly relevant to the women’s lived experiences. Such recognition with strong emotional claims is a point of meeting the

socio-psychological needs of the women viewers trying to make sense of the relational human conditions in their own lives. Television drama here reaches not only the intimate sphere of day-to-day life, but also the heart of the self. It is a significant object with powerful emotional claims in the women's lives. A-ha! emotion gives a firm sense of meaning of reality and human relations; for example, a meaning of the man-and-wife relationship as an inseparable tie, or a meaning of daughter-in-law to mother-in-law, different from the position of daughter.

It is suggested that individuals tend to engage in *emotion* work when they experience a clash between their core identity and the contradictory messages they receive from different ideologies (Duncombe and Marsden, 1998: 220). For the working-class housewives in their 30s, the experience of different ideologies is manifest in their critical reading of the feminist drama *The Last War*, wherein the young lawyer wife, contrary to their own lives, shows no respect for the husband and disrupts the normalized patterns of family life. The women's reading of the feminist drama is critical as they reflexively relate the text to their own world of everyday experiences, interpret it from the angle of their own situations, and appropriate it to their own emotions. The women's attempt to make sense of the human conditions in the encounter with the popular drama evokes specific social patterns that are already internalized in their social positioning. In other words, they emotionally invest themselves in television drama with particular meanings that are already governed by the familiar values, norms and existing orders embedded in their everyday social and personal life. Therefore, strong emotional responses in the experience of television – for example, “A-ha! This is man and wife!” – are the attempt to preserve a sense of order and rationality in the situations where the familiar and recognizable order or the common sense is challenged. A-ha! *emotion* provides “a magical reaffirmation of the sense of rational order and a negation of the cause of disruption” (Crossley, 1998: 32). A-ha! is a point of emotional resolution and closure that ensures the ontological sense of order and control over the meanings of the family and relational human conditions.

For the Korean working-class women in their 30s, the everyday social and personal context for the experience of television is first and foremost the family. These women's lives and identities are defined closely in terms of the family. Insofar as indicated throughout the cases of the Korean working-class women in their 30s and

50s, the working-class life may be more home/family-bound, more local, and more traditional than the middle-class life. Home/family retains its importance strongly and strikingly in the working-class life. The working-class women's experience of television in everyday life is so personal, so intimate, so local, and its main themes are related to husband, child, and relations with others, which are all deeply embedded in the structure of family.⁷ The women's everyday life pivoting on the family and the interest in the ordinary human relations are significantly implicated in their daily experience of television. A-ha! emotion above indicates that the Korean working-class women have a deeply-anchored desire for the emotional level of engagement with the human content of familiar cultural forms and its integration into their own everyday relations. They desire to participate in immediately accessible and familiar forms of culture, such as television home dramas, "as if they were real-life events", and this symbolic participation in the human content "structures their everyday perception of everyday existence" (Bourdieu, 1980: 236, 246). "The desire to enter into the game, identifying with the characters' joys and sufferings, worrying about their fate, espousing their hopes and ideals, living their life, is based on a form of investment" (Bourdieu, 1980: 237). This emotional level of investment in ordinary human relations, particularly in the family context, and A-ha! resolution as a consequence constitute a major source of popular pleasure that continues to hook the working-class women to Korean drama.

"I am a huge fan of *Rose and Beansprout*. Drama precisely shows the complicated family relationships. All the relationships between man and wife, between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, etc. I can really understand their situations. I can really sympathize with the characters. It's exactly our life. It's about the life of ordinary people. So, I watch it again, again, again..."

(Young-joo, 31)

Contrary to the working-class women's enormous delight in watching Korean popular drama, their viewing attitudes towards Western programming on television are strikingly different – disinterestedness, indifference, detachment, dissatisfaction, or even pejorative parody. Western programming is largely disregarded by these working-class women in far higher favor of the familiar and recognizable human content of Korean drama. Western programming is not received as pleasurable

because it does not provide A-ha! emotion, a point of immediate recognition and identification relevant to their lived experiences. The source of phenomenal pleasure from Korean drama comes from its particular relevance to the women's everyday life and greater emotional affinity to their everyday experiences. On the contrary, the images projected on Western cultural forms are not part of their day-to-day experiences. These Korean women see themselves as having no practical relations to the Western world, no practical value or interest in it. Naturally, they cannot derive a similar degree of pleasure from the culturally and emotionally distant viewing. Western images are mainly perceived by these working-class married women as different, another world which has nothing to do with their everyday life and experience.

“I used to watch Western movies (on TV) a lot when I was young, single. But now, I don't watch them. Because there is not much I can really sympathize with. It's a different, another world. It has nothing to do with my life... Maybe, I have become more realistic since I married. Before I married, I was not interested in (Korean) dramas. I watched lots of (Western) movies. But now, I get to find our dramas more interesting. They are very realistic. They show our life. I can really sympathize with their situations. I learn through those dramas our life, our complicated relationships in the family”.

(Nae-young, 30)

“I don't know much about them (Westerners). I am not interested in that kind of (Western) stuff. That's *their* life, that has nothing to do with *us*”.

(*Italics*, her emphasis) (Sun-hae, 32)

These working-class women in my research have not been abroad and rarely encountered Western people in their local orbit. Their perceptions about the West are mainly formed through foreign movies, dramas and news on television – mostly, American. Here, they freely talk about the overall images of the Western world that are ingrained in their accumulated memory through the experience of television. Consensually, Western images reflected on television are received as a different, another world which has nothing to do with their ordinary working-class life. More specifically, the West is received as a different, another world for two significant

reasons. As the following accounts illustrate, the first reason lies in the relative absence of “family” which is, on the other hand, a pivotal framework in these working-class women’s lives. The second reason is found in the relative absence of “security” which is constitutive of central desires in the working-class human conditions.

“Western moms don’t seem to care much about their children. They hand over little kids to others’ care and go off to work. They seem to draw a line, “This is my life, that is your life”. In western countries, “I enjoy my life, you enjoy your life”. I wonder if there exists any strong bond in the family, between parents and children... They seem to easily divorce. They don’t care much about their children once they fall in love with somebody else. It seems like “my own life is most important”. Even children come next. I don’t know, I may be wrong, but there are lots of juvenile crimes in Western countries, right? I think, that’s because children have not grown receiving enough care from their parents in the family. Children who have not received enough care from the family become trouble makers”. (Ha-jung, 30)

“Their sexual relationship is promiscuous (in Western movies). They seem to sleep with anybody. Before marriage, they sleep with anybody. That’s maybe their free life. It would feel very insecure if people lived in that situation, I think. If people just sleep with anybody, how can they trust each other once they are married? It would be very insecure. The husband may seduce another woman in the office, the wife may seduce another handsome man at a party... (Laugh) That may be their free life, they easily divorce, marry again, divorce again... That’s *their* life, that has nothing to do with *us*”.
(*Italics*, her emphasis) (Hee-sun, 30)

“I wonder if there exists any strong bond in the family”. “It would feel very insecure if people lived in that situation”. The Korean working-class women cannot relate their lived experiences to the images of the Western world that are perceived as lacking two fundamental elements – family and security. Family and security are central features in the working-class women’s everyday realities, as demonstrated throughout this chapter. Thus, Western images are not visibly part of their local universe and

have no experiential bearing on their lives. Western images are evaluated from within, and criticized by the powerful everyday realities within which the working-class women are embedded.⁸ In a critical stance, they comment on the lives of others who do not belong to the familiar local morality but follow different norms and rules in the structure of everyday life and human relations. Western sexual morality is one of the most pronounced differences in this regard. Through the critical comparison, these Korean women regard the Western people on television not as “us”, Koreans, and repudiate the Western images as “their” life, “their” world. The women’s repudiation of the Western images functions to consolidate who they are in the local context of the family, and provides a secure sense of reaffirmation and maintenance of the self.

Chapter 6 Korean Working-Class Women in their 20s

Section (1) Work, Marriage, and Feminism

The previous chapter on the working-class women in their 30s has shown that television is an integral part of everyday life. The family and personal relationships with husband and child are the central concerns to these housewives, and television, as another member of the family, is intimately used by them out of the desire to control everyday family life. In contrast to the television's significant role in the day-to-day lives and experiences of the married women in their 30s and 50s, for the working-class single women in their 20s, television is not clearly an important part of everyday life. Television is less embedded, playing a less integrative and critical role in their lifestyle circumstances in the absence of husband and child. The socio-cultural life contexts determine the differential ways in which the different generations of women perceive and use television. The single women in their 20s have a range of interests separate from television, and engage in their own activities and social relationships perceived as more significant than watching television. They are not so concerned about television consumption inside the home, but other social interactions elsewhere outside the home, such as going to work, having friends and socializing on a regular basis, are perceived as more important features of everyday life. In short, television is not a central focus. Television is de-centered and de-focused in everyday life. Therefore, I will begin this chapter by focusing not on television, but on the central interests and concerns in these young women's lives. What do they most desire in life? In this section I intend to understand closely the young working-class women's thoughts, sensibilities and feelings about their own life politics. It is this focus on the young women's interests, concerns, desires or aspirations in everyday life that provides the background to the subsequent sections on their experience of television.

"I want to have a career. I don't want to be stuck at home, waiting for the husband to come home early, doing the housework all day long, without knowing how old I am getting. That's terrible!" (Na-ri, 22)

“I am most concerned about how to get a nice, well-paid job. There are lots of things I want to do, but I can’t figure out yet what I really want to do. I am still confused. But definitely, I will not be vegetating at home! I hate staying at home all day long, cooking, cleaning, chatting over the phone, picking a trivial quarrel. I would like to have a nice job first.” (Jung-hyun, 22)

The young working-class women in my research, aged between 20 and 22 and single, are currently in a two-year college or work in the field of sales and services. Although confused and uncertain about their job prospects, this young generation of women desires to seek personal fulfillment in the world of work. This is a major theme that emerged in the interviews – the search for self-fulfillment through a life-long career. This is a time of significant changes in the young women’s lives, a marked difference from the lives of the women in their 30s and 50s. These young women in their 20s do not look at their staying-home mothers or married sisters as a role model, but rather firmly declare: “I don’t want to live like my mom”. “I want to work outside because I don’t want to live as a housewife”. They emphasize “doing my own thing”, and are determined to move onto more meaningful and well-paid employment. The common perception in their life politics is, “A woman looks better and can feel better about herself when she has her own work”. However, despite the determination for fulfilling personal life through a life-long career, this young generation of working-class women also demonstrates a strong desire for traditional female roles, such as getting married and having children.

“My mom has never worked outside home, but I want to work and then marry a nice man. It would be nice to have children and a family”. (Yeon-jung, 22)

“I want to marry as soon as possible. I am not the only one who is dying to marry. All my friends are the same”. (Kyung-joo, 22)

Clearly, marriage is a crucial interest here as the young working-class women tend to accept marriage as “right, normal, ideal”. Life of the working-class women is not regarded as finally “real”, because after all, the real element of life is getting married and having a family. They tend to have a surprisingly concrete, “age-specific plan”

about marriage – for example, they want to get married at the age of around 24 or 25, or definitely before 28 or 30. The ultimate message about the marriage by this specific age is that it would be difficult to get married if a woman is over thirty. Marriage is carefully planned because financially feasible prospects or socially acceptable alternative ways of life are rarely available to working-class women. Their employment futures are far less secure, hence, dependence through marriage is envisaged to offer a potential way of achieving material security. In this calculated envisioning on their socio-economic position, they come to accept marriage as the best open choice to them, as the most accessible channel for possible social mobility. For the working-class women with little life resources of their own, marrying a promising man is expected to be a decisive turning point to escape from the hard life of working-class reality. The young women's desire to get married before 30 also reflects both the wide-spread social fear of limiting the chance to meet a young, promising, *single* man, and the socially desirable conception of marriage as the *once-in-a-lifetime* event in Korea. The following accounts sum up this point.

“I would like to marry at the age of around 28. (Researcher: Why 28?) That feels right, normal. That would be ideal. Definitely before 30 I want to marry. After 30 it may be difficult to find a young, promising, good man, and after 35 you may only have a chance to marry a divorced man. I want to marry before it's too late and to have children”. (Suh-jin, 21)

“I believe it's good to marry and have children. I want to marry at the age of around 24 or 25, have children immediately and then continue my work... If I marry at a later age I would probably have to marry a man who has once failed in a marriage. I will try to marry at an early age”. (Kyung-joo, 22)

“I know, marriage is not like the most important thing for women. Marriage is an individual choice. But I want to marry. I will marry before 30 and have a nice family”. (Jung-hyun, 22)

This research on Korean working-class women in their 20s clearly reveals that for the most part, the kind of ideal life they desire to pursue is self-fulfillment in the public sphere of work, but *not at the expense of a family role*. Here, it should be

recognized that these young women wish to work and become mothers, fulfill the traditional role for the family. They strongly express aspirations for combining both marriage/family life and work outside home. The following examples show the young women's strong assertion for marriage and family life.

"To me, the ideal woman is the one who is happily married with children, and at the same time has her own work. I know that would be hard, but that's the kind of ideal woman I strive to be". (Suh-jin, 21)

"Both career and family are important for women, but family is most important of all. A successful career woman without a nice family and home doesn't look all right to me. I don't honestly respect a successful *single* career woman". (*Italics*, her emphasis) (Yeon-jung, 22)

"I don't honestly respect a successful *single* career woman". A successful, *single*, career woman here connotes a feminist in Korea. These young women's aspirations for combining both marriage/family life and work can partly explain the phenomenal yet unexplored "anti-feminist" trend in contemporary Korea, especially among the young generation of women. These young working-class women in my research do not take a successful *single* career woman as a role model, and even attack, implicitly or explicitly, the ideas surrounding feminist/feminism. Why? This is because they do not agree with one particular category of feminism and its values particularly against marriage and family life. It is widely argued that the conditions of heterosexuality, marriage and motherhood are all part of the Western "patriarchal parcel" of rules for appropriate sexual relations and behavior between men and women, and entail a form of oppression (Nicolson, 1993: 215). Nonetheless, these Korean working-class women choose to marry to fulfil their desire for the family in this patriarchal parcel. These young women refuse to call themselves feminists or to be associated with any of those categories, although their thoughts, sensibilities and beliefs closely echo the feminist discourse of equality between men and women. They strongly disagree with the strident, rather stereotypical cliché images of what they call "aggressive, manly feminists" who particularly lack the capacity for maternal and familial thinking. Coming from the American second-wave feminism's primary emphasis on "work-like-men careerism", Korean, educated, *single*, feminists are teased by these young

women for their ugliness, lack of femininity, and most crucially, lack of maternal thinking. They even ridicule the middle-class intellectual feminism for its irrelevance to their own life politics and conditions.¹ Furthermore, they tend to repudiate the notion of feminism as “a thing of the past”, or as one woman puts it, “the old history of society”. For these young women, feminism is taken as an antique and historical phenomenon rather than a current existence.

“Personally, I don’t consider an unmarried woman truly successful, no matter how successful her career is. I think, she is incomplete not only as a woman but also as a human being. Even though she may be proud of herself and her successful career, I wouldn’t envy or admire her as my ideal model. Feminist women are like that. Aggressive, manly feminists... If somebody who is married with children and has a successful career approaches and talks to me, I would listen to her. Because I could really admire her. (Laugh) But that kind of woman wouldn’t have to come out to the street raising a feminist voice, because she doesn’t have any problem. She is happy with her life”. (Yeon-jung, 22)

“It seems like they (feminists) gather at a café, drink a coffee, and criticize all the men in the world. They all look ugly, grumpy, and wear glasses. I wouldn’t marry any of them either, if I were a man... They don’t make sense to me. How can women who are not married, who have not had a child, really understand other women’s life? They pretend to know everything about women. That’s ridiculous. They all seem to have a nice, well-paid career. How can they really understand poor, uneducated women?” (Na-ri, 22)

“During the high school days, we had the subject about “feminism” in the reading exam. That was the first time I heard about feminism. But, isn’t it antique talk? I thought that was antique, irrelevant today. When I read it in the exam, I simply thought we were studying the old history of society”. (Kyung-moon, 22)

The above critiques suggest that ordinary women’s desire for marriage, motherhood and family life should be equally recognized and valued, and that some old vocabularies of feminism may not be adequate in understanding the actual lives, concerns and aspirations of the young women growing up today.² However, the young

working-class women's desire here is not without its practical limitation. In order for the young women to have all they desire, what are the possible strategies for combining work and motherhood/family life? A practical issue then is how to negotiate and reconcile these two. Whether or not the women can realize such desire depends upon finding *suitable men*. This point is clearly stated within the young women's yearning for the ideal condition of marriage.

“Whether I can manage work and family depends on the man I will marry; how open-minded, modern, considerate he is. I don't want to marry a dominating and conservative type of Korean man”. (Jung-hyun, 22)

“My ideal life would be, man and wife go out to work in the morning, come home and share the housework together. Men should be considerate of their wives”. (Soo-mi, 20)

The young women's yearning here implies that working women's typical problems in handling everyday struggles and conflicts – for example, how to cope with work and childcare - are largely conditioned upon, and are to be resolved by, choosing the *right men* who can unfailingly understand and support women's desire for work and family life. Men's absolute understanding and supportiveness is a necessary precondition for women's own career life, which means that married women then cannot make their own decisions and succeed *independently* without the acknowledged approval and support of their men in actualizing their desire. Women do not have the same degree of freedom to activate their desire to come true as men do. This consequently means that until significant structural changes are made in the transformation of men's roles, the young women's desire will remain forever as a utopian fantasy.

Section (2) Representation of Women on Korean Television:

“It's always killing smart women”

The previous section has shown a point of significant change in young women's lives, a difference from the lives of the women in their 30s and 50s, in that the women in their 20s desire to seek self-fulfillment in a life-long career and a family life as well. These changes are further articulated through their critical and reflexive engagement

with television drama in the privacy of home. Television drama becomes a public forum for discussing changes in women's roles and identities. My intention in this section is to assess, from the viewpoint of the young women, whether or not contemporary Korean television recognizes the changing lives of Korean women and responds particularly to the young generation's growing needs and aspirations for work in the public world. How do young working-class women perceive television drama? What types of programs or characters do they most like or dislike? This section analyzes the representation of women on Korean television drama which is critically debated by these young women. It shows how reflexive they are in their critical relationship with television.

When asked about programs or characters they like most on television, the working-class women in their 20s rather talk more about their "dislikes", manifesting a sharply critical and cynical stance towards the stereotypical, impotent images of women on prime-time drama. Specifically, what aspects do they most criticize? The young women all ridicule and criticize the frequent presentation of the limited world of the domestic in what they call "a-zoom-ma" (pejorative term for housewife) dramas. On the other hand, they display a great desire to see the life of working women outside the confined domestic space which rarely appears on the prime-time dramas. This shows that women of different age groups have different types of viewing preferences: The older generation of women in their 50s and the younger housewives in their 30s delight in watching Korean home drama, extending their age-based identities according to traditional cultural associations. On the contrary, these single women in their 20s prefer to watch the more modern, professional world of drama to satisfy their aspirations for a life-long career. The women's real-life desires in this context are interwoven into the particular ways in which they experience and interpret television dramas.

"I really dislike a-zoom-ma (housewife) drama. It's so stupid to have to watch that in the primetime. It's too commonplace, too limited in characters; grandmother, mother, daughters-in-law, puzzling sons in between them. It all happens in the home, and people's relationships are so complicated that it irritates me. I am sick and tired of a-zoom-ma drama. Those housewives are stuck at home haggling over trivial stuff wasting their life". (Jung-hyun, 22)

“I don’t like tears-squeezing dramas, haggling-fussy housewife dramas. My mom is so touched by that stuff, but I am tired of them”. (Soo-mi, 20)

On the other hand, these young women desire to experience the public world of work:

“It would be nice to see different kinds of problems arising not inside the home but outside the home, like happenings at the workplace”. (Soo-mi, 20)

“I would like to see a professional side, not the typical home and family stuff. I find career women interesting. Housewife drama is all too obvious. It’s all about ordinary families in the same house, haggling, arguing with each other. I like something different. I want to see professional women, but they rarely appear on the dramas. I cannot recall anything particularly”. (Yeon-jung, 22)

Crucially, these young women complain that the images of professionally independent working women, when they do appear on Korean dramas, tend to be seriously distorted. According to their critical observations, one moral message explicitly and implicitly involved in Korean dramas is that married *working* women will always get into “family trouble”. The phenomenon of married women entering the professional labor force is presented as conflicting with traditional gender identities and as always causing inevitable problems in the family. As success in the workplace always leads to travails in personal relationships, few professional women characters on prime-time dramas have fulfilling personal lives. Although they are assumed to be smart, competent, and win professionally in a court, in a male-politics office, in a creative public domain, they are nevertheless to lose in the private domestic sphere. After all, professionally independent female characters have to pay personal costs; for example, breakdown of intimate relationships, divorce, disintegration of family, or even criticism from the ordinary viewers. These young women commonly point out that working women’s resistance to, or neglect of, the family role is typically portrayed as “evil-minded and selfish”. Moreover, such distorted images are always reinforced on prime-time television dramas in a way that triggers moral condemnations among the ordinary viewers like housewives. The

young women's critical discussions in the following accounts succinctly highlight this point.

"This woman (in a popular drama) is smart, well-educated, confident. She has a sophisticated career. But in the end, this smart career woman always ends up being a miserable failure. *It's always killing smart women*. Smart, strong, working women tend to be shown evil-minded, selfish. They always turn out to be unhappy, losing their love in the dramas, and receiving the complaints from the audiences". (*Italics, my emphasis*) (Jung-hyun, 22)

"In general, smart, capable women on dramas are purposefully made by the (male) producers to be criticized by the audiences. (Researcher: Why?) Because people want women to stay home raising children and keeping the housework. The television message is, "If you work outside the home you will always get into family trouble". I just ignore it. It's just a drama. But my mom criticizes, pointing a finger to those (working) women, saying to me, "Look at her! You shouldn't be like her". Then, she starts to sermon to me on what a woman should be like". (Yeon-jung, 22)

"A working woman (in dramas) is always seen fighting with her husband. Her professional side at the workplace is hardly seen, instead she is always seen at home quarreling, battling with her husband. I bet this drama will, in the end, make this strong career wife change into an obedient person for the peace of home... Her job side should be equally emphasized as her husband's. I think, it's important to show the good image of working women. Otherwise, working women will be criticized by people". (Suh-jin, 21)

"*It's always killing smart women*". As one woman here precisely puts it, the above criticisms all articulate the contemporary Korean television's inherently conservative, tyrannical "symbolic nihilism" (Tuchman, 1978) of married *working* women. Korean television limits women's lives to hearth and family. By reinforcing the bifurcation of women into *married housewives* and *single workers*, television discourse basically offers no place for married working women. It almost implies an impossibility of being a married working woman. The narrative frames of work and family life affirm

the traditional division of men and women into separate spheres, where women are primarily supposed to occupy the private sphere of the family, and men the public sphere of work. Working women's family role is normally emphasized, and this rule commands a great deal of narrative attention on the family, not on the workplace. Women's true happiness is construed as lying in the care role of family life, not in the self-fulfillment of work. This rule of narrative frames, if violated, always posits the women's choice of work life as itself the decisive cause of various tensions, conflicts and discords in the family life. Although contemporary Korean television drama introduces married working women to the audiences, it eventually puts them back into the home, "in a revitalization of traditional family values that melds with a superficial acceptance of feminist perspectives concerning women and work" (Press, 1991: 47).³ By stereotyping the images of married *working* women as "bad", contemporary Korean television actively participates in pushing modern women back into the traditional role and identity defined within hearth and family.

In contrast to the television drama's enormous popularity and identifiable relevance to the working-class housewives in their 30s and 50s, for these single young women in their 20s Korean television drama is both a completely disappointing frame of reference and a fiercely negative point of identification. Although contemporary television drama reinforces women's roles and identities within the limited sphere of domesticity, these young women respond *against* the television's dominant ideology. As manifest in all comments quoted above, the ordinary women themselves are makers of critical meanings, with the abilities to subvert the television's hegemonic message with the interpretation of their own: "*It's always killing smart women*". Television triggers a debate on changes in gender regime, and a kind of popular feminism is found in the young women's critical engagement with television drama. These young women do not call themselves a feminist, however, they show a similarly feminist response to the television's dominant ideology. Although television drama is largely reflective of the society's dominant interests, the gaps and spaces are also present in the young women's critical reading of television. The young women here are cultural producers, "the most sophisticated readers" (Willis, 1990: 30), not merely consumers, dupes or victims of television images. Certainly, they are able to see and subvert the ideological operations of the television's dominant culture.

“I once watched the producer talk about his (prime-time) drama. He said, the drama is trying to show the (young) audiences the image of a *good woman*. What does he think a *good woman* is? It looks like he is in his mid 40s or 50s. What does he know about us (young women)? He seems to know nothing but the old rubbish”. (*Italics*, her emphasis) (Na-ri, 22)

Overall, the young women’s critical reception indicates that contemporary Korean television, prime-time popular drama in specific, is totally insensitive to the needs and desires of young women today. There is a serious disconnection between the young women’s expectations and the representation of women on Korean television. Contemporary television drama has not caught up with the young generation’s attitudes and aspirations for the participation in an expansive world outside the domestic. Women’s roles and identities on television drama, according to these young women’s critical view, are extremely limited within the domesticity and predetermined by immovable traditional definitions of femininity. These young women aspire to explore and invest themselves in the maelstrom of new cultural forms and various social roles, however, Korean television drama does not offer different subject positions or challenging modes of femininity that they can symbolically appropriate for the reflection on their life politics. Despite the fact that increasing numbers of women today are entering the workforce, contemporary Korean television has not yet paralleled actual changes in the society and its extreme adherence to the domestic portrayal has overshadowed women’s emerging roles and new identities in the public sphere. Korean television drama has largely failed to recognize changes in women’s lives and failed to meet the young women’s growing desires to explore and experience an expansive wider world outside the limited domesticity.

Section (3) Play in the Global Telecity: “TV is my best friend”

Insofar as indicated in the previous sections, television is not an integral part of everyday life as these single women in their 20s perceive outside social activities, social relationships and interactions as more important than staying in and watching television. Moreover, Korean television drama, in particular, is fiercely criticized for its predominant representation of women within the limited sphere of home and

family, and for its failure to meet the young women's desires to explore a more expansive wider world outside the domesticity. However, these findings do not mean that the young working-class women do not value television. Despite such claims about the television's lack of central importance in structuring everyday life, and the television drama's absence of relevance in satisfying their desires, they still like to watch television whenever staying in the home and they have a playful relationship with television. They lively assert, "TV is my best friend". Why? Specifically, what elements of mediated experience make them define television as the best friend? What kind of pleasure do they experience from television? In this section, I explore such personal meanings of television as the best friend, particularly by delving into the young women's enormous fascination with the symbolic world of the West. This section will show the ways in which the young women playfully interact with the expansive world of the West on the television screen, and the pleasure gained from this is in sharp contrast to their discontent with the confined world of domesticity on Korean drama.

"I like to watch TV very much. TV is my teacher. TV is my best friend. When I look around me, I don't find special people who can inspire me personally. Everything is just dull, common, all the same". (Kyung-joo, 22)

"I have a desire to get useful information from television. It may sound like a good excuse to watch television, but I really want to learn from television. There is nothing much around me that can stimulate my life". (Na-ri, 22)

"Whenever we are engrossed in watching television, our parents scold at us, "you are falling into the idiot box". Then we reply, "television is an information box". I can't understand people who say television is an idiot box. Why is it an idiot box? It gives me useful information". (Suh-jin, 21)

Contrary to the generally dismissive perception of television as an idiot box, these young women hold a positive and enthusiastic view about television, asserting the valuable pleasure of consuming television: "Television is my best friend". "Television is my teacher". "Television is an information box". The relationship between the young women and their television sets is meaningful. Television is received as a

leading object for transmodern education, as a trustworthy channel to the world of public knowledge, providing the basis for competence in the everyday modern culture. They express the close connection between television and their sense of modern life: “Without television, I may feel like I am out of this world, I am left out”. “Without television, I feel alienated, dumb, antique”. The enormous pleasure invested in the experience of television reflects the young women’s desire for more practical learning and real-world knowledge. They want television to inform as well as entertain, and continue to engage in television with a playful attitude. They actively look for some bits and pieces of useful information, experiencing triumphant gratification when they succeed.

“When staying in the home, I keep the TV on. When I go to the bathroom I volume up so that I can hear TV while sitting on the toilet. I find TV very useful. If I can find at least one piece of useful information, I feel rewarded. Yes! It was worth watching television for a day!” (Na-ri, 22)

Information is one patent source of pleasure in watching television, and there is a more significant yet less patent source of pleasure. As shown in the previous section, this young generation of women is not particularly fond of watching the confined world of Korean home dramas, but rather delight in consuming a variety of public domain programs, including music, movie, realistic documentary and news. In “the media ensemble” (Bausinger, 1984: 349), these young working-class women give a special credit to television for its easily graspable presentation of up-to-date and real-life stories in the public domain. One woman openly expresses, “I can’t understand the newspaper, but TV story is so easy to understand”. Among the real-life stories on television, they display a strong desire to see successful figures - for example, interviews with self-made entrepreneurs in a human documentary *The Success Times*, or internationally renowned designers in a talk show - and such images seem to bring a powerful impact on triggering their hidden aspirations for wealth and success. Thus, a deep emotional impact of television is found here: “I get fascinated with the alive visuals and punching lines that strike the right chord of my heart”. Significantly, these young working-class women get pleasure from their active search and discovery of *inspiration*, which is an unfortunately absent element in their

ordinary life. The following extract shows the pleasure of inspiration sought in the young woman's reflexive engagement with television.

“One time a leading Korean fashion designer appeared on a TV talk show. When he pioneered the Korean fashion world in the 1960's, he said, nobody thought about doing that kind of work, and it was even harder for men as it was dismissed as women's work. He has nevertheless made it! When asked about how he got ideas in those old days when there was no fashion information available, no fashion education offered, *he said he got much of inspiration from glamorous Western movies. When I heard him talking about his inspiration, I thought that's exactly what I am getting from watching TV sometimes*”. (*Italics, my emphasis*) (Suh-jin, 21)

The young working-class women commonly view their everyday life as “dull, same as usual, nothing particular, uninspiring”, and constantly look out for something “new, different, inspiring” outside the bounds of ordinary life. The living conditions and environment of the working class lead to relative deprivation and do not offer meaningful stimuli. This is a significant reason why they enormously delight in watching programs about the West – particularly, Western movies and world travel shows. In the next section I will analyze in detail the specific meanings of the Western images implicated in the young women's lives and identities, but in this section I will explore the general significance of entering the symbolic world of the West, or in Zygmunt Bauman's (1993: 178) term the global “telecity”. For these young women, television is a window on the expansive world. Television is their best friend, teacher and information box for it constantly offers something new and different, the other sides of the exciting universe. Making a mediated excursion to other countries through television is of particular interest to the young working-class women. This is because there are increased opportunities for travel and mobility for young middle-class women in modern Korea, typically university students, while this is not the case for these young working-class women. Through television, the socially and materially disadvantaged women get suddenly “plugged in” (Meyrowitz, 1985: 223), and can “go” where they could not travel. Television allows the working-class women to see the world outside without having to actually travel out there. It enables them to “visit far away locations via sound and image without leaving their living rooms,

simultaneously staying home and going places” (Moore, 1996: 23). Precisely, television is a “mobility multiplier”, a form of “vicarious armchair travel” (Lerner, 1958: 53) which enables the young women to distance themselves from the immediate locales of the day-to-day lives, and to imagine new lifestyles, possibilities and opportunities beyond the material restraints of the working-class reality. The following accounts express the pleasure of mediated travel to the new, different, expansive world.

“I want something new and different in my life. I feel encouraged by watching inspiring programs. That’s the most interesting thing about watching foreign movies, travel shows. How can I experience that real stuff outside the world, if not from television?” (Yeon-jung, 22)

“Where can we (working-class women) see that kind of stuff other than from TV, unless you can afford to travel abroad yourself? TV is exciting and useful!” (Na-ri, 22)

“I find it interesting to watch foreign movies and travel programs like *TV World Culture Tour*. I like to see something new and different. Through television I get to experience things that I cannot actually do in the real life. It shows a variety of people, different places, different ways of living. I especially enjoy watching those programs comparing Korea with other countries, their cultures, lifestyles. Television is interesting”. (Jung-hyun, 22)

For these working-class women, the experience of the symbolic world of the West on television may be more exhilarating, partly because it is “non-reciprocal” (Thompson, 1995: 208), freed from the reciprocal obligations characteristic of a capitalist modern society. Television, as the best friend given generously free and available anytime, allows the poor working-class women to enjoy some of the benefits of companionship without monetary demands typically incurred in the context of capitalist day-to-day interaction. Thus, the symbolic world of the West on television unfolds before them, purely as the object of materially unrestrainable amusement and pleasure. This materially unrestrainable amusement is a significant feature of the global telecity that attracts these young working-class women. “In the

telecity, the others appear solely as objects of enjoyment, no strings attached; they can be zapped out of the screen when they cease to amuse. Offering amusement is their only right to exist with each successive switching on" (Bauman, 1993: 178). Amusement here needs not be spoiled by fore- or after-thought, and no thought of consequences needs to poison the pleasure. The global telecity is a care-free site for "play" in which players can safely leave a real life and engage in a different world, "as-if" culture: It is a site for the new pleasures, the challenges of the new within the bounds of the familiar (Silverstone, 1999: 63). The global telecity allows these young women to enter the playful realm of the imaginary that offers a release from the normal constraints of daily life. Through the safe and familiar glass screen of the global telecity, they can playfully imagine strangers and distant events, comfortably without fear. They can symbolically participate in the "as-if" culture, as if they were in the same place experiencing the same events. Such real-experience-like imaginative excursions produce an intense pleasure and a mediated quasi-relationship.

"Television is so much fun. When you read books, you can imagine only in words the whole different world, but that's not satisfying for me. When you watch television you feel like you can *really experience* it through the alive visuals". (*Italics*, her emphasis) (Soo-mi, 20)

"I have not ever met Western people in real life. Only those people I see on TV are making *relationships* with me. I kind of feel *close* to them because I see them often on TV". (*Italics*, my emphasis) (Kyung-moon, 22)

This intimate experience of the symbolic Western world can further explain why television is taken as the best friend to these young women. As distant events and strangers on the television screen routinely visit the intimate sphere of home and enter into everyday consciousness, it becomes possible for these young women to establish a sense of familiarity or "intimacy at a distance" (Thompson, 1995: 219). The everyday experience of the global telecity in this context helps to cloud the distinction between people who are "here" and people who are "somewhere else" (Meyrowitz, 1985, 122). The distant others whom the young women come to know through the mediated quasi-interaction become friends who can be slotted into the time-space

niches of their everyday life. The quasi-friendship can mediate the young women to playfully explore the tissue boundary of the self and the other.

Overall, the young working-class women in their 20s playfully use television to journey outwards to the global, the modern, the new and different, the other. Television allows for the women, who have limited opportunities for travel and mobility in real life, to leave the immediate locales of the day-to-day lives and make infinite imaginative excursions to the other side of the new and exciting universe. Here, the young women's playful relationship with television reveals a sharp generational difference. As shown in the previous chapters, television's relationship to the everyday life of the women in their 50s is rather marked by misery, and their use of television is to move inwards the traditional, the familiar, the local and the national. On the other hand, television's relationship with the housewives in their 30s is formed in the fantasy of dominance and negotiation, which means that they tactically use television to control the domestic, the familial, the personal and intimate, the husband and the child. In contrast to the repudiation of the women in their 50s and 30s with the modern, unfamiliar and imaginary world, the young women in their 20s playfully interact with the new, expansive Western world. It can be inferred that as they become increasingly embedded in the symbolic Western world, their horizons of understanding may well extend beyond the immediate locales of day-to-day life. Their "local knowledge" may increasingly be supplemented by new forms of "non-local knowledge" (Thompson, 1995: 207-211), and their formation of the self may become more reflexive and open-ended.⁴ Thus, it may be possible for these young working-class women to achieve a fluidity of existence, of living, so that "real life needs not stagnate in everyday life" (Lefebvre, 1971: 82). Although they continue to live a local life, and the constraints of the body ensure that they are contextually situated in the limited time and space, their playful interactions with the expansive symbolic world may alter what the world of everyday life actually is, without totally destroying the connection between self-formation and shared locale. So the phenomenal world of the young women's everyday life for the most part is "truly global" (Giddens, 1991: 187).

**Section (4) Representation of the West in the Korean Imagination:
Yearning for Free Choice, Social Mobility and Change**

The previous section has explored the young working-class women's playful relationship with television, particularly in their imaginative excursion to the expansive world of the West. This section further analyzes specific meanings derived from the women's imaginative experience of the symbolic Western world. Specifically, what do they imagine about the West? What are the yearning elements, if any, in the Korean women's imagination of the West? What are the consequences of the imaginative experience of the West on their real life? My underlying intention is to show the ways in which the specific meanings of the Western images influence the young women's formation of the self, thereby marking a difference from the identities of the women in their 50s and 30s.

“During the high school days I wanted to watch *Weekend Movies* (dubbed Western movies after 10:00pm), but my mom told me to go to sleep or study. When something is forbidden you get more tempted to do against, right? I came out stealthily late night, sat in the dark and watched those movies. I tuned the TV volume as low as possible. Just the screen, sometimes no sound. I remember, whenever I was restricted by my parents from watching those movies, I wanted to grow quickly to do freely anything I want to do”.

(Kyung-moon, 22)

“Why can't I do whatever I want to do? I have been told so far in my life, “Don't do this, don't do that”. I don't feel like I am living *my life*. I don't know if I will ever have *my life*. That's what I envy most about Western people (on TV). They look so free. They can do whatever they want to do”.

(*Italics*, her emphasis) (Jung-hyun, 22)

“I most like their free choice. They can do anything freely they want to do. They live independently, don't get much interference from their parents”.

(Na-ri, 22)

Young working-class women in my research, aged between 20 and 22 and single, are fond of watching Western movies on television – mostly, American Hollywood - and started watching them since middle school days. Although none of them have actually traveled to Western countries, they freely talk about the general images of the West garnered through the mediated experience of the imported television programming, such as movies, dramas, music, and travel shows. This is their typical response: “I have not been abroad and rarely met Western people in real life. All I know about, all I can say about them are from television”. Regarding the distinctive image associated with the West or Western people, the young women’s immediate, consensual imagination lies in the notion of “free choice”, or free lifestyle, which is in sharp contrast to, thus a yearning element in, their own restricted everyday life. The attraction of watching Western programs on television lies much in the opportunity to get a sense of how people live differently in other parts of the world, a sense which can give them a point of comparative reference to reflect critically on the conditions of their own lives and see them in a new light.

These young women increasingly draw on mediated experience to inform and “refashion the project of the self” (Thompson, 1995: 233), and their growing mediated experience of the West creates new opportunities for self-experimentation. Such experimentation ranges from simply trying out a different fashion style or a different hair color to something more profound about life. For example, one woman expresses a desire to experiment in her life: “When I watch Western movies, I sometimes feel like doing something unusual, exciting. I like to be free of my ordinary, restricted life”. However, the young women’s self-experimentation out of the yearning for free choice is not without conflicts. Although they involve a continuous interweaving of different forms of mediated experience into the self, the actual life context and its moral claims equally continue to exert a powerful influence on their project of self-formation. In other words, what these young women act and think of themselves primarily in relation to the local authority such as parents, and to the others whom they encounter in face-to-face interaction, continues to influence their decisions on the incorporation of mediated experience into the self. The following examples indicate the kind of conflicts they experience between the yearning for free choice and the realization of the local authority and social pressure.

“I once wanted to color my hair yellow, but I couldn’t do that. My mom would be shocked, get a heart-attack. People might think I am a trouble maker”.
(Yeon-jung, 22)

“They (Western people on TV) are so free. They don’t seem to care about what others think about their weird outfit, strange behavior, different lifestyle. In Korea, people’s style is very similar. What’s similar is not only our appearance but also the way we think and act. I have a desire to do different things, but feel pressured to follow the social norms”. (Jung-hyun, 22)

More significantly, the young women’s yearning for free choice points to “freedom of social mobility” in the decisive contexts of education, occupation and marriage. Freedom of social mobility is the most yearned for element, the most central meaning derived from their experience of the mediated Western world, for it is a substantially limited and contrasting feature in their own working-class reality. Freedom of upwardly mobile transformation is their class-specific interest and priority. This is why the symbolic world of the West, marked by the promise of social mobility, is so fascinating to these Korean working-class women. While situated in the day-to-day contexts of locales, they can imagine how life is organized differently in the Western world under different codes and cultures than their own. The symbolic Western world provides them with a glimpse of alternatives, thereby allowing them to reflect critically on the self and the actual conditions of their life. The following self-reflexive talks clearly demonstrate their yearning for the freedom of social mobility mediated through education, occupation, and marriage.

“As I see the Western world (movie *Goodwill Hunting*), a toilet cleaner can go to a university. They seem open, flexible. In Western countries, it seems possible to have a good job even with a high school diploma, but in Korea a high school diploma is just a piece of rubbish. It’s useless because almost everybody has it”. (Na-ri, 22)

“(In the Western culture) lawyer can choose to be a cook if she wants, and move onto another job in a different area. But in our Korean culture, once you have studied something, you are expected to work only in that field... After

working for a long time you may want to go to a university, but that can't easily happen. You may be criticized, "Are you crazy? Why suddenly study in your age?" (Suh-jin, 21)

"This Cinderella movie (*Pretty Woman*) may come true in Western countries, but I don't think that is possible in our country. In our country, nobody would approve and support that kind of marriage (between a working-class woman and an upper-class man). But in America it seems like it's only you yourself who makes all the decision about your life. Western people are so free, individualistic". (Soo-mi, 20)

As shown in the above extracts, the working-class women's experience of the Western movies, such as *Goodwill Hunting* and *Pretty Woman*, gives rise to a new dynamic in which the immediacy of their lived experience and the moral fixities of Korean tradition are constantly compared, contrasted, and evaluated against the backdrop of different claims stemming from the Western representation. The symbolic Western world provides a cultural reservoir of alternative visions, encouraging the young women to critically question the traditional and normative values and yearn for alternative ways of living. Here, their strong envy and yearning for the freedom of upwardly social mobility reflected in the Western images is a "self-reflexive escape" (Schroder, 1988: 74) that brings along enough of their working-class identities and real-life concerns – for example, missing out higher education, promising occupation and socially upward marriage - to effect a synthesis of thoughts and feelings between the two different types of existence; symbolic Western fantasy and actual Korean reality. This self-reflexive "fantasy space", interrelated to their lived experiences of powerlessness, pain and desire, is a place "for hope and for escape from oppression" (Walkerdine, 1986: 195). For these working-class women, watching American Hollywood movies is not simply an escape from drudgery into dreaming: "It is a place of desperate dreaming, of hope for transformation" (Walkerdine, 1986: 196). The women's desperate yearning for transformation, a new opportunity and a new life, is further demonstrated in the following self-reflexive talks.

“Even though this movie (*Pretty Woman*) did not show their marriage, I can imagine they will marry and live happily together. Julia Roberts will become a totally new person and lead a new life. She is given a new opportunity. I envy that kind of free choice, opportunity. In our country, that would be absolutely impossible”. (Soo-mi, 20)

“After one sudden accident, she (in *Desperately Seeking Susan*) completely loses all her memories. She goes completely blank! It would be so good to be able to forget the whole past, the whole present, and start all over again a new life! Nothing special can happen to ordinary people like me, unless this kind of accident happens. Can ordinary people like me get into this kind of accident and change the whole thing? It seems so, as in the movie. I consider this kind of accident as an opportunity for change in life”. (Jung-hyun, 22)

The freedom of social mobility is further imagined by these Korean working-class women to give Western people “a new opportunity”, “the second chance”, “a new life”, which could possibly bring significant “change” in the individual and social levels. The notion of change here is a desperate dreaming and hope in the working-class living conditions. These working-class women wish: “It would be so good to forget the whole past, the whole present, and start all over again a new life!” “It seems like Western people can freely move on and start all over again. I envy that”. In encountering the symbolic Western world’s new opportunities and upwardly mobile transformations, these young women are not simply escaping into dreaming and consuming the fantasy, but they are exploring possibilities, imagining alternatives, and experimenting with the self. They enter the realm of the imaginary while projecting themselves onto, or identifying with, the fictional characters. They establish vicarious relationships with the fictional characters by dissolving the line between fiction and reality. For example, one woman quoted above states, “While watching this movie, I constantly imagined, what if I were in that situation, what if I did that? I thought of myself as if I were herself”. They find themselves not only to be observers of distant others and events, but also to be “lifted out” or “disembedded” (Giddens, 1990: 53) from their situatedness in specific localized contexts, to be transported to a state of “not-myself”. This state of “not-myself” is a “psychological time-out” (Schroder, 1988: 72) in which they are relatively free to explore the

boundaries of the self. They are temporarily released from the day-to-day contexts of locales and find themselves traveling through a new world of opportunity and change.

The young working-class women here can be termed as a “mobile person with empathy” (Lerner, 1958: 49). This means that, in contrast with the women in their 50s constricted by the familiar and traditional fatalism, and the women in their 30s negotiating by the fantasy of dominance within the intimate domestic, the young women in their 20s have a high capacity for moving freely out of the familiar local settings, confronting new and different environments, recognizing alternative visions and learning new identities. They can identify with new aspects that arise outside of their habitual experience, and are willing to incorporate them into the process of self-formation. While the self of the women in their 50s and 30s is a “constrictive self” and a “negotiating self”, respectively, the self of the young women in their 20s is a “mobile self”. These young women with a considerable degree of playful curiosity and imagination locate their self not at some fixed point in an unchanging order of things, but at some “moving point of desire” (Lerner, 1958: 134) – for example, the desire for freedom, mobility and change. With the increasing experience of symbolic Western materials, the self of the young women becomes less constricted and fixed by the local contexts of day-do-day life. It becomes less stable, more opening and expanding. By willingly opening up the self to the mediated experience of the West, they enrich and re-construct their self-identity. They increasingly incorporate Western symbolic materials into the everyday process of self-formation, “the coherent and continuously revised biographical narrative” (Thompson, 1995: 210). Precisely, their formation of the self is a continuously “revised” process, as the mediated biographical narratives suggest in the following.

“I used to think change might be an extremely difficult thing to do, so I didn’t dare to try. I thought change might be almost impossible (in Korea). After watching this movie (*Desperately Seeking Susan*), I came to think change might not be that difficult as I imagined. Once one change happens, this can lead to another change, to another, to another. Only the first step seems difficult”. (Jung-hyun, 22)

“Whenever I encounter free (Western) images on TV, I feel stimulated. I want to change like that. I don’t want to restrict my life by old (Korean) thoughts”.
(Kyung-joo, 22)

Insofar as indicated, the self of the young women is then a “reflexively organized symbolic project” (Thompson, 1995: 233) that they construct creatively out of the available symbolic materials. They interweave the new mediated experiences into the changing narrative of self-identity. In a similar vein, the self of the young women is a “reflexive achievement” (Giddens, 1991: 215) that is integrated from a diversity of mediated experiences, shaped and sustained reflexively in relation to changing circumstances of social life on a local and global scale. The profusion of symbolic Western materials today deepens and accentuates the reflexive organization of the self, continuously providing new possibilities, new openings and new imaginations.⁵ The young women’s new experience of the symbolic Western world plays a significant role in their reflexive achievement of self-formation.

Section (5) Rejecting Western Sexuality

Insofar as demonstrated in the previous sections, the young working-class women are routinely subject to new possibilities and choices, different styles and models through their imaginative excursion into the expansive world of the West on the television screen. However, not all Western images are received as the references for appropriate behaviors and values that can provide the possibility of incorporation on the part of the “disembedded, lifted-out” (Giddens, 1990: 53) women into their reflexive formation of the self. While such elements as free choice, social mobility and change are positively appreciated and yearned in their playful imagination, Western sexual freedom is highly contested and rejected. By highlighting the Korean young women’s “talking back” (Hannerz, 1997: 13) to the West about the particular issue of sexuality, in this final section I intend to show their complex mediated relation to the dominant Western values.

“I do envy their free choice, free lifestyle, but I don’t envy their sexual freedom. Sexually, they seem too free, too open. If you see Western movies,

they meet a person in the morning, have a lunch together, and jump into bed at night. If sex is great they decide to marry, then divorce quickly”.

(Kyung-joo, 22)

“They seem to sleep around with anybody (in movies). It seems promiscuous to me. That’s what I don’t like most about Western people. It all happens so quickly, in a day, in a week. They always say “I love you”, and go to sleep together. Then, break up! divorce!” (Suh-jin, 21)

“Western people seem to have no restraint in the sexual relationship. While watching Western programs I notice, they easily talk to a stranger, laugh together, and relationships are immediately formed on the spot. They easily make a casual sexual relationship. In Korea, it takes long time to have any kind of relationship, whether personal or business. I don’t like the easy sexual relationship. I don’t want to be like them”. (Jung-hyun, 22)

“Western people don’t seem to mind anything as long as a woman has a nice body. They don’t seem to care if she is a dumb, stupid bimbo”. (Soo-mi, 20)

“We are opposed to (Western) free sex. My friends have the same thoughts. No matter how much we are dying to change, rebel to the old (Korean) stuff, whether we color hair yellow, we don’t want to be an easy sexual slut”.

(Yeon-jung, 22)

These are some concrete examples of the periphery’s talking back to the West in the contesting field of sexuality. These Korean young women make considerable use of strong language in judging and disapproving Western sexual freedom. Western sexuality, as an exceptionally visible point of contestation, is highly criticized and rejected by all of them. As shown in the previous section, these young women display a high degree of “reflexive involvement” particularly in the yearning image of freedom of social mobility. On the other hand, here they demonstrate “critical distantiation” from the Western sexual image in moral condemnation. They suspend the close involvement and rather withdraw to a position of “superior distance” (Schroder, 1988: 76) expressing a great deal of ridiculing and criticizing. The

excessive immorality of Western sexuality, such as promiscuity and frequent display of divorce, is perceived as distinctively Western features and conventionalized rules of Western human relationships. It is received as incompatible with the prevailing local moral codes they live by, hence, hard to enjoy. These young women, however, do not resort to moral condemnation simply out of cultural differences or prejudices. They often go to some length to supply “rational explanations” for their strong repudiation with Western sexuality, furthermore, they tend to justify their uncertain claims by relying on the combined sources of media information. Here are some examples.

“Sexually, Western people involve fast, finish fast without considering what will happen to their children. It looks like there are many divorced women, single mothers, broken homes, crimes in Western countries (on TV). I think, these may be the by-products of their free, promiscuous sex”. (Yeon-jung, 22)

“I am not sure if Western people are *really* too liberal, sexually. But it seems all true when I watch news about their sex scandals, drugs, crimes”.

(*Italics*, her emphasis) (Kyung-moon, 22)

“When I watch current affair programs about Western (Hollywood) people, I get to know about their *real life*. I get disappointed with the real stories about who is divorcing, who has been divorced how many times, who is having an affair. Their sexual life is too free”. (*Italics*, her emphasis) (Na-ri, 22)

Commonly, the young women’s perception of Western sexuality is garnered generally from watching Western movies, yet the rationales for their criticism derive mainly from composite illustrations of television news and current affair programs, supposedly more realistic portrayals of the Western world than movies. These separate representations of television movies, news and current affair programs do “not add up to a single narrative, but they depend on, and also in some ways express, unities of thought and consciousness” (Giddens, 1991: 26). These young women tend to clear out questions and uncertainties naturally arising from encountering Western movies, by relying on television news in such a manner that this different yet more realistic source of information can further confirm their already established images

about Western sexuality from movies. The negative perception of Western sexuality is forged and reinforced by their selective interweaving of images from different television genres.

These young women reject Western sexuality for it is not of particular interest or relevance to their morals, and such rejection is largely determined by the cultural specificity of local contexts. Their strong repudiation of Western sexual freedom is closely related to the desire to preserve a secure basis of the family. Naturally, a host of questions arise regarding the family/home and children within it. They commonly wonder, "Then what happens to children, if Western people are sexually too liberal?" Although these young working-class women yearn for the Western free choice and change in their own life, a certain value of the Korean tradition continues to have an enduring significance in their modern life. That enduring traditional value lies in the foundation of family. The women's concern for the family is found in all cases of the working-class women in their 50s, 30s, and 20s. All these working-class women have a common attitude that cherishes, maintains and guards the family as a sacred realm. When criticizing Western sexual morality, the young women in their 20s are most concerned about the possibly destructive consequence that the sexual freedom may unsettle their desire for having a family and children.

"They (Western people) seem promiscuous to me. I don't agree with their living together before marriage. That's not good for children. I wouldn't sleep with anybody just for fun, or on the spur of a biological impulse. I am against Western free sex... I don't envy their sexual freedom. Our Korean way is better!" (Kyung-moon, 22)

"Sexually, Western people seem to live too liberal. I don't see any image of home, family inside TV. That's odd to me. Western people behave like they don't have a family. They have a noisy, jolly time with lovers, but rarely with their family". (Jung-hyun, 22)

Overall, the Korean young women's critical talking back to the West shows a complex mediated relation, wherein dominant Western values do not necessarily encourage a homogenizing reception as they are subject to a process of active

negotiation. Western sexual freedom, for example, is highly negotiated and rejected by their culturally-specific systems of meaning, despite the Western knowledge's modern and liberating potential. The women's talking back produces a "heterogeneous dialogue" (Appadurai, 1990) against the homogenizing Western cultural discourse. This implies that if the influence of Western images is assumed to have a profound and irreversible effect on the periphery, such assumption would be extremely Anglo-Eurocentric. Although Western homogenizing forces introduce and reinforce certain standardizing values and knowledge in virtually every corner of the world, these influences do not enter cultural contexts uniformly as they always interact with diverse local conditions (Lull, 1995: 147).⁶ These Korean young women continue to keep some elements of the traditional values such as the family, while integrating the new possibilities of the Western free choice yet simultaneously rejecting Western sexual freedom. Their experience of the Western symbolic world is not subject to a passively adapted one-way interaction, but open to negotiation in a complex dual force of change and continuity.⁷

Chapter 7 Korean Middle-Class Women in their 50s

Section (1) TV, Emotion and Shifting Power: "Now it's women's times!"

How is television used in the homes of Korean middle-class women in their 50s? Who most often controls the selection of television programs in the family? This section delineates the domestic space and patterns of television use in the context of changes and transitions of middle-class family life. I focus on the way in which Korean middle-class women absolutely control the domestic space including the use of television in the primetime, which casts a very different light on existing Western studies. By highlighting a point of intersection between the female-dominating patterns of television use and changing emotional relations between men and wives at the later stage of life course, I intend to show a collapse of the male authority structure and a shift of power in the private sphere of the contemporary middle-class family. This is a marked difference from the previous case of working-class women in their 50s with the perceived misery from male-dominating power and the lack of emotional intimacy.

The television remote control device, as a visible symbol of condensed power relations, typically represents the power of the father with the breadwinner role in the patriarchal society. This is demonstrated in American homes (Lull, 1982) and British working-class families (Morley, 1988). Characteristically, the remote control device is the symbolic possession of the father that sits "on the arm of Daddy's chair" and is used almost exclusively by the father: thus, wives often complain that their husbands use the device obsessively, channel-flicking across programs when wives are trying to watch something else (Morley, 1988: 36). In a broader sense, the remote control is a patriarchal symbol of social relations characterized by male domination over women. In the family system it is commonly assumed that such power is held by wage-earning husbands not by "staying-home" wives. However, my research on the Korean middle-class families unveils an opposite power relation. In contrast to the Western family viewing patterns, it turns out that it is the women who use the remote control regularly in Korean middle-class homes.

“Now it’s women’s times! Women are the king in the home... If my husband and son keep watching their favorite sports, I shout, “I want to watch drama, give me the remote control!” Then my son grumbles heading to his room, and my husband browses the newspaper again or goes to sleep. I rarely miss my favorite drama... My husband sometimes calls me for a lift late at night at a drinking social. I tell him, “Don’t call me between 10:00 and 11:00pm while I am watching drama”. Then he calls me later after the drama is finished”. (Bong-wha, 52)

“At least in the home, mother is the king. My children may think I am the authoritative figure in the home... Watching drama is women’s privilege. I watch all I want to watch at night”. (Jung-soon, 50)

“Nobody in my family would dare to switch a channel while I am watching drama... Mothers of my age are powerful in the home. (Laugh) Nowadays husbands succumb to wives’ power, otherwise, they could not get a spoon of rice later. Patriarchy is gone! Now it’s women’s times!” (Won-ja, 52)

The above accounts indicate a collapse of the male authority structure and a shift of power in the domestic sphere. “Now it’s women’s times!” It is interesting to see that this claim recurs throughout the interviews with the middle-class housewives in their 50s, and a facet of their empowerment in the private family life is manifest in their use of television. It is commonly suggested in Western feminist research that as the home for women is a continued workplace most women find it difficult to assign a comfortable space/time of their own for leisure in the home – including TV watching – whereas men and children can relax without interruption. Some book titles sarcastically encapsulate the relative absence of women’s leisure, *All Work and No Play?* (Deem, 1986), *Women’s Leisure, What Leisure?* (Green et al., 1990)

In this Korean case, however, I would rather argue that at least within the domestic sphere Korean middle-class women hold a great deal of power, hence, experiencing the pleasure of concentrated viewing with guilt-free indulgence – a mode of privileged viewing typically associated with male power – is also made possible for these women. Women can watch all their favorite programs in the

primetime, especially dramas, as nobody in the family dares to switch a channel or interrupt their viewing pleasure. The home is an arena of feminine expertise, a place of rituals, such as TV viewing, participated in and often controlled by women (Brown, 1994: 55). If the term “patriarchy” means “the rule of fathers” or refers to any social system of male superiority (Rothman, 1994: 140), this term is felt irrelevant to the everyday experiences of the Korean middle-class women in their 50s.

“Now it’s women’s times!” “Patriarchy is gone!” Their bold claims pose ineluctable questions. How come these housewives view their position as powerful in the domestic sphere? What are their power resources? I will explain these in two fold: first, in terms of the structural absence of husbands in the domestic sphere, and second, as a consequence, the husbands’ greater emotional dependency on their wives in the later stage of life. To begin with, consider the following complaints by these housewives about the Korean men’s typical work life characterized by extremely long working hours and often work-related drinking sessions afterward. Korean men work the longest hours in the world, 55.1 hours per week, (*The New York Times*, June 10, 2001), moreover, drinking after work has been established as a ritualistic male tradition between leaders and subordinates in the public world of work. (This is a more critical issue in the lives of middle-class younger wives in their 30s, so I will explain it further in detail in the next chapter).

“My husband gets home late, usually after midnight. I once marked on the calendar to see how many times he came home early. It was only three times a month! When he comes home early, I rather tease him, “What a surprise! How come you are home so early today? Tomorrow, the sun will rise from the west!” My husband has lots of meetings and drinking socials after work”.

(Go-sun, 50)

“During the earlier years of marriage, almost everyday I nagged at my husband about his coming home late, routine drinking session after work. Since a certain point of time I have given up. If you continue to quarrel about that, the result is obvious – a big fight or a divorce”. (Gwang-mi, 52)

Structurally, the accelerating modernization of the Korean economy and urbanization of the family system have produced a middle-class “matriarch” of the nuclear family, wherein the father goes off to a managerial position and the mother undertakes home management. I emphasize the “matriarch” because while most housewives in the Western society do not have complete control over their husbands’ paychecks or over children’s education (Hoffman, 1995: 132), these Korean middle-class wives exercise an almost absolute control over family affairs, including managing their husbands’ wages and shaping their children. Korean middle-class men also acknowledge that women have enormous power at home (Elaine Kim, 1998). Ironically, the patriarchal social structure of a separate division of labor has created the matriarchal family wherein women are expected to become active, competent and professional domestic managers. This is more so in the middle-class homes due to the fathers’ busier and longer-hour engagement with the public world of work.

To be culturally specific, the structure of the Korean middle-class family operates by a negotiated gender contract, a different settlement of roles between men and wives. In this settled arrangement of paternal absence and maternal omnipotence, there is simply “too much of mother” (Chodorow, 1978: 185). It may look as if Korean women are subservient to their husbands in public, yet there is little feeling by the women that the private sphere of domestic life is oppressive (Hoffman, 1995). There is little fear of divorce or economic uncertainty on the part of the middle-class housewives, for they are aware of the cultural climate that Korean men equally have a shared commitment in the maintenance of family life and divorce can be a stigma in the men’s rise to public prominence. Given the private and public significance of family life, these middle-class housewives attempt to renegotiate and shift at the level of the family structure the gender-power relations.

This implies that Korean middle-class housewives are embedded in the “dualistic power structure” (Hyoung Cho, 1997): Full-time housewives are structurally disempowered in the patriarchal society, but certain power resources can be constructively created. For instance, in twenty years of married life, housewives would increasingly gain a control over financial management – often including their own separate saving accounts – and dependency of husbands and children, which become positive power resources. This dualistic power structure is a particularity of

the lives of Korean middle-class housewives. By particularity I further want to accentuate a largely unexpressed issue of emotion and intimacy in the gender relations. While Korean husbands' preoccupation with the economic activities and unavailability in the private sphere is a structurally apparent reason for the women's domestic empowerment, there is another significant dimension – husbands' greater emotional dependency. Consider the following self-reflexive analyses by these middle-class women.

“While watching TV, I realize that now it's women's times. On drama or talk shows, I can see that people of my age are getting concerned about “how to spend the rest of life well”. We women can take care of ourselves, so are not afraid of living alone as we get older. But husbands, as they grow older, become afraid of being left alone and self-caring, so they become emotionally dependent on their wives. They get afraid, ‘When I get older and ill, who will take care of me beside me?’ So husbands become nicer to their wives as they grow old together”. (Jung-soon, 50)

“It is true that husbands of our age get concerned, “How can I stick to my wife's side until I die?” Without a wife, what can old men do? Men have rarely cooked, rarely learned how to take care of themselves. All they have done in life is go out and earn money”. (Chung-sin, 51)

“I can see, in TV drama, husbands of our age become nice to their wives, “Darling you just sit down here, I will make a dinner tonight. Or shall we go out for a dinner tonight? Where do you want to go this weekend?” In our real life, that is true. Men are changing as they get older, otherwise, they will not be served later by their wife and children”. (Go-sun, 50)

The informal power of the Korean middle-class women is exercised subtly in the way they control the emotional and psychological dimension of married life, the basic patterns of intimacy and dependency. While living in close proximity, women come to recognize their men's emotional anxiety. Women are relatively adept at identifying emotions, in themselves and others, in part because their social responsibility for caretaking has required them to develop a special acuity in recognizing hidden

emotions (Jaggar, 1992: 165). For these women in their 50s, this emotional acumen is, by now, sharpened as a skill that allows a special advantage in both understanding the mechanisms of domination and envisioning alternative forms of power and freedom through the control of emotion and intimacy. Women, like all oppressed groups, may have difficulty in imagining the precise contours of an alternative society, but they have no trouble at all in invoking alternative sources of power (Scott, 1990).

Korean middle-class women's lives may not be oppressive because a largely unrecognized yet overwhelmingly powerful intimacy transcends the structural gender separation, fusing man and wife as "codependent intimates" (Hoffman, 1995: 126). As one Western researcher has sharply observed, "Beneath what may be the surface appearances of aloofness and distance between husband and wife, there is a certain quality of emotional bonding and dependency in Korean marriage that most Westerners would find *overly close or even suffocating*" (Hoffman, 1995: 122. *Italics*, my emphasis). Culturally, Korean middle-class women are positioned as an emotional center of the home and family, a "spiritual anchor" (Christian, 1994: 96), so their felt-status may be far higher than that of Western counterparts.¹ Korean middle-class husbands daily buffeted by the harsh economic structures are overwhelmingly dependent upon their wives in the private life, largely attributing their success to the wives' emotional "opiate role" (Hewlett, 1986: 326). These middle-class women not only recognize the significance of their emotional role, but also use it to advance their micro political position in the long-term perspective. Here are examples.

"On TV drama, I once saw a woman of my age utter to herself, "*OK, you will see when you get old!*" She was angry with her husband and tried to appease her anger in revengeful determination. My friends say that they sometimes bully their husbands, "*OK, you will see!*" (Laugh) I tease my husband, "*You will see when you get old!*" (Italics, her emphasis) (Won-ja, 52)

"Sometimes my husband suffers a hang-over in the morning due to over-drinking. If I make Book-uh-gook (special fish soup for a hang-over) in the morning, he gets so pleased, fawning on me, "That's why men must have a wife! I wonder how men without a wife can live!" But I watch for a chance, thinking, 'Don't get too impressed now. I am not going to quarrel with the

drunken man now. But you will see tonight when you get sober!’ The wife’s voice pitches higher as we get old together”. (Eun-kyung, 52)

“You will see when you get old!” This is a “hidden transcript” (Scott, 1990: 136), a backstage discourse spoken often behind the back of the dominant. These middle-class women enjoy freedom and power in their domestic roles, improving their position in a calculated manner, by the long-term perspective on their prospects. They employ calculated “tactics” (De Certeau, 1984) to take advantage of whatever opportunities present themselves, and such tactics often involve “spotting the weak points” (Fiske, 1989: 19) – in this case, husbands’ emotional dependency – to carve their own space and maintain their own position within and against the social structure dominated by men. Women are both cunning and savvy enough to spot their husbands’ weak points. “Subordinate groups know more about dominant groups than the dominant group knows about them because a large part of their life is spent accommodating those in power” (Brown, 1994: 23). Such pragmatic knowledge is sometimes tapped through television drama and often shared through the women’s friendship networks, wherein they heartily talk and laugh about the meanings of small elements of domestic rituals. Equipped with their own strategic knowledge, these middle-class housewives insinuate and maneuver for a better position within the structure of patriarchy. In this way, women escape without leaving the place of patriarchy. Within the place of patriarchy, they renegotiate the relationships of power and the institutional definition of their roles. They attempt to turn upside down the gendered role set out for them by educating their husbands little by little, with an occasional feeling of triumph about small changes and transitions in everyday life – ranging from the husbands’ participation in the housework to watching TV together.

“We cannot be a servant for life, so wives of our generation start to educate husbands on simple things – cooking instant meals, warming up left-over food in the refrigerator, running the laundry machine. If husbands of our age can’t cook a simple meal, that’s a wife’s fault. If husbands in their 50s or 60s still dictate wives to do this, do that in the home, they will be deserted alone later”.

(Chung-sin, 51)

“My husband sometimes sits next to me while I am watching drama, and teases, “It’s just a drama, why are you falling for that stuff?” But he tries to talk to me, asking about the story, “What happened? Who is that?””

(Bong-wha, 52)

“I sometimes wondered, how come I had been living with this man for so long? If I got ill and moaned all night long, he would just sleep snoring loud. If he got ill, he would make all the fuss as if he were dying... Now he has changed. We go mountain-hiking together. He sometimes calls me to let me join his drinking social”. (Jung-soon, 50)

“Husbands, when young, did not help housework. They went to work and came home late. Now, as they get old, they help housework. If I am tired my husband would vacuum the house, and upon hearing “ding” (ending signal) of the laundry machine, he would take out clothes and hang them on the rack”.

(Go-sun, 50)

Overall, this section has shown that the position of Korean middle-class women in their 50s does not quite resemble the Western ideas of male-female power relations. As evidenced in the female-dominating patterns of television use, the private sphere of the contemporary Korean middle-class family is constantly shifting. The women’s status changes radically at the later stage of life while renegotiating and redefining the gender-power relations at the level of the family structure. Rather than universalizing women’s oppression across generation and class, it is therefore necessary to accommodate life *course* analysis to address more adequately the question of gender relations. Unlike the term life cycle, which implies fixed categories in the life of the individual and assumes a stable system, the term life *course* suggests more flexible biographical patterns within a continually changing social system (Featherstone and Hepworth, 1991: 386). It thus permits a more dynamic and fluid approach to the study of contesting gender relations over the period of life, and provides a better understanding of the question of shifting power.

Section (2) Middle-Class Leisure and Television

In the previous section I have argued that the status of the Korean middle-class housewives changes radically at the later stage of their life course with a significant degree of power and freedom in the domestic sphere, as demonstrated in the female-dominating patterns of television use in the primetime. This section further reinforces my argument by considering the women's life styles subject to change according to their stage in the life course. I examine middle-class women's changing life styles in the context of everyday leisure and television. How are the women's life styles characterized by the changing life course stage? What are the distinctive features of their everyday leisure? How is television positioned in middle-class leisure culture? My special interest is in how middle-class women perceive daytime television and whether television has a role to play in structuring their everyday leisure life.

"A woman of our age who stays at home all day long and watches TV would be either a woman without money, or an idiot. Why stay home when there are lots of things to enjoy outside? I get out of home in the morning and go back home when the sun falls. I have been rusting at home for nearly 30 years, that's quite enough!" (Bong-wha, 52)

"If you have nothing to do in life you may watch TV during the day. Often in the morning, my friends call me, "Let's get out!" Then I say, "Where?" They laugh at me, "Why stay at home? Just come out, then we will figure out where to go to entertain you". If you stay home, you get fat and old". (Jung-soon, 50)

"Once you turn on TV, you can't stop watching and your brain stops functioning right there. Consciously I try to stay away from TV, instead find other things to do. There are lots of other things to do outside, why stay home and waste the rest of life?" (Go-sun, 50)

The above accounts demonstrate that television is not heavily integrated into the daytime routines of the middle-class women in their 50s. The question of whether, and how, television takes part in structuring everyday life is inextricably related to the question of what "meaning" women give to television (Seiter et al., 1989), and to the

issue that consumption and lifestyle preferences involve discriminatory judgments (Bourdieu, 1984). The meaning of daytime television consumption for these middle-class women is conspicuously dismissive as cheap low-brow forms of cultural activities: "A woman of our age who stays at home all day long and watches TV would be either a woman without money, or an idiot". Television is part of popular "low" culture and daytime program is its "lowest" form (Livingstone and Lunt, 1994: 173), the soap opera in particular is the very epitome of the low and waste-of-time women's trash. (Allen, 1995: 3). For the middle-class women with some economic and cultural capital, the meaning of daytime television with all the evaluative weighting is precisely a "low-prestige leisure activity, engaged in thoughtlessly by those who do not have the inner resources to do anything else" (Brunsdon, 1989: 116). In short, television merely occupies a marginal space in middle-class women's daytime leisure life. Being perceived as "anti-television" means a sensible middle-class lifestyle.

"Consciously I try to stay away from TV, instead find other things to do". The middle-class women do not have a close engagement with popular television, particularly during the daytime. The middle-class aesthetic is not compatible with the popular sensibility characterized by the "desire to enter into the game, identifying with the characters' joys and sufferings, worrying about their fate, espousing their hopes and ideals, living their lives"; on the contrary, the middle-class aesthetic values "detachment, disinterestedness, indifference" (Bourdieu, 1980: 237-239). The middle-class women's conscious distance from the mundane television, with their discriminatory aesthetic judgement and taste, is a way of "defining, fixing and legitimating social differences": For taste is one of the important means by which social distinctions are maintained and class identities are forged (Bourdieu, 1984). Taste on television consumption can be a signifier of social identity. For these middle-class women, distancing away from the popular cultural goods – television – is a manifestation of class status. It is more true for the social status groups among older members – like these women in their 50s – that distinctive consumption patterns function as a "marker of class", and that such patterns help to define the members of a status group to preserve its status-honor, its social and cultural esteem, in its own eyes and in the eyes of others (Bocock, 1993: 6). It feels socially relevant for them to distance away from television watching, instead engage in proper-status activities.

“Why stay home when there are lots of things to enjoy outside?” This is commonly stated by these middle-class women in their 50s.² They show a somewhat rebellious attitude towards staying home during the day, and are determined to go out and enjoy their life: “I have been rusting at home for nearly 30 years, that’s quite enough!” Then, what do they do outside home, often until the sunset?

“The minute I get out of home, all the stress flies away, I feel like whistling! With the swimming bag on the shoulder, I feel like skipping! I go for swimming, then a sauna on weekdays, and mountain-hiking at the weekends. Our friends’ meeting place is a sports center. After swimming and sauna, we feel hungry, then go out for lunch together. The next course is a singing room. Until the sun sets, we never go home. If somebody says, “Let’s go home now”, another retorts, “To do what at home? Still the sun is there!””

(Bong-wha, 52)

“At 9:00am I go to a sports center – fitness for 1 hour, swimming for 30 minutes, then sauna. While bouncing in the swimming pool or learning aqua-aerobic with young women, I feel like I am going back to the youth again... Sweating inside the sauna, we get in the mood for lunch, “Hey, why don’t we go out to lunch, there is a nice live-song restaurant with a mountain view!” We hop into a friend’s car and chat... We don’t hurry home to make a dinner. I would just call my family, “Buy a dinner! One-time eating out would not hurt!” I have served home-made meals for 30 years, then buying a dinner once in a while is not a problem for the family”. (Gwang-mi, 52)

“Mothers of my age think about how to enjoy the rest of life. We are so determined to enjoy, play hard before getting too old. (Laugh) We are the rebel generation of the 50s! Just like rebellious teenagers run away from home and wander around in a gang, we don’t think about going home once we are playing outside... We try out hip styles, the young women’s low-waist pants, even though that fashion on our big hips and short legs makes us look like stupid frogs. Mothers of my age don’t care as long as it gives us pleasure”.

(Chung-sin, 51)

The middle-class women's leisure patterns are strikingly similar, composed of three major activities: body maintenance / singing / consumption. Almost ritually, everyday they engage in exercise such as swimming, fitness, mountain hiking, aerobic; cultural-educational programs including singing, dancing, calligraphy, computer internet, English; gourmet eating and shopping. A body of evidence exists to confirm that women generally have less time, resources and opportunities for leisure than men, and a narrower range of options and where and with whom to spend it (Green et al., 1990). But this scenario would be highly unlikely for the Korean middle-class women in their 50s. Especially, body maintenance is firmly established as a virtuous leisure activity among these middle-class women. The body is the materialization of class taste (Bourdieu, 1984). The middle-class women's morality assumes an increasing self-responsibility for their health, body shape and appearance. They make a constant effort on body work and self-consciously monitor their bodily presentation in the social space. Their self in this sense is the "performing self" (Featherstone, 1991: 187). The increased opportunity to enjoy leisure outside the home and public display encourages body work, self-monitoring and self-transformation. The culture of mid-life can be described as the "modernization of ageing" (Featherstone and Hepworth, 1991: 385), which involves a distancing from deep old age, chronologically determined age. It is resistance to ageing that intersects around the concept of youthfulness. Those at the bottom of the social class hierarchy have few resources to facilitate the choice of a "positive" old age, but for those in the middle class with generous income, old age holds out the prospect of a prolongation of the plateau-like phase of adult life, with continued relatively high consumption of the pursuit of consumer-culture lifestyles, body maintenance and styles of self-presentation (Featherstone and Hepworth, 1991: 374).

The second distinctive feature of the middle-class women's leisure life styles is their "female friendship network". The sources of female support and companionship are a crucial determinant in maximizing their leisure pleasure. "Sociability" is important as women tend to feel that "real leisure" should offer an opportunity for having fun in company outside the home environment, for a lively social interaction (Green *et al.*, 1990: 7). Friendship affects willingness to be involved in out-of-home activities, and provides the social support to carry out their leisure

decisions in practice. Body maintenance / singing / consumption all signal a stepping out from the domestic bounds.

The women's talks quoted above are exuberant of ultimate leisure experience. Their out-of-home leisure is youthful and self-reflexively playful with a hint of resistance: "Until the sun sets, we never go home... Still the sun is there!" It is a deliberate opposition to the rule of everyday life, which is evidenced in their loose notion of meal preparation: "Buy a dinner! One-time eating out would not hurt!" Ignoring the preparation of family dinner in pursuit of leisure pleasure is a small act of revolt against the grain of patriarchal culture. At this point, I want to reinforce my previous argument by stressing that the middle-class women's ultimate experience of the out-of-home leisure is a more prominent, public manifestation of the women's domestic empowerment, and this is one specific example of significant socio-cultural shifts in the middle-class women's life. "I have served home-made meals for 30 years, then buying a dinner once in a while is not a problem for the family". Underlying this talk emerges a justification for the women's entitlement to leisure. Here, I want to further accentuate women's assertion of leisure entitlement. Listen to the following claims.

"Even though I get home late, nobody in my family would dare to criticize me. Who can criticize us, mothers, when we have finished raising and educating our children? Impatient women would have already run away from home, but we have made sacrifices for the sake of children's future". (Won-ja, 52)

"I have sacrificed my life, raising children and supporting my husband's success. Sometimes I wonder, why have I lived like this? Nobody is going to award me the prize of "Good Mother", or "Good Wife". I don't have to make sacrifice anymore. From now on, I should enjoy my life". (Eun-kyung, 52)

"If somebody is about to leave to make a dinner and chill the spirit, we friends advise, "Just call your husband and tell him to eat dinner at work! You don't have to be nice anymore as nobody is going to award the golden badge of "Great Wife" on your shoulder"". (Jung-soon, 50)

“Mothers of my age have been rusting at home for 28-30 years. Our responsibility inside the home has now finished. Now, we should take care of ourselves. Now, we get the feeling of liberation!” (Bong-wha, 52)

Here, these women in their 50s self-confidently defend and assert their entitlement to leisure against the social obligations of day-to-day caring. It is this generation of articulate middle-class women that is at the forefront in the elaboration and expression of entitlement to leisure in direct opposition to the traditional role requirement. These women see themselves as earning the right to leisure in the same way as their working husbands, and argue that they deserve it. To enjoy out-of-home leisure, even all day long until the sunset, is not felt selfish by them, for leisure time outside home is taken as a well-earned moment of compensation for their lifetime caring role and sacrifice. Needs are influenced by culture not only in the ways they are formed, but in how they are gratified too (Lull, 1995: 99). Sacrifice is a culturally situated social experience for Korean women, while leisure is one of the main sources of personal gratification sought in the later stage of life. Leisure pleasure is taken as the most accessible means to redress their uncompensated sacrifice and alienation from the public world of work. Through a common interest in leisure activities, the friendship webs of middle-class women seek to express their otherwise “silenced” identities. By “silenced” they commonly mean, “Nobody is going to award me the prize of “Good Mother”, or “Good Wife””. It is through the leisure life that this generation of housewives attempt to revive the self forgotten and buried in the dust of time. Their search for the construction of a new identity and the self-transformation in the later stage of life course is played out in one form through an intensive engagement with everyday leisure consumption. I would argue that the cultural and psychological significance of leisure for this generation of middle-class women is precisely “the end of sacrifice” with an exalted feeling of freedom and liberation. Indulging in the pleasure of leisure is their own way of celebrating the ending of self-sacrifice, the bottomless, unspoken emotional demand to take care of the other. This is a celebratory ending of the “being-for”, “being responsible-for” (Bauman, 1995: 60-70), and a new beginning of their entry into the modern way of transforming an identity.

Taken together with the previous section, it becomes clear that the current everyday life is not felt so disadvantageous by the middle-class women in their 50s

with their enormous domestic power and ample leisure opportunity. This finding can partly answer the question: Why do many ordinary women accept or consent to the patriarchal social-economic system that is apparently against their interests in the eyes of society? The powerful have a vital interest in keeping up appearances appropriate to their form of domination; and subordinates, for their part, ordinarily have good reasons to help sustain those appearances or, at least, not openly to contradict them (Scott, 1990: 70). Because these women increasingly gain control over the private sphere, the major arena of their everyday life, coupled with a freedom to engage in leisure activities, they have less impetus to challenge the patriarchal social structure. In effect, individual women's domestic empowerment under the patriarchal structure can result in a strongly defensive "anti-feminist" force of the patriarchal system (Hyoungh Cho, 1997). The middle-class women both adhere to the home in their domestic empowerment and rebel against the home through the intensive engagement with the out-of-home leisure. The women's domestic empowerment and leisure life styles sustain a patriarchal middle-classness settled on the binary relation – work for men and consumption for women. Although the changes in the domestic power and leisure opportunities are of special importance for the women, these positive changes in the later stage of life course are only limited to the realms of the private and leisure life, but do not extend to work with publicly recognizable forms of formal power.

Section (3) TV Reflexivity: Women's Work and Childcare

In the previous section I have shown the freedom of out-of-home leisure firmly structured in the everyday life of the middle-class women in their 50s. For this generation of women, the meaning of out-of-home leisure is the end of sacrifice, the most available means to redress their lifetime caring roles inside the home and alienation from the public world of work. Their search for the self is limited within the realm of leisure against the reality that a proper -status work can not be attainable. Leisure then may not be a choice in the sense that these women have no choice but to turn to leisure pleasure in their attempt to compensate for the self-sacrificing life. One woman precisely puts it, "What kind of decent job can we find at this age when the brain has stopped functioning at home for such a long time?" Such reality further propels these middle-class housewives more intensely towards the pursuit of leisure pleasure.³ This, however, does not mean that they do not have a desire for work. In

fact, all of these middle-class women express a desire for work, which is yet irreconcilable and unrealizable. Their unfulfilled desire for work is reflected in the envious yet complex response towards the images of professional career women on television. In this section, I analyze the highly self-reflexive ways in which these women question and scrutinize the modern images of working women on television from their vantage points as mothers with family roles. This section focuses on the middle-class women's reception of television as an object for reflexivity, in particular relation to the subject of women's work and childcare.

"Inside TV I can see many working women nowadays. They look nice to me. It would be so nice if I could have my own work. I wish to work outside and earn even 1,000 Won (BP 50p) on my own". (Jung-soon, 50)

"I envy those women who have their own work on TV. They look confident. In the alumnae's meeting I find working friends usually look 4-5 years younger than us, housewives. Their life is on the going and getting, unlike our drooping and sinking life. My children have grown up, I wish I could work again". (Go-sun, 50)

"I tell my daughter, "Don't live like me. Hang on to the company until you get kicked out!" I don't want my daughter to repeat my life". (Gwang-mi, 52)

All of the middle-class housewives in their 50s express a strong desire to be able to work outside the home and earn money on their own, even 1,000 Won (BP 50p). They tend to find working women more confident, lively, "going and getting somewhere", whereas their housewifery life "drooping and sinking". Commonly, their unfulfilled wish for work is projected on their daughters. This strong desire for work is also reflected in their envy for the images of professional career women on television. At the surface level, these Korean women's envy for the images of career women parallels the responses of American older women towards modern working women on television (Press, 1991). American older women also respond positively to the images of women at work because their own experience in non-traditional careers has been limited. They thus enjoy newer television images of women in the workplace, expressing feelings of envy and admiration. "Older women are inspired by newer representations of working women, images that are far from representing their past or

present experience but that fire their imagination” (Press, 1991: 155). American older women feel free to fantasize about the lives of working women characters, and such feminist images can broaden their horizons. “In this respect, newer television images of working women serve as a liberating force for older women, freeing them to envision new possibilities for women, possibilities they have never experienced and have rarely seen in their own lives” (Press, 1991: 168). However, in the following I will demonstrate that the Korean women’s envious response to the images of professional women on television is more complicated.

“Once *The Success Times* (documentary drama) showed a successful woman doctor. She has made a big fortune, so established a medical school. Wow! I envied her remarkable achievement... While TV was showing around her house, I got curious about her family, “What kind of husband does she live with? How many children does she have?” But her family didn’t show up! Where is the family? She said, “I didn’t have time to marry. I love my work so much that I’ve got married to my work”. A-ha! That makes sense to me. Women can choose either a nice job or a nice home. We cannot have both. That’s why most successful women with a nice job do not have a nice home. They remain single or get divorced”. (Bong-wha, 52)

“On TV drama, I can see that women of my age work in professional areas. They look nice, well-dressed, confident. But I get to wonder, how come they have managed work and home? How come?” (Jung-soon, 50)

“Whenever I see working women with a nice career on TV, I envy them. They look sophisticated at work, well-respected by their children and husband in the home... How have they managed to work? They look so glamorous, without any trouble in life. How could that be possible? I would really like to know their *secret method*. They all must be superwomen... Drama only shows the surface, not the reality underneath. Drama showing those glamorous working women is an unrealistic fake”. (*Italics*, her emphasis) (Go-sun, 50)

The image of successful career women with glamorous and multi-dimensional lives is not simply received with envy and admiration, but this seemingly envious image is

critically scrutinized. These Korean middle-class women are extremely analytical in this respect. While watching television they engage in the analytic process of questioning, reasoning, reflecting, and criticizing. They tend to take rhetorical approaches to practical reasoning. Encountering successful career women on television, they pose curious questions: "Where is the family?" "How come they have managed work and home?" "How could that be possible? I would really like to know their *secret method*". Here, there is much speculation and scrutiny concerning working women's "family life". Family life is the central concern for these Korean middle-class women, so they are inclined to interpret and question the televised image from their vantage points as mothers. Family life is the main interpretative framework in their reception of television. Inside television, working women are almost always shown in conjunction with their family roles, happily without troubles. Such images are taken as unrealistic for these women as they touch upon their respective experiences as working women differently. While talking about television, these women frequently relate events or characters to their own lives or to their friends' lives in a real situation. They constantly judge such representations by making a "referential talk" and fusing it with a "critical talk" (Liebes and Katz, 1993). The above questions posed by these women spring from a "dialectic" between televised representations and actual realities. Their self-reflexive accounts emerge from the frequent referential and critical modes of viewing. One feature that I want to particularly emphasize here is this "self-reflexive" nature of the women's TV talk. The "examination of self" (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998: 128) is central in the women's TV talk, so their accounts tend to be retrospective and autobiographical. As televised images trigger a reflection on their particular experiences as working women previously, these women criticize the image of professional women, who combine a family life with ease, as largely an "unrealistic fake". Then, what was their own reality like? The following is a typical experience of working women in real life.

"In our days most women had to quit work once we had children. One child can be managed in a way as we can leave the child with our mother or sister if they live nearby. We beg around for childcare. But once we have two children we cannot beg anymore. When my children cried, missing mommy, my mother got out of control and called me at work, "Take your children! Women should take care of children first, what's the use of work?" Should I continue

to work or quit? Feeling guilty for children everyday, many women give up at this stage. What's the use of my work when my children are not happy? I had no choice but to quit my work and stay close to my children". (Go-sun, 50)

This talk reveals that women's lives are largely conditioned upon, and circumscribed by, childcare responsibilities. When career women have children, they most surely take on an exhausting double burden, often then, find their career "sabotaged by motherhood" (Hewlett, 1986: 15). In the feeling of guilt and ambivalence as a working mother, women give up their dreams of career life, realizing that childcare is the main barrier to their professional achievement. Far from the images of successful career mothers on television, these middle-class women point out the difficulties inherent in combining childcare responsibilities with professional aspirations. It is this realization of the incompatibility of work and family that is central to the women's lives. Eventually, almost every working mother "must choose" either family or career – either the joy of love and motherhood or the life alone, childless with her work for sole consolation. This is the general reality of high-achieving, feminist-oriented professional women in Korea. It is unfettered single or divorced women who can competitively leap into the mainstream marketplace and work equally like men. On the contrary, when given a choice of either a family life or a career life, "normal" Korean women are assumed to prioritize the former. Work and family life together is considered an impossible set of dreams to ordinary Korean women. In short, "We have not yet created a context that allows a woman to reasonably expect that she can have both a career and a family" (Hewlett, 1986: 401). Childcare was a major concern for these women in their 50s, and even today younger women – their daughters' generation – still cannot figure out a way of reconciling motherhood with professional aspirations. In the lack of social support systems, women's family-based networks, particularly the mother-daughter tie, remain a dominant source of help, although such help is reluctantly offered by mothers. The childcare issue is indeed a "moral dilemma" and part of everyday talk among the group of older women who have working daughters.

"How can you heartlessly ignore it when your daughter is so eager to work, struggling with work and home everyday? I am not happy about childcare, but

can't ignore it for the pleasure of my own life. But frankly, I really don't want to be stuck at home again. That's a dilemma for the women of our age".

(Gwang-mi, 52)

"My friend once played with her grandchild. This little boy babbled "Teletubbies, Teletubbies", pointing to the TV set. My friend thought, he was incorrectly pronouncing "Television", so turned on TV. But he kept babbling, "No! Teletubbies, Teletubbies", then burst into tears as the grandmother could not grasp what he meant. My friend finally called her daughter and found out what he wanted. It was a *Teletubbies* videotape... My friend talked about this in our meeting, asking us, "Do you know what Teletubbies is?" We said, "No. What is it?" Then she warned, "If you don't know what Teletubbies is, then don't dare to think about looking after your grandchildren. We, antique generation, cannot catch up with modern kids' demands". (Bong-wha, 52)

"My daughter has even moved near my apartment to leave her child with me. If I move to another apartment, she may follow me again. So what can I do? I am her mother. I just cannot callously declare to my daughter, "You quit your work and take care of your own child!" (Eun-kyung, 52)

In the course of my research, themes concerning "childcare" have recurred consistently as dominant concerns for the Korean women interviewed, therefore, I want to direct my final focus on feminism's insufficient attention to the issues of motherhood/childcare.⁴ Feminism with its central emphasis on equal rights and sexual freedom is grounded on the assumption that once women possess the same rights as men and achieve control over their own body – including the right to choose not to have children – women can achieve a true equality of opportunity and compete for economic and political power on the same terms as men. This assumption has led modern feminists to ignore the issues of motherhood/childcare. My research data, however, reveal that the crux of (Korean) women's problems lies in motherhood/childcare. Given the lack of alternative visions for childcare, the concrete realities of women's lives center on reconciling motherhood with professional aspirations. Can we afford to ignore any longer women's desire for both motherhood and work?

Motherhood is the most widely shared experience of the great majority of women in Korea, yet this pivotal issue of childcare has been largely ignored. 73.4% of all Korean women of age 15 and over get married, and 66.1% of all married women remain full-time housewives/mothers (Hyoung Cho, 1994: 170). If any camp of feminism takes anti-marriage, anti-children or anti-motherhood as a short-cut solution and continues to devalue the significance of motherhood in the lives of ordinary women, this particular “anti” camp must be then making a gigantic mistake: It basically fails to recognize the ordinary women’s deep desire for motherhood and family, fails to incorporate the bearing and rearing of children into the vision of liberated life, and fails to reach and connect to the mainstream of women’s lives. For the ordinary Korean women interviewed in my research, the imminent issue in their everyday lives has not much to do with such agendas as equal rights and sexual freedom that are mainly voiced by high-achieving, unfettered single or divorced career women, the epitome of feminists in modern Korea. What the ordinary women need in their everyday reality is a plethora of family support systems and sensible public policies concerning childcare in particular; some pragmatic visions that can ease women’s dual burden in the home and the workforce. In the absence of supportive social structures in modern Korea, the problem of childcare largely remains individualized, privatized, weighing heaviest on women. There emerges a strong urge to take the lead on the childcare issue to allow women to combine a family life with a career, as they so wish.

Section (4) Family, TV and Moral Discourse

In this final section I attempt to construct a Korean case of television morality in particular relation to the notion of family – television as part of family moral discourse. I find this task imperative, for the narrative logic in the women’s reflexive TV talk hinges greatly on the intensity of family values. Throughout the interviews, the middle-class women in their 50s emphatically make a lengthy, reflexive and forceful rhetoric about family values, generating a clear and consensual meaning of the home and family. This was equally true for the working-class women in their 50s as proven in Chapter 4. So far in this chapter, I have argued for radical changes in the private sphere of the middle-class families, which are demonstrated in the female-

dominating patterns of television use and the shifting power of the gender relation in Section (1), and the women's infinite freedom of out-of-home leisure life structured against the grain of the everyday patriarchal rule in Section (2). In Section (3) the women have shown an irreconcilable desire for combining a family life with a career. Their consensual definition of modern woman points to the image of a career woman, but not at the expense of the woman's traditional role for the family. Although some main features inside the family structure are continually changing in the later stage of life course towards a more female-dominating modernization, hence, a balance of power between men and women, the traditional value of family is nonetheless kept intact, unchangeable and irreplaceable. Unlike the working-class women's entire embeddedness in the traditional morality of the family system, the middle-class women are both modern and traditional, largely conservative but not entirely traditional. This concluding section therefore focuses on the ways in which everyday television is intersected as a space of moral discussion and constructed as an on-going family moral discourse by the middle-class women in their 50s.

“Even a woman President must take care of her home and family first! Woman's work is important, but the home always must be the top priority no matter what!” (Won-ja, 52)

“Without the family, what's the meaning of my life? Even though I have sacrificed my whole life for the family, if my family is well and happy my sacrifice is worth it”. (Bong-waha, 52)

“What is important in woman's life? I come to think about that nowadays. Whenever seeing working women, I envy them and complain, “I am a useless antique”. But if I had a nice work without a nice home, then I would definitely desire a nice home. Having a nice home and family is most precious of all”. (Jung-soon, 50)

“I majored in Korean Literature in university, but have not made use of my aptitude since getting married and staying home with children. One of my classmates has become a famous novelist. I saw her once on TV and found her book on the list of bestsellers. I envied her success. ‘What am I?’ This thought

disturbed me... But later I have noticed that she doesn't have a husband and children. It would be perfect if a woman could have both a nice career and a nice family, but that's an almost impossible dream. If I am to choose between a successful career and a family life, I will choose, again, my family life".

(Go-sun, 50)

As evident in the above extracts, the kernel of middle-class values lies in the idea of home and family. All of the middle-class women here extensively emphasize the central role of children and family in women's lives. The home is a space for family cohesion and stability, a guarantee that the essence of women's identity can be secured. Middle-class women highly value their social status as a powerful, moral guardian of the family. It is the women themselves who actively support the idea of home and family – perhaps even more so than men. Precisely, in their own family discourse, “women are the bearers of the vision of family, its keepers, its producers” (Stivens, 1998: 17). Their idea of modern woman resembles the second wave American feminist rhetoric in a way that emphasizes the importance of women's work outside home, however, the family is believed to be the top priority in any circumstance. Their primary concern is family harmony and stability from which their emotional security and meaning of life are derived: “Without the family, what's the meaning of my life?” Although all of these middle-class housewives project their irreconcilable desire for a career life on their educated daughters, they basically do not want social structural changes that may challenge their current stable position as a mother, as the emotional and moral backbone of the family. As a consequence, the family is constitutive of the middle-class women's everyday conversation, and the domestic presence of television intersects intimately with their ongoing discourse of family.

“I like to watch the drama that makes me think about the importance of home and family. We mothers like to watch the drama about a happy, harmonious family. That's our life. That's the way to live”. (Jung-soon, 50)

“I like to watch a ha-ha-ho-ho happy family. TV drama should show the audience happy families living together harmoniously”. (Chung-sin, 51)

“When drama shows any serious conflict in the home, I just turn off TV. I believe drama should not show that kind of unpleasant stuff”. (Eun-kyung, 52)

The middle-class women’s supreme emphasis on family values is reflected in their particular preference for a certain genre of television program – home drama – the portrayal of “ha-ha-ho-ho happy family” characterized by a subjective sense of harmony and cooperation. These women most enjoy watching a typical middle-class home drama with its concentration on the “family ensemble structured within definitions of gender and the value of home life for family cohesion, the stability of the family” (Haralovich, 1992: 111). They selectively watch the home drama guaranteed for family union, while holding the expectation that such a normative portrayal of the Korean family ought to be the conventional rule of television drama. The normative home and family is expected for them to be a central focus of television drama and of real life.

However, the normative space of home and family and the women’s moral order within it are felt to be challenged and even threatened by television drama’s newly emerging modern themes, for example, divorce. As the “naturalized normative territory” (Allen, 1995) is on the verge of disintegrating, television stirs the women’s sense of security and stability grounded on the family. This is precisely where a moral discourse of family enters. The middle-class women’s empathetic rhetoric about family values is triggered by the encounter with contesting modern themes, and the women’s TV talk intensifies the ongoing moral discourse of family. This is exemplified in their debates on the prime time daily drama *Can’t Help Loving you*, wherein the marriage between a single medical doctor and a divorced woman becomes a main concern for the families involved.⁵ This is, in these middle-class women’s view, a morally problematic event. The anxieties about holding on to the idea of family resonate in the women’s TV talk about the drama.

“The marriage between a young doctor and a divorced woman (in the drama) is uncommon, unrealistic. Frankly, no mother would like to accept a divorced woman as a daughter-in-law unless her son was a total idiot. Ask anybody on the street! No matter how smart, pretty, capable she is, no mother in Korea would like to accept a divorced woman into the family”. (Gwang-mi, 52)

“In *Can't Help Loving You*, a single doctor marries a divorced woman despite his mother's fierce disapproval. Nowadays divorce is increasing in Korean society, but TV drama should show a normal, happy family. That drama is rationalizing a wrong marriage ethic”. (Jung-soon, 50)

“While watching that drama, I can feel what we frequently call the “generation gap”. To our generation, the family bond and harmony always came first. Nowadays the family bond and harmony is loosening. Things are drifting in a wrong direction! Young people dare to marry anybody, even driving a nail into their parents' hearts. That's very wrong!” (Won-ja, 52)

There is certainly an air of morality surrounding television viewing here. The conflictual theme of divorce disrupts the self-evident nature of the family, while allowing and opening up a space for moral discussion to enter. It invites a forum in which women immerse themselves and discuss the level of ethical imperatives. Women's TV talk enters a highly critical moral discourse. On one hand, women's criticism above is based on “ethical realism” (Alasuutari, 2000). For example, “Ask anybody on the street! No mother in Korea would like to accept a divorced woman into the family”. This is a particular ethos of Korean ethical realism. Drama content contradicts the women's existing ethical positions about what is not right, what should not be: “Young people dare to marry anybody, even driving a nail into their parents' hearts. That's very wrong!” TV talk here can be seen as a terrain of moral struggle. On the other hand, women's fierce criticism comes from a deep fear of disintegration of family, with a reflexive imagination of such incident in their own lives: “What if that happens to me?” “What should I do if my son or daughter brings a divorced person?” The events and subjects covered in the television drama – divorce in this case – act as a catalyst for reflection on their family life. The moral messages contained in the drama are discussed, interpreted and re-dramatized in the company of friends, thereby, the television drama is “thoroughly realized” (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998: 110). This particular issue of divorce sets the agenda for women's concerns and anecdotally fuels a focus for open conversation.

“When we happen to hear divorce news about friends’ children, we get shocked. That becomes a main subject in our conversation. Recently, my friend’s daughter got divorced. While this daughter was studying in Paris she met a (Korean) man who was working as a tourist guide. Despite the parents’ opposition, she lived with that man and got pregnant! Reluctantly, my friend got her daughter married off. But now, they are divorced even though they have one child! Nowadays we are all concerned about the young people’s loose idea of marriage. We are still the old generation, we are not open to accept divorce”. (Bong-wha, 52)

“Nowadays we are all concerned about the young people’s loose idea of marriage”. Distinctively, the middle-class mothers tend to show a stance of elitist and nationalist paternalism; accordingly, the way they talk about television is grounded on the “cultural” or “national” terms. Their moralistic debates are carried out often adopting the notions of “Korean culture”, “traditional culture”, “virtuous Korean custom”. Their criticism of television focuses on cultural and national issues. This may be due to the cultural positioning of television that is likely to trigger a talk of moral condemnation. This may be, also, due to the cultural positioning of middle-class mothers in modern Korea. Middle-class mothers are nearly always regarded as an “embodiment of the essential virtues of social morality, a repository and teacher of the moral and cultural ideals upon which the entire society is structured” (Hoffman, 1995: 117). Since the cultural positioning of the mother is recognized as principally responsible for the education of children, becoming in this sense the guardian of the moral values deemed central to Korean society, she plays a major role in preserving and strengthening the society as a whole against the unwelcome incursion of the “low morality”, such as divorce/remarriage, characteristically associated with modernized Western societies. As evidenced in the following extracts, through TV talk these middle-class women construct a nationalistic consent on the Korean family morality that is essentially organized around principles of paternalism and persuasion.

“I am so worried that that kind of drama (*Can’t Help Loving You*) may damage our traditional culture, our virtuous Korean custom. Why is TV broadcasting such content in the evening time? It’s unsuitable for our Korean culture! You can marry anybody in the Western world, but not in Korea! We

talk about television drama with our friends. Our generation criticizes it. Is current drama wholesome? We don't think so. TV should foster Korean family values and educate the importance of the family to the young generation".

(Won-ja, 52)

"What if young people get badly influenced and think of marriage and divorce lightly? What if young people watch that drama and think, 'It's all right to marry any kind of woman regardless of my parents' opinions'. It may harm our Korean culture that most values family harmony". (Bong-wha, 52)

"I become concerned, what if that drama fans the flame of liberal thought in the young generation? Young generation nowadays is too self-centered and individualistic. Our traditional culture is breaking down". (Go-sun, 50)

These are commonly voiced fears toward television, social anxieties about the issues of "family" and "traditional culture". TV drama with a contesting modern theme is criticized as one of the cultural changes perceived as destroying Korean culture. These middle-class women worry about destructive effects of television on the younger generation, whose uncritical involvement is assumed to place national culture in danger. In encountering a new, modern and individualized mode of lifestyle on television, the moralist middle-class women construct a defensive nationalistic discourse: "You can marry anybody in the Western world, but not in Korea!" This is an expression of anti-Western modernity with the forceful emphasis on complying with the traditional culture of family. "Everyday life is constructed on many levels and on many fronts that mainly concern the formation of historically specific cultural identities" (Lull, 1995: 173); for these Korean middle-class women, the family is taken as the main source of the values essential to the cultural identity.

Overall, these middle-class women demonstrate a highly critical and reflexive approach towards television, delegating the activity of "investigatory looking" (Tulloch, 1990: 254) to the television media. They assess television as a moral force by emphasizing the notions of what television "should" or "should not" do. For example, "TV should foster Korean family values and educate the importance of the family to the young generation". They criticize and call for the reinforcement of

family values and ethics on television. The middle-class women's moral right to criticize television reflects the strength that comes from expressing not simply an individual opinion but a consensus of the women's friendship network, a consensus forged through ongoing debates about the possible effects of television on the young generation. It is worth noting that the commonly adopted code in the middle-class women's spoken text is "We" rather than "I", and their moral discourse of family and television is often collectively produced and intensified in the company of friends. Consensually, these women contend that television should be an upright moral force orienting the viewers towards the social goal of family harmony and stability. The role of television is emphasized as a moral guardian that can "teach" the viewers traditional family values and provide ethically sound models of family life.⁶

Insofar as I have attempted to convey a Korean example of television moral discourse, arguably Korean television morality is strongly associated with the cultural ideology of family. The embodiment of family is the core of Korean culture, tradition, and identity of women, and the middle-class women are exceptionally concerned about television morality regarding the family. This finding can serve as a barometer to gauge the dominant conservative middle-class morality of family intersected with modern television. Furthermore, it indicates a complex interplay and co-existence of tradition and modernity in Korea. Like the case of the working-class women in Chapter 4, middle-class women's forceful emphasis on the traditional idea of family reflects a unique feature of Korean culture of modernity. The current triumphalist rhetoric about modernity as progress seems tempered by the women's moralistic and nationalistic discourse about the family and the Korean-style of modernity. The middle-class women's contesting discussion here encapsulates a facet of the complexities and ambiguous locations of the current Korean culture "where traditions have not yet disappeared and modernity has not completely arrived" (Canclini, 1995: 1). It is evident in this Korean case that there are "continuities between the traditional and the modern, and neither is cut of a whole cloth" (Giddens, 1990: 4). What is subtly implicated in the women's television moral discourse is an invention of retraditionalization, wherein the traditional ideal of family is constantly invoked in the everyday practices to secure order and stability against the increasingly challenging global modernity. Tradition still thrives almost everywhere, "beside, behind, between, or beneath the practices and structures of modernity", functioning as "vessels carrying

a certain cargo of spiritual value or moral meaning” (Luke, 1996: 112-116). For the Korean middle-class women in their 50s, the traditional ideal of family acts as a lived metaphor for their moral, spiritual, and cultural prestige that creates a continuing sense of identity and legitimacy in the society of complex modernization.

Chapter 8 Korean Middle-Class Women in their 30s

Section (1) Unavailability of Husband, TV and Childcare

As already indicated several times, Korean men work the longest hours in the world – 55.1 hours per week – according to a recent world statistics (*The New York Times*, June 10, 2001). This means almost an eleven-hour working day and absolutely no chance to have dinner with the family at home, because of drinking socials after work, just a glimpse of the family already asleep. No wonder these middle-class women in my research complain most about their husbands' coming home late, after 10:00pm, even past midnight. For this reason, I want to start this chapter by accentuating Korean men's extremely long-hour work culture often followed by drinking and its overall implications on the women's domestic lives, with particular relevance to television and childcare/mothering.

“It's only one or two hours that I can see my husband's face at home, and actual conversation is just several minutes. My husband comes home late from work, then he is already tired”. (Sung-mi, 32)

“We don't have a chance to sit down comfortably and watch TV together. He works until late, and when he has meetings and drinking, he comes home near 12:00pm. At least, a half of the week is late like that. This house is a lodging house to my husband”. (Mi-ra, 32)

“We don't have time to watch TV together as my husband usually comes home late. Sometimes past midnight, even around 2:00 or 3:00 am. Because it is so common for Korean men to come home late, I cannot blame my husband alone. I really hate men's culture, any wife would hate it”. (Nae-yoon, 31)

“Why do Korean men have to work so much and come home so late? In the whole world, only Korean men might do so. We cannot spend time together”. (Se-jung, 32)

As manifest in the women's complaints, almost every day Korean middle-class husbands are not present enough in the domestic sphere. It is a rare luxury that husbands and wives together indulge in a leisurely time watching television in the evening because husbands normally return home late after long working hours and customary work-related drinking socials afterwards. There is simply not enough time to "use television as a means of facilitating positive marital interaction" (Gauntlett and Hill, 1999: 21) such as intimacy and caring. Korean middle-class husbands spend most of their time outside the home and cannot afford the time to sit in front of the television together with the family. In the absence of husbands in the domestic sphere, it is thus unlikely to experience tension or conflict surrounding the television remote control, or to complain about husbands' sole preoccupation with the television set. In these middle-class families, wives are likely to watch television alone in the evening after putting young children to sleep.

As a consequence of men's long working hours and drinking socials afterwards, Korean middle-class men and wives have a set of strictly separate work/leisure culture. At this point I may need to briefly explain one distinctive feature of Korean male/organizational/work culture, "drinking". Drinking is an indispensable element in the Korean male culture of the public sphere, just like television in the female culture of the private sphere. Drinking permeates all social relationships, in particular those between leaders and subordinates in the organization. In order to reduce conflict and enhance harmony and cooperation, not for hedonistic sensual pleasure, almost ritually drinking socials tend to be arranged and run by a paternalistic senior leader in a group, and members of the group are expected to conform to this arrangement. By and large, Korean work culture still follows a "group model" characteristic of a close-knit social organization, which is equally true for Japan (Moeran, 1989: 57-73), whereby members are supposed to act within the framework of a group and subordinate individual interests to group goals. Under this implicit rule, avoiding or saying "No" to drinking socials is regarded as individualistic and irrelevant in the group model. This type of organizational drinking is practiced until late night in a single sex sphere as female employees can normally be excused for childcare. In short, drinking has been an essential ethos of the Korean male culture, often as a means for male-bonding, in spite of whether an individual man enjoys drinking or hates it. Consequently, husbands' coming home late accompanied by

drinking becomes a conflictual element in the married life. It threatens to cause disputes between spouses, and registers as the main complaint of Korean housewives, yet this expression of complaints has an “interesting ambiguity”: “Although complaints about husbands are common and frequent – drinking too much, not being home enough, not helping enough around the home or with the children – complaining itself is something expected, an almost ritualized way of letting off steam that does not mean the wife does not love her husband, or that the marriage is weak” (Hoffman, 1995: 120).

As Korean middle-class husbands find their primary social place in the public sphere, they are largely absent in the domestic sphere and rarely involved with domestic affairs including childcare; whereas women’s primary social location is in the domestic sphere because of sole responsibilities for childcare. The normative structure of a middle-class nuclear family is an increasingly father-absent, mother-involved family. In the case of Korean middle-class families, it is the extremely rigid dichotomization of public and domestic life that provides the foundation upon which the extreme differentiation and segregation of gender roles are established. This gendered “habitus” produces a system of acquired dispositions, an organizing principle of action and a way of being that are pervasively naturalized in everyday life (Bourdieu, 1984). It produces men who put most of their energies into the non-familial world of work and public life, and women who turn their energies toward nurturing and caring for children (Chodorow, 1978: 209). Then, what happens to young mothers in this private, invisible, “natural” sphere when their busy husbands are absent from the family circle of evening time?

“When my husband comes home late, I wait for him sitting still like a plant in the living room. ‘Why did I get married?’ This thought comes across me in late night silence after the baby falls asleep. I cannot call friends late night. Then I just turn on the TV”. (Nae-yoon, 31)

“I want my husband to be home-oriented. ‘Am I having a happy life? What can I do?’ When there is nothing particularly to do at night, even nothing particularly to watch on TV, I can’t help thinking. I feel kind of depressed”. (Hae-ji, 30)

“I make a bomb-shell proclamation to my husband, “I want you to become either a big shot outside or a home-centered caring husband”. While waiting for him at night with two kids, I come to think, ‘Why am I living like this?’ Once I threatened him, ‘If you don’t come home right now, I will jump from the apartment terrace, or leave the kids home alone and get out of this house!’” (Se-jung, 32)

“Staying home alone with the child until late night is like living in a mental hospital. I sometimes feel like hitting my head against the wall. I can understand what an insane person is like. Even a normal person can go insane”. (Eun-sang, 32)

These are only a part of the women’s story. “The story of shattered life can be told only in bits and pieces” (Bauman, 1995: 1). Women wait with impatience for the moment when their husbands return from work. The domestic life of middle-class women is in line of expectation and waiting, whether for the phone to ring, for the baby to sleep, for the husband to come home shortly (Modleski, 1979: 88). Women have always been seen as waiting, “waiting is a female fate” (Rich, 1976: 39). Women deal with this waiting, this female fate, by denying every active, powerful aspect of themselves – for example, “I wait for him sitting still like a plant in the living room” – or by asking silent questions about themselves, ‘Am I having a happy life?’ ‘Why am I living like this?’ These young mothers live in the “suffering of ambivalence”: the murderous alternation between bitter resentment and raw-edged nerves, and blissful gratification and tenderness (Rich, 1976: 21). The experience of childcare is an interpenetration of pain and pleasure. Living day in and day out with young children at home, waiting for husbands to come home, women come to experience a chain of complicated feelings; sense of entrapment, emptiness, weariness, frustration, depression, incompleteness, resentment, bursts of sudden anger. These are private pains as a mother. The hard fact that women alone are responsible for the care and nurturance of children twenty-four hours, denies women’s desires, goals, interests and activities outside the home and the family. These educated modern mothers feel their own needs acutely and sometimes express them violently: “If you don’t come home right now, I will jump from the apartment terrace”. They

suffer a “lonely terror” (Friedan, 1963: 68). While waiting for husbands late at night and individually suffering the lonely terror, women turn to television to ease their extreme loneliness. Television, as the only company late at night, becomes constitutive of the mundane night life. Mediated through television it becomes pleasantly surprising for women to realize that they all share the same problem. It is a sheer relief to know that they are not alone in this lonely terror.

“I once watched *Beautiful Sex* (night talk show). The theme of that night was about married couples in their 30s. Wives of my age talked openly about their feelings of loneliness, emptiness in the married life. I was so surprised! Because they were talking exactly about what *I* am feeling! Many other women are also living just like me! I realized, this is a common problem amongst married couples of my age”. (Sung-mi, 32)

This younger generation of middle-class housewives is not suffering “the problem that has no name” (Friedan, 1963); in a different angle, I would rather argue that these educated modern housewives precisely know what the problem is, yet find no way out in the rigid social structure that deters the possibility of substantial change. The problem has been constantly identified and articulated, yet with no practical solutions, no realistic alternatives to their role of childcare. Korean women are embedded in such a rigid social structure that does not permit flexibility of gender role. Surely, these young housewives want something more than their husband and children and their home, but Korean culture in this rigid structure does not permit women to gratify their basic needs and to grow and fulfil their potentialities as human beings. Embedded in the same structure, Korean men also have no choice in life but to work long hours every day. Thus, both women and men live by the rigid structure in discontent. From the women’s discontent and suffering of lonely terror, this same question repeatedly springs, “Then, who will look after the children?” The Korean women’s recognition of discontent with “the problem that has a name” is frustratingly tautological in this sense. These educated middle-class women here demonstrate a high degree of self-reflexivity and criticism, yet this does not necessarily mean a formula for social change, nor is it taken further outside the private sphere. These savvy, at times scheming and manipulative, middle-class housewives precisely understand the rigid socio-economic structure and their position and the dynamics of

male-female power relations within it. This is indicated in their perception of the mothering role, and the territorial place of home and television. Listen to the following claims.

“We young couples are in an equal relationship. Nowadays no husband would raise a voice to wives because they earn money outside. We women also received the same university education, are able to work and earn money. But we have chosen to stay home for childcare. Earning money outside doesn’t give husbands any privilege”. (Eun-young, 32)

“If husbands sniff at women’s childcare work, wives would defy, “If raising children looks that easy for you, then you stay home and raise children, and I will go out and earn the money!” I gave up my work to look after the children, so my husband cannot look down on me”. (Se-jung, 32)

“Home is a woman’s territory. We stay home all day long, then inside the home, we should do everything in our way. In the home I am the king”.
(Mi-ra, 32)

“Even though my husband is sitting in front of the TV, I always watch my favorite TV program. I say, “Give me the remote control, I have to watch drama”. Watching drama is women’s privilege”. (Nae-yoon, 31)

In effect, Korean middle-class women are enjoying a considerable degree of power and freedom in the domestic sphere, and their discontent, anger and antagonism can lead to a more determined formula for control over the home and family.¹ As a consequence of the husbands’ unavailability in the home, the domestic realm belongs to the possession of women – “Home is a woman’s territory” – so does all the domestic affairs including television viewing – “I always watch my favorite TV program”.² Home is a gendered construct which gains its power, which makes its claims through an intense emotional attachment (Silverstone, 1994: 25-26). In the Korean middle-class homes, it is normally wives that set the rules, make claims and gain power. All the minutiae of everyday life are structured and managed by wives, for whom “home is a base, a mental point of reference, a position from which

everything else is measured” (Larsen, 1999: 110). Overall, the lived experience of Korean middle-class families is far from the dominant feminist critique that views family as a primary arena where men exercise their patriarchal power over women’s labor. It is far from the universal understanding of the private sphere as the site of women’s oppression. Insofar as the growing body of evidence in my research has indicated, the private spheres of Korean middle-class families are constantly shifting, redefining, being negotiated by the women on the terms of personal gratification for the self-sacrificing role of childcare.

The middle-class women here do not intend to remain as passive victims of the marriage, on the contrary, they act as a negotiator and strategist to improve their lot within the marriage. They seek to gain power and control, and maximize personal gratification within the home territory by embracing all the territorial resources. Within the rigid social structure, they nevertheless attempt to create a fissure for their discontent to vent, finding a niche for themselves to advance their own interests. This fact links to my final point about the other side of women’s mothering. I can argue in this particular Korean case that women create subtle power through child rearing activities, as the practices of mothering are always invested with mothers’ conflictual, ambivalent, yet powerful and intentional needs. “Powerless women have always used mothering as a channel – narrow but deep – for their own human will to power” (Rich, 1976: 38). The following extracts show such implications of mothering on the women’s sense of power and identity.

“In the earlier years of marriage, my husband used to occupy the remote control. But things have changed since we had the child. With the child, my voice has pitched higher, “Turn it off. Give me the remote control. *I will choose. I will watch this. I will watch that*””. (*Italics*, her emphasis)
(Nae-yoon, 31)

“Whenever my husband came home late, it was a war. For the first several years of marriage I constantly complained, “What am I? Am I a housemaid in this home?” But I now realize, it’s better to give up expecting my husband to be more caring, more attentive to the wife’s needs before consuming all my

energy and getting more frustrated. Instead I try to focus more on my child. My child occupies the center of my life". (Eun-sang, 32)

Entering a certain stage of married life, these women start to realize the pointlessness of anger and discontent towards their husbands, then, try to divert their energy to something else. "You can't go back – you have to go on. There must be some real way I can go on myself" (Friedan, 1963: 295). To go on themselves in some real way, Korean women start to focus on their children in an intensely emotional way. As husbands are not sufficiently present in the domestic life, women are likely to turn their affection to their children to fulfill emotional desires unmet by their husbands. Women come to want and need primary relationships with children, and these wants and needs result from wanting intense primary relationships, which men tend not to provide both because of their place in the non-familial world of work and because of their difficulties with intimacy (Chodorow, 1978: 203). Therefore, these Korean women commit themselves to their children, although this may be simply a mask for the bewildering and exhausting life, for the feeling of helplessness to find a life of their own: "Who am I?" "What am I?" "What do I want?" Identification is fought at every level, through the most mundane everyday practices of childcare. Mothering is a central element in the construction of women's identity, and it is only mothering that can give women a self. Being "just a housewife" – "the contemporary nonperson" (Hewlett, 1986: 253) – is never enough for these educated middle-class women. But being a mother is different. "If you are a mother, you're given a valid occupation. Motherhood is a socially and culturally acceptable role, and gives you an identity. You have an identity in your eyes and in your partner's eyes, and his/her family, and the community" (Weeks, 2000: 96).

Section (2) Child Education and Professionalization of Motherhood

In the previous section I have emphasized Korean men's extremely long-hour work culture in the public sphere as a distinctive feature of modern Korea. In the private sphere, on the other hand, women's extreme zeal for child education is a parallel distinction that deserves academic attention. Any research into everyday life of Korean middle-class housewives makes it imperative to discuss this fervent educational phenomenon and to redefine the notion of mothering in a contemporary

context. In this section I specifically focus on the middle-class women's pivotal concern with child education as the main practices that structure their everyday life. The aim of this section is to document and analyze in detail the Korean middle-class women's everyday experiences of motherhood, which I define as a "professionalization of motherhood", in particular relation to child education and daytime television. Overall it explores the differing cultural contexts and material conditions under which mothering is carried out. Motherhood is a culturally formed structure whose meanings can vary and are subject to change (Segura, 1994: 211). Yet the existing scholarship on motherhood has been primarily from a Eurocentric perspective, as a result, most feminist critiques have not taken into account distinctions in the practices and meanings of motherhood for different women in different contexts but tended to present a monolithic view of mothering (Christian, 1994: 96).³ This particular Korean case can hopefully cast a different light on mothering, posing a challenge to the universal theory.

"Without my child (age 7) I would have nothing to do in my life. My everyday life is centered on child education... I don't watch TV during the day. I am too busy to sit and watch TV. After sending off my husband and child in the morning, I finish the housework, then go swimming. After swimming, my whole daytime is tuned into my child's schedule. I pick him up after school, then drive him to extra-curricula lessons – computer, English, music, swimming. Then it becomes almost time for making dinner. After dinner I help him with homework. So busy everyday, I get ill sometimes. I wish I could rest for a single day only for myself!" (Eun-sang, 32)

"With two children, there is no time to sit down and watch TV during the day... My child (age 5) takes up 3 lessons a day, total 6 different lessons a week. Kindergarten from 10:00am until 2:00pm, and then ballet, piano, Korean language/English language/Math private lesson. I am so busy sending her to the lessons, feeding in the meantime". (Mi-ra, 32)

"Moms should be sensible in raising children, so restrain from watching TV for children's emotional cultivation. Consciously I try not to watch TV during the day when my baby (age 1) is awake... Of course, moms' everyday life is

child-centered. We moms are most interested in knowing how to raise children well, how to make children brainy". (Hae-ji, 30)

These descriptions are the typical everyday life of the Korean middle-class mothers in their 30s. Child education is clearly the pivot of everyday life. These middle-class women play an incredibly busy role as a systematically personalized, educational coordinator, managing children's schedules, chauffeuring, feeding, as well as taking care of the usual housework. They are investing an extraordinary amount of time and energy into the emotional and cognitive development for children, efforts which go well beyond the physical care of the home and family. This suggests that for these middle-class mothers, motherhood is not just a physical or emotional relationship with their children, but it is also an "intellectual activity, intellectual project": Maternal thinking is a unity of reflection, judgement and emotion (Rothman, 1994: 155). As engaged with the maternal intellectual project of child education, evidently in this context, daytime television viewing has no place in the middle-class women's everyday life. Daytime television is not part of their domestic routines, nor does it provide an external structure to daily life. This is in contrast to general Western views that the textual rhythms and structures of daytime television, soap opera in particular, neatly accord with the rhythms of women's daily domestic work (Modleski, 1979), and that women audiences incorporate enjoyment of daytime programs into their hectic household activities by creating a space to follow the stories (Hobson, 1982). Television means very little during the daytime to Korean middle-class women. Here, it seems necessary to clarify that although television has a significant role to play in easing the women's loneliness during the evening when their husbands are not yet home and their children are asleep, television is not a determining factor in the planning of activities during the daytime. What constitutes routines for these Korean mothers is child education, consequently, mothers' daytime life is structured by, and strongly constrained by, the time schedule for their children's education. In other words, mothers are "living in the rhythms of other lives" (Rich, 1976: 33).

This cult of motherhood centering on child education is becoming the standard against which women assess all child-rearing practices. In fact, Korean mothers, whether poor or rich, have high educational goals for their children. One difference between the social strata is that middle-class families are more privileged than

working-class families with regard to the quantity and quality of resources which can be invested in their children's education. This difference is clearly reflected in the extent of and kinds of private tutoring that middle-class families can provide for their children: "3-4 lessons are basic for kids". Another difference is that based on financial resources, middle-class mothers tend to start education for their children at an early age, normally at the age of one or two, for the learning of Korean alphabet, English, math, music, etc. Here is an example of teaching the baby at one.

"My baby (age 1) is now learning Korean alphabet. I purchased a set of picture books, and a tutor visits us once a week to give the baby a private lesson. I find my baby concentrates better, even for 20 minutes, with the expert tutor than with me. This education is necessary for the earlier development of the baby's brain". (Nae-yoon, 31)

The present form of mothering with its emphasis on child education is not a new phenomenon, but it has been more intensified and competitive in modern Korea. This is hardly a surprising phenomenon in a society that has long been overly preoccupied with children's education. Education, as an ethos of Korean culture, has been viewed as an important channel for achievement and social mobility in the Korean society for several centuries under the influence of Confucianism. Since the end of the nineteenth century when modern education was made available to the masses, education has been a central constituent in the building processes of the nation and economy in Korea (Kim, 1995). In 1961 when the Korean government launched The First Five-year Plan for Economic Development as the beginning of the full-scale modernization project, the list of top priorities included education for the next generation. Right from the sixties, the significance of early childhood development and education came to be increasingly recognized, with a greater emphasis placed on the "mother's role as the planner and manager of her children's education" (Lee, 1999). In short, the present form of mothering, centered around child education, originated in Korean industrialization and modernization over the last four decades.⁴ Since then child education has been greatly emphasized, resulting in today's gigantic commercial industry of private education. This has further prompted a professionalization of motherhood. Middle-class mothers pro-actively seek and consume a plethora of information, expert advice and commercialized knowledge on

child education to keep up with modern demands. Searching for information regarding child education has no bounds, in this sense, these educated middle-class mothers are active “hunters and gathers in an information age” (Meyrowitz, 1999: 106). Then, what are their major sources of professional knowledge?

“We moms are interested in childcare-related programs, but there is not useful information on TV. Through TV commercials, I just get to know about newly introduced products – children’s English study, computer, drawing, cerebral development material. In the newspaper I find suitable information for my child. I read several magazines, ask around friends what are being used for their children”. (Eun-sang, 32)

“I buy 3-4 baby magazines and examine articles and products to see what would be best for my baby. I closely read every kind of child-related information, even the advertisement fliers slipped through the apartment door from the nearby department store”. (Hae-ji, 30)

“Of course, our everyday conversation is about child rearing and education. In the children’s kindergarten, in the apartment complex, or with friends, moms form a network and exchange information”. (Se-jung, 32)

These educated young middle-class mothers, referred to as a “professional mother”, not only spend a great deal of time seeking expert advice and educating themselves on the latest available knowledge on child development, but also spend large amounts of time and money on a daily basis in attempting to apply such knowledge to their children. These professional mothers are “not just passive consumers, but proactive job performers” (Lee, 1999: 23) carrying out mothering based on their intellectual judgement. Information concerning childhood education is regularly sought through magazines, newspapers, even advertisement fliers, television as the least useful medium, which are all part and parcel of the ever-increasing professionalization of child education. Consumption of professional mothering knowledge is further exchanged via networks of friends and education-gearred middle-class neighbors. Apparently, to keep up with modern demands these middle-class mothers feel a need for information. This need, however, is not just for information, but it could be a

“need for personal security, something that information may be perceived to provide” (Lull, 1995: 100). On the psychological front, these mothers are burdened with the fearful knowledge that their children may grow falling behind the modern competition, if not properly provided with the up to date education by mothers; and that if children fail to live up to the modern society, it is very definitely the mothers’ fault. This “fear of failing” places on mothers the burdens of a greater devotion to child education. Korean mothers begin to articulate their ambivalent, new discontents about private education for children in modernist terms. “Ambivalent” because they are certainly discontented, yet simultaneously creating and living by middle-class cultural mandates.

“While talking with other moms in this apartment complex, I got to notice that other kids are already taking several lessons. Only my child (age 4) is not taking any lessons. As a mom, I can’t help feeling insecure, what if my child falls behind later?” (Sung-mi, 32)

“The Korean reality is that education for children starts from the age of one. That’s the reality, whether we like it or not. That’s why we moms are busy everyday, anxious about child education”. (Eun-young, 32)

Loaded with the fear of falling in the competitive modern society, middle-class mothers tend to approach the ubiquity of television in the domestic realm from an educational point of view, and criticize television for offering a low degree of information with few details. Television is taken as the least valuable medium in carrying out their modernist mission of mothering. In fact, television during the daytime is taken to be incompatible with these women’s new modern definition of motherhood.

“Idly watching TV at home is the story of our mothers’ generation. My mom wonders, “Why are young moms so fussy about child education? I was not fussy like you, yet all of you went to good universities”. Then I laugh, “Mom, that is the story of good old days, now we live in a different generation”. Nowadays mom has to keep fast pace with information, otherwise children would fall behind in this fiercely competitive society”. (Eun-young, 32)

“Watching TV all day long and doing housework would be such a comfortable life for women. Nowadays moms’ role is not just meal-making and house-cleaning, but child education. Child education is moms’ main role and moms’ main burden”. (Eun-sang, 32)

“If mom is lazy, sits down in front of TV all day long, then children will fall behind. The modern mom has to be diligent, actively looking for information, offering children education as much as is affordable”. (Mi-ra, 32)

Here, the middle-class women talk self-reflexively about how they deal with social change in the modern globalizing society of Korea.⁵ In the fast-moving competitive society, idly watching television during the day is felt inappropriate when there is so much else of immediacy and importance to attend to, most of all, child education. According to the women’s new and enlarging role of mothering, a modern mother comes closer to a competent professional manager of child education. The actual portrayal of Korean mother is “not an example of that much-maligned cultural stereotype, the simpleminded housewife who can manage little more than to feed her children, iron a few shirts, and watch the afternoon soap operas” (Radway, 1984: 114). On the contrary, television during the daytime has no place in the women’s modern definition of motherhood. To simple-minded outsiders, mothers at home with children may not be believed to be doing “serious work” but idly watching television all day long. But the actual fact is that mothers are doing serious work. For these Korean middle-class mothers, that serious work is child education.

The more serious child education becomes, the more are middle-class mothers able to claim that they have highly skilled occupations at a professional level that equally require the analytical, interpretive, intellectual capacities of a professional. Precisely, my underlying arguments here are two-fold. First, through the professionalization of motherhood, Korean middle-class women are attempting to transform their identity of “just a housewife” to a “professional mother” that has a socially and culturally valued identity. Being a professional mother with skills, expertise and education is a legitimate occupation. They thus take child education as their most meaningful, unavoidable intellectual project, although this

time/labor/finance-intensive task drives their everyday life making it discontented and burdensome. Focusing intensively on child education is the women's own policing of the ongoing construction of a middle-class way of life, in this sense, the women's domesticity becomes a crucial site for reproducing middle-classness. They collude to the political structure of the gendered role settlement, while finding their social status through the professional management of the family, through the legitimate occupation as a professional mother. My second argument is more implicit. The women's devotion to child education further suggests that the Korean path to modernity is being made within the Korean family and is primarily women's work. Although Korean middle-class women are largely inactive in social and economic activities, largely limited to the domestic sphere, this does not necessarily mean that they are unconnected with the Korean modernization process. As their full-time devotion to child education indicates, women are the hidden contribution to Korean modernity.

Section (3) Escape into Romance: Emotional Fantasy and "Good Feelings"

In the previous sections I have discussed the unavailability of husbands in domestic life and the women's sole responsibility for child care/education with the fear of falling in the modern society. These are closely connected to the way in which the structure of women's everyday life excludes possibilities of leisure freedom and caring for women themselves. All of these young mothers express a common wish: "I wish I could rest for a single day only for myself!" "I wish I could be absolutely free even for one day!" This shows interesting consequences on their particular preference for the late night television program – romance drama. Contrary to the working-class women's A-ha! emotion, a great deal of emotional investment in the realistic text of ordinary home drama as shown in Chapter 5, these middle-class women find unrealistic romance drama more pleasurable and meaningful to their ordinary existence. Why? In this final section, I explore the significant ways in which television romance drama intersects with everyday needs and desires of the Korean middle-class housewives in their 30s. I intend to show a close interrelationship between the women's everyday lived experience and the fantasy of romance discourse, and particularly argue for the role of emotional fantasy, not sexual fantasy, which has a potential to serve as immensely powerful sources of pleasure and is felt more meaningful in the Korean women's structure of feeling. My discussions on the

women's real-life relationships with their husbands and children in the previous sections will then serve as a backdrop for understanding their escape into romance drama.

"I like to watch something totally different from my ordinary routine life. Something stimulating, provocative, extraordinary!" (Eun-sang, 32)

"I like romance drama. I know such drama is silly, unrealistic. Despite that, I enjoy watching because it is different from my life". (Hae-ji, 30)

"Housewives inside the house long for an oasis, something different from this ordinary life. I like to watch something simplistic yet refreshingly shocking!" (Nae-yoon, 31)

The emphatic comments above demonstrate middle-class women's intense pleasure in watching romance drama, so-called a mini-series drama broadcasting at 10:00 in the evening. These middle-class housewives are not particularly interested in ordinary home drama, a realist genre with a theme closer to their life situation. They rather delight in watching "extraordinary", "unrealistic" romance drama that is far different from their ordinary existence as housewife. This is a class-specific contrast to my previous case of the working-class counterparts, who invest a great deal of emotional energy in ordinary home drama as such text helps them to understand what is happening in their own life. However, these educated middle-class women do not show a high degree of pleasure in the exploration of problems in real life, mediated through the realistic text of drama. They rather show a cynical stance: "Daily home dramas are so boring, the same story all the time, the same problems". "We all know about that. So what?" Consensually, these middle-class women assert that it is unrealistic romance drama that is pleasurable and meaningful to their real lives, while emphasizing that there is nothing wrong with fantasy in their romance viewing.

"Sometimes I want to escape into a different world inside TV, somewhere completely different from my routine life. All people live a double life - a real life and a fantasy life - don't we?" (Mi-ra, 32)

“I know it’s just a silly, absurd fantasy. Nobody’s perfectly satisfied with their own life. There must be something wanting in real life. Everybody has a fantasy and lives in a fantasy sometimes”. (Eun-young, 32)

The middle-class women here recognize romance drama as a low-brow culture, so they feel obliged to defend and justify their pleasure against the stigmatizing moralism which generally views romantic fantasy as “something inadmissible and darkly shameful” (Jackson, 1981: 171), or as a “social disease affecting the weaker constitution of the female psyche” (Kaplan, 1986: 148). These middle-class women know perfectly well that romance drama is a temporary escape, a mere fantasy. Equally, they know perfectly well that they nevertheless enjoy it and are willing to seek their own pleasure from it. As will be clear throughout this section, these women explain pleasure of their fantasies in a remarkably articulate mode with concrete examples and episodes. These Korean middle-class women are so intelligent and reflexive that they have a full awareness of the meaning and role of fantasy in their life. They see nothing wrong in their escape into romantic fantasy, as it is worthwhile and meaningful to their real life. “One can escape into a world of imagination and come back from it refreshed” (Donald, 1989: 3). They are fully conscious that they will return to their real life situations “refreshed”, after all. Fantasy is taken as a way of dealing with real life situations. These young mothers express needs and desires that are deeply felt in everyday life, by giving vivid accounts on why they delight in romantic fantasy. Precisely, “the need for fantasy is based on the unfulfilled desires set up in the construction of women’s lives” (Geraghty, 1991: 109). The following comments indicate a correlation between the young mothers’ unfulfilled desire for the freedom of out-of-home leisure and the vicarious effects of romance watching.

“While watching the drama, I imagine a different life. Mental freedom and physical freedom from this routine life. Now I can’t go out anywhere because of the baby. Sometimes I want to meet university classmates, drink a beer, chat for long. When I first got pregnant, I was so excited and called a friend, “Let’s go out and drink to celebrate!” That friend sighed, “Go out with two kids? With nappies and milk bottles?” Over the phone we reminisced, “Weren’t those university days so nice? We could play all night long, didn’t we?”” (Nae-yoon, 31)

“Watching young people’s free life on drama triggers memories of my university days. Young university students freely walk down the campus, make fun and laugh. I envy them. It stirs my feeling. When my feeling arises so intensely, it’s painful to watch. My mind is still young like a teenager, but my body is heavy as a rock as run down from everyday routine life”.

(Sung-mi, 32)

“At least through the romance drama, we can be temporarily liberated from all obligations. *It mentally liberates us!* We can be totally free from the responsibility of childcare”. (*Italics, her emphasis*) (Eun-sang, 32)

Explicitly, these middle-class women with young children express their intense yearning for freedom, guiltless and self-indulgent time and space within which they can be entirely on their own, pursuing their individual pleasure in leisure. Even for one day, these mothers wish to escape from the sole responsibility for childcare, from the “psychologically demanding and emotionally draining task of attending to the physical and affective needs of their families” (Radway, 1984: 92). In the regular absence of husbands in their domestic life, Korean wives are often drained by domestic caring duties with a particular emphasis on child care/education: “My mind is still young like a teenager, but my body is heavy as a rock as run down from everyday routine life”. In the everyday hectic routines with young children, watching romance drama in late night solitude becomes a rare splendid time and space for self-indulgence. Romance fantasy is a “self-indulgent desire to move away from reality and to retreat into another world created by the fiction” (Geraghty, 1991: 107). It is an imaginary escape from the confining habitual existence into a different free world with a desire to lose the self within it. Temporarily in the viewing moment, they feel lifted out of the strained domestic obligations: “It mentally liberates us!” Precisely, romance viewing creates feelings of freedom and liberation from the seemingly endless role as a care-giver. It functions as a form of “psychic power” (Kaplan, 1986: 164) producing emotional sustenance that enables the women to better cope with their routine life. In this sense women’s experience of romance drama is “compensatory” (Radway, 1984: 211) as it permits them to carve out a solitary time and space wherein their self-interest can be pursued and met, albeit temporarily.

For these educated middle-class women, the fantasy of romance drama often evokes the memory and nostalgia of the university period during which everyday life was totally free only for themselves without the burden of caring roles or any obligation. Romance watching is then a figurative journey to a utopian state of complete freedom. Freedom was something they normally took for granted as a quality which was “always there”, but now stuck at home with young children these women seek for freedom in the state of desperate desire, most intensely and painfully felt at the moment. Their desperate desire for freedom comes from the experience of constraint in motherhood, from the intense feeling that they cannot do what they would wish to do. Without practical solutions or realistic alternatives to their role of childcare, complete freedom can only be imagined, though not practiced, by their full solitude in romance watching in the privacy of their homes. “Complete freedom is a mental experiment rather than a practical experience - intermittent, confined to special places” (Bauman, 1988: 51).

Overall, the women’s escape into the romance watching indicates a corollary consequence of their mothering situations – the absence of leisure freedom and caring for themselves. It is the corollary consequence of the social reality that “no one within the patriarchal family is charged with *their* care” (Radway, 1984: 12). Then, how about their most intimate other, their husband? Interestingly, these middle-class women’s exuberant talk about the pleasures of watching romance drama intersects closely with complaints about their husbands, with observations about other husbands in real life. Women’s romantic TV talk reflexively slips in and out of their private relationships with husbands. Listen to their intimate stories here.

“Of course, I am not satisfied with my husband. He comes home late, doesn’t help with anything in the house. He’s too tired from work outside to pay attention to me. I cannot follow him around the house, like a little puppy, appealing, “Please pay attention to me!”... While watching romance drama, I search for an ideal man, like the hero in *All About Eve*. He’s so caring, and always considers the woman he loves. Besides, he’s smashing handsome! There would be nothing else I would wish for in life, if living with such a

handsome, unselfish, caring man. Every night after watching the drama, I dream of him in sleep". (Sung-mi, 32)

"My friend's husband is short and not good-looking, frankly. When my friend met this man on a blind date in the university days, she didn't like him at all. My friend told me seriously, "He is a really nice guy, worships me like a queen. But he is too short and not good-looking at all!" (Laugh) My friend confessed to me at that time, while dating him at night, she just wanted him to drive a car and talk to her in the dark, so she wouldn't have to look at his face! She didn't want to sit down with him right across the table in a restaurant or a café... Yes, they are married now. He is very home-oriented, comes home early and spends most of time with the family. He even changes the baby's nappy and cleans the house. (Laugh) Now my friend says, her husband is very good-looking. Sitting across the kitchen table, she finds her husband very good-looking! I can understand why she finds her husband more attractive now. Married women of our age don't care about men's appearance. In university days, we fell for men who were smashingly good-looking, well-dressed, splendid money-spenders. But married life is a reality. All married women would like most is a caring, home-oriented husband". (Mi-ra, 32)

Evidently, the theme of "caring" is essential in the (married) women's fantasy. These middle-class women repeatedly stress that the best attraction of their favorite romance heroes is the quality of caring. Simultaneously, it all points to the centrality of the fact that these Korean women are not content with their husbands, all of whom typically come home late and rarely help with the housework or childcare. The women's comments above demonstrate their intense need to be focused and cared for, yet their need is not being met adequately by their husbands in day-to-day living. Immersing themselves in romantic fantasies is fundamentally grounded in the women's dissatisfaction with their husbands in real life, and the women's imaginary search for an ideal man is an attempt to fulfill, vicariously, their longing for being cared for. They engage in a fantasy world of romance drama that bears little resemblance to the one they actually inhabit. Romance drama makes women engage in an "interplay between experience and wish" (Maltby and Craven, 1995: 22). It consists of an "amalgam of fantasy and reality" (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998: 102). I want to

argue that the Korean women's escape into the fantasy of romance drama is intimately linked to the real-life experience which they find so frustrating sometimes. The women's fantasy of being cared for is preconditioned on a "disparity between socially constructed experienced need and socially prescribed and actually available means of satisfaction" (Levitas, 1984: 26). The Korean women's needs remain largely unmet in day-to-day existence as the result of the regular absence of husbands in the domestic life and the women's sole duty for child care/education. Therefore, the way they select, interpret and use romance drama is profoundly influenced by their needs and desires in everyday conditions, domestic relationships in particular. Their romantic fantasy does not exist independently of the real, it does not escape the real. Fantasy exists in a "parasitical or symbiotic relation to the real", hence, fantasy can be understood by "relationality", by its positioning in relation to the real (Jackson, 1981: 20). Here is another example to suggest that the pleasure of romance watching is emotionally linked with the real life of a muted presence.

"In the young people's romance drama, I see exactly what I went through in the university days. Emotionally, I can identify with their repertoire of play, childish love games - going to a dance club with women friends, acting haughty to approaching men, making male students pay through the nose. We went out on many blind dates and were treated like queens by male students. We made a naïve male student wait holding a big bouquet of roses in front of a women's university, then stood him up... I don't get that special treat from my husband any more. My position has been demoted from a queen to a servant. Of course, before marriage, my husband often brought flowers with nice gifts, took me to nice places to impress, persistently waited in front of my house. Now, it would be fortunate if he could remember to bring a gift on my birthday or wedding anniversary. I wouldn't complain if he tried even 1/100 (1%) of what he had tried before. Now, rather my husband wants to receive special care from me". (Nae-yoon, 31)

Underlying this statement is the implicit assertion that the woman has lost faith in her husband. Overall, the Korean women's expressions of discontent, frustration and desire are all, at a deeper level, based on the broken faith in their husbands: "Now, it would be fortunate if he could remember to bring a gift on my birthday or wedding

anniversary". "My position has been demoted from a queen to a servant". More significantly, not receiving husbands' care and attention consistently anymore as they did before marriage, the women have also lost faith in their sense of self – metaphorically, from the sense of an always-demanding queen to a care-giving servant. The fantasy of romance watching in this context is, then, an emotional compensation that the women provide for themselves at the level of imagination, "for what they have lost at the level of faith" (Jackson, 1981: 20). As will be evident in the following comments, through identifying with a beloved heroine, these women get vicarious pleasure by ensuring their lost sense of self as being truly worthy of care and attention. The lost faith in their husbands has an interesting connection with the characteristic quality of a caring hero that these women find most impressive. For a specific discussion I will quote two comments from the women's intimate experience of the romance drama *All About Eve*, which ranked the highest rating during the summer of 2000 in Korea.

"He's so perfect! He is this kind of man – *"I will be always there for you"*. That kind of man, although it's just a drama, would be all women's ideal man. I reach orgasm fantasizing about him. He's young, good-looking, competent, most of all, a caring guard. Women want to be loved and cared. Although he never says cheaply, "I love you", his deep eyes show that he truly cares. He always watches over the woman he loves, and helps when she's in trouble... When she fainted at work, he immediately turned the car and ran down to a hospital holding her in his arm. He's always there for her. It would feel so nice if someone always cares about you, particularly when you are ill".

(*Italics*, her emphasis) (Eun-sang, 32)

"He once bought an anklet for her birthday gift. It was so romantic when he knelt down and put the gift on her ankle, saying the meaning of the gift, "Love lasting for 1,000 years, destiny to meet again in the next world". *Kneeling down* and putting the meaningful gift *on the ankle!* That's unselfish, ready-to-give, true love. The woman who lives with such a caring and romantic man, if such a man exists, would be so happy. Such a man might also change once married, but I don't think this man in the drama would change. It feels good to see such true love". (*Italics*, her emphasis) (Nae-yoon, 31)

"I will be always there for you". The ideal hero for these Korean women viewers is, of course, handsome, masculine and capable, but most of all, a man with the quality of attentive concern and caring, who is "always there for you", who makes you feel like the center of total attention. Male caring and attention is an important element in the women's fantasy. The woman quoted above is most impressed at the moment when the hero, just like a faithful bodyguard, enfolds his beloved in his protective arms and runs down to the hospital. The woman desires to be the object of his concern, the recipient of his care, and woman's fantasy is to "lose control with someone who really cares for her" (Radway, 1984: 75). Escaping into the romantic fantasy is therefore a ritual wish to be loved and cared for: "I wish I had a caring husband just like him". Women, in particular mothers sacrificing their own interests for the family, have an intense need to be cared for. "Mothers also need men who can mother because we *ourselves* need that mothering – women are tired of mothering the whole world" (Rothman, 1994: 155). Women are tired of being the peace-makers and soothers at home, dispensing comfortable feelings, affection and warmth, and nowadays women increasingly want to be the "recipients of such feelings" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 88). Through the vicarious experience in romance watching, these Korean women become the recipients of attentive caring, temporarily reviving their deeply felt need.

"Kneeling down and putting the meaningful gift on the ankle!" What significance does this image of the romance make in the woman's experience of pleasure? The romance exactly visualizes women's dissatisfactions with the asymmetric rules in male-female relationships, and the pleasure is created in the fantasy world that "departs from the rules of everyday reality" (Donald, 1989: 10). The romance gives pleasure, precisely because the satisfactions which it offers "contrast so dramatically" with the lack of fulfillment in the women's emotional lives (Geraghty, 1991: 111). Women derive pleasure by fantasizing about a utopian world with a new kind of male-female relationship, whereby a man equally cares for a woman as she cares for him. The women's fantasy here has to do with violating dominant assumptions and overturning rules and conventions taken to be normative in patriarchal gender relations. It inverts elements of this world, re-combining its constitutive features in new male-female relations to produce something new and

different (Jackson, 1981: 8). In this utopian realm of romance, these Korean middle-class women get pleasure by witnessing the imaginative transformation of female position – metaphorically, from a servant to a queen – and by finding that their lost faith in their sense of self is being vicariously redressed as the object truly worthy of care and respect by an unselfish, ready-to-give, true lover. In this romantic fantasy these women feel the deepening of “true love” which they find is a rare quality in real-life gender relations. Here is another example of true love embodied in a caring hero.

“I wonder if such true love (in romance drama *Legend of Love*) still exists these days in this selfish world. His unchanging, sublime love towards only one woman is touching. This tall, handsome, successful lawyer could have pursued another woman. Yet for long years his heart has been only towards this first lover he met in university days. Although she is now married to another man, his love doesn’t change. He has moved near her house hoping to catch sight of her, but never intends to disturb her married life. Because he cares about her so much and what he wishes for is *her happiness*. Although it’s just a drama, such unchanging love feels more precious to me in this world where everything changes so easily”. (*Italics, her emphasis*) (Se-jung, 32)

The perfect romantic fantasy that these Korean women are searching for in their escape into romance watching is what they frequently call “true love” – true love by an unselfish man who cares about “*her happiness*”. Ultimately, what these women find pleasurable about the experience of romance drama is the “good feelings” they get by rediscovering their cherished meaning of true love in this heartless unreliable world of asymmetric gender relations. For example, “It would feel so nice if someone always cares about you”. “It feels good to see such true love”. “Although it’s just a drama, such unchanging love feels more precious to me in this world where everything changes so easily”. All the women in my research willingly acknowledge that romance drama is absurd and unreal, hence dismiss it by often saying, “It’s just a drama”. Yet significantly, they nevertheless do not want to dismiss the “good feelings” they personally construct from such absurd and unreal fantasy. Precisely, “while the fantasy is *unreal*, the good feelings it gives us about ourselves and our future are *real*, and these good feelings are what we need to sustain us” (Radway,

1984: 100). The fantasy world of romance drama creates an illusion which is “known to be false but felt to be true” (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998: 103). Despite the romance’s lack of resemblance to their real world, the women’s ritualistic, imaginary journey into romantic fantasy creates and maintains “good feelings” that are rarely experienced in the course of their demanding social condition of mothering and habitual existence in relation to their unavailable husbands. Although women’s fantasy has a “short-lived compensatory therapeutic value” (Radway, 1984: 85) at the moment of romance viewing, “good feelings” it evokes deep inside their emotions may last longer sustaining the true pleasure of the experience of romance drama. At large, it seems that television (romance drama) works through “feelings”, “sentiments” rather than through thoughts, reasons (Noble, 1983: 102-107), arousing deep emotions and reverberating in women’s hearts.

Overall, the Korean women’s constant emphasis on the quality of “caring” and “true love”, and the experience of “good feelings” derived from it, all appear to suggest that the women’s romantic fantasy is more emotionally-oriented than sexually-oriented. In this final conclusion, I am tempted to argue that it is more of “emotional fantasy”, not sexual fantasy, that the Korean women in my research are truly engaged with in their imaginary escape into the romance text. It is a predominantly recurring characteristic throughout their discussion on romantic fantasy that the women’s emphasis is more on the “emotional” quality of true love than physical sensations. Interestingly, this point partly explains, furthermore, why these Korean middle-class women cannot derive the same degree of pleasure from watching Western romance texts wherein explicit sexual conduct and carnal passion, including promiscuous bed-hopping, are prevalently noticed. The Western idea of love does not correspond to the Korean women’s dominant social character and “structure of feeling” (Williams, 1961: 64-80), their affective elements of consciousness and relationships in emotional and social involvement. As the following comments manifest, the Korean women’s exquisite pleasure in the emotional/spiritual quality of love, or “essential bonding and intimacy of absolute oneness” (Hoffman, 1995: 130) formed by such quality, is found to be relatively absent in the Western cultural forms oriented more toward carnal desire and sexual arousal. For these Korean middle-class women, “emotion” rather than sensation has the potential to serve as immensely powerful sources of pleasure. Their state of high

emotional arousal and intense pleasure from it can be a form of “modern hedonism” (Campbell, 1987: 69) characterized by the intensity of emotional experience exceeding sensory experience.

“Fantasize a Western man? No. No matter how handsome and romantic a Western man is (in a movie), I am not interested. They have different emotions and different ways of loving, perhaps. I can’t imagine that Western men would be sincerely loving. I can’t think of any Western movie about a caring and devoted man. That doesn’t seem like Western culture”.

(Sung-mi, 32)

“While watching a Western movie (on TV), I could say, “This man is very handsome, that man looks very sexy, has a sexy body”. That’s all. They don’t attract a deep interest beyond that. They hardly arouse my emotion deep down”. (Eun-young, 32)

“In *All About Eve* (Korean romance drama) he has rarely said “I love you” to the woman he truly loves, only kissed her finally at the end of the drama. Of course, not sleeping together hastily. Yet that love is felt so precious and sincere. While watching the drama we can feel that this man truly loves and cares about her... That kind of love and deep emotion cannot be found in a Western movie. Western men always say “I love you” and jump into bed, then someday may dump the lover once losing interest sexually”. (Eun-sang, 32)

“I can’t imagine that Western man or woman would be in love with one person for life. Look at the lawyer man in *Legend of Love* (Korean romance drama). He has loved one woman for life. That kind of eternal love doesn’t seem to exist in the Western society. Western people seem more physically, sexually oriented than emotional. They are different from us. It’s hard to imagine an emotionally strong bond in the Western society”. (Se-jung, 32)

The importance of emotions emphasized above may be a unique particularity of the Korean women. Or is it a universal fact that women, in contrast to men, focus much more on the emotional side? In the complex functionally divided society, the “need

for friendly warmth” which only intimate groups or couples can offer is possibly stronger than even before (Bauman, 1988: 49). In interpreting the romance text, these Korean middle-class women mainly stress the aspect of “emotional bonding”, sharing feelings and being close, the existence of faith and intimacy between a hero and a heroine, which all implies that they most desire to be loved and cared for emotionally by one significant other. Emotional bonding is the women’s main concern, proper way of loving and being loved, and desirable substance in their real-life relationships with men. In a way, Korean romance drama closely fits in the women’s lived experience and structure of feeling, both of which are not adequately recognized and met in the everyday patriarchal ethos. By immersing in the romance watching, these women find a “validation and celebration of those interests and concerns which are seen as properly theirs within the social world they inhabit” (Lovell, 1980: 51). The Korean middle-class women experience quite unique pleasure in the realm of emotional fantasy, not in physical sensation or sexual excitement, but in their endless search for intimacy and emotional love tenderly cared and eternally united in oneness. This is the women’s deep desire. The emotional fantasy and the experience of good feelings derived from it are immensely powerful sources of pleasure to the hearts of the Korean middle-class housewives in their 30s. The discourse of Korean popular romance precisely understands the meaning of love and intimacy embodied in female emotions, which serves as the essential ingredient of its commercial success.

Chapter 9 Korean Middle-Class Women in their 20s

Section (1) Employment and Uncertainty: Whose Individualization?

Like the case of the working-class young women in Chapter 6, the middle-class young women in their 20s, single university students, do not find television as an integral part of everyday life. The structure of university life activities - such as studying for exams, preparing for employment, as well as meeting friends and socializing on a regular basis - ensures that these young women do not have much leisure time for television consumption at home. Their engagement with the out-of-home social activities and other media, including cinema, magazines and newspapers, is also perceived as an important source of entertainment and information in planning their own life politics. Unlike the case of the married women in their 30s and 50s, everyday life of the single women is focused on issues, activities and relationships elsewhere outside the domestic. Therefore, in this opening section I direct a focus toward the young women's life and identity. I aim to understand closely what issues concern Korean educated young women today, by surveying their overall thoughts, sensibilities, feelings and reactions. What do they want in life? What are their major concerns? As educated young women are in the vanguard of change, my data here will reflect the voices of the modern liberated generation in contemporary Korea. Throughout the section, I will specifically focus on three decisive issues that emerged from the women's free discussion; employment, sexual discrimination, and marriage. The data substantially verify the existence of Western individualization in the young women's intense quest for an independent life through a career choice. However, by problematizing the conditions of the contemporary Korean labor market, I will argue that the regime of individualization does not include Korean women. Whose individualization? I intend to demonstrate that Western individualization is unlikely to be implemented, but only played out at the level of imagination, within the Korean young women's imaginative self-reflexivity compounded with the feelings of uncertainty, insecurity and anxiety. This unresolved identity of individualization will serve as a necessary context within which I further explore the role of TV media in the subsequent sections.

“Moms’ generation might have attended university to get married well, a university degree was a means to a good marriage. We have different thoughts. If intending to be stuck at home doing housework, why would we go to university? I want to get a nice job and live a free wonderful life”.

(Moon-sun, 22)

“I have lots of thoughts and worries everyday. Would getting a job within this year be possible as I plan? Can the job measure up to my expectation? What should I aim for in life? I come to think more and more about my life. I want to find a secure job and live an independent life”. (Sung-won, 22)

“I hate the XX automobile (TV) commercial. It’s so stupid - “My husband wanted to remodel the kitchen for me, but I wanted to get him a new car instead. For my husband’s confidence”. Then, the husband drives a car and the wife happily leans on his shoulder. I hate that commercial. I would earn money *on my own*, change the kitchen *on my own* and drive *my own car!*”

(*Italics*, her emphasis) (Bo-ra, 21)

One dominant theme throughout the young women’s discussion of the concerns in their life is the pursuit of personal freedom and independence.¹ “I want to have a free independent life”. This is a particularly common narrative of self-identity among the educated young middle-class women. Yearning for the sense of personal freedom and independent quality of life, these women desire to take total charge of their own life and constitute themselves as an “actor, designer, juggler and stage director of their own biography and identity” (Beck, 1994: 13). They want to plan, produce, stage and cobble together their own biography for a more self-responsible, self-determined, new mode of life that is no longer obligatory and embedded in the traditional gender roles. It appears that they are struggling to break free from the fixities of traditional norms to discover a true self. By choosing different ways of living and being in the world, they are struggling to ally themselves with new modes of “life politics” (Giddens, 1991: 214), a politics of self-actualization in a reflexively ordered environment. This is a pioneering expedition into a new territory, a quest for “individualization” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). The strong desire for individualization is empirically verified in the young women’s ongoing self-observation and questioning in everyday

life. "What do I want in life?" "What should I aim for life?" In heightened awareness of thoughts and feelings, at each moment of life these women engage themselves with self-interrogation. It signals a great deal of intensified "self-reflexivity", self-monitoring and reflection on life: "We are, not what we are, but what we make of ourselves" (Giddens, 1991: 75). Here, the women's self is not taken as a pre-constituted category, but as a responsible, reflexive "project and venture to be performatively produced through the discourses of choice" (Cronin, 2000: 276).

"I want to get a nice job and live a free wonderful life". "I want to find a secure job and live an independent life". All of the educated middle-class women here envisage a free, independent, individualized way of life through the participation in work. They demand the right to control and build up a life of their own through a career choice. This means that the women's do-it-yourself biography is preconditioned on the labor market, and that the women's reflexive idea of individualization is in this sense "occupational reflexivity" (Lash, 1994). Consensually, the most pivotal concern to these young women is therefore "employment". Employment turns out the most urgent, recurring issue throughout the interviews, as education and professional careers are taken as central to the women's life politics. The middle-class young women clearly demonstrate intense aspirations for work, believing that it is only through work that they can ultimately invent a life of their own. Work is regarded as a "motor of individualization" (Beck, 1992: 92). Practically, the creation of their own biography is dependent upon the attainment of work in the labor market. It is a work biography. However, for Korean men the work biography is taken for granted, but for Korean women, especially these well-educated women, it is ironically contesting and problematic. The following comments reflect the reality of the Korean labor market.

"The biggest worry is employment. Approaching the 4th year, I am afraid of graduating. We nowadays say, "Graduation equals unemployment". No matter how smart women are, most companies prefer to hire men". (Eun-soo, 22)

"Employment is as difficult as catching a star in the sky, more difficult for women. Whether you are an elementary school graduate or a university graduate, it wouldn't make a big difference in finding a job". (Joo-hyun, 22)

In the following I argue that the current Korean labor market does not promise women the feasibility of individualization. In the Western societies, education and career opportunities are generally regarded as the driving force behind the individualization of people's lives and social mobility. It is argued that labor market positions now are constituted less by determinants such as gender and class location and more by self-design, self-creation and individual performances: "The educated person becomes the producer of his or her own labor situation, and in this way, of his or her social biography" (Beck, 1992: 93). However, the rosy Western theory that education encourages labor market freedom and individualization is illusory for educated Korean women. This is my contention in this particular Korean context with its pronounced enthusiasm for education. In contemporary Korea there certainly has been an impressive increase in educational attainment for women. In terms of higher education alone, 56% of females are now enrolling in a two-year college or a four-year university (KWDI, 1999). Although this is almost a half of male enrolment (92%), still this is a significant improvement compared with the rate of 21% for females in 1985. Despite the fact that Korean women have attained as much education as their male counterparts, women's higher education does not necessarily lead to a better job prospect, an individualized career path in the labor market.²

To be specific, first, despite the women's high educational level, there is an inverse correlation between the level of education and employment, as female university graduates have a difficulty in finding positions commensurate with their educational qualifications (Rowe and Kim, 1997). Only 46.7% of female university graduates are now employed, but most of them are in a secretarial position that has nothing to do with their educational degree (MBC News, July 22, 2001). In Korea today, it is rather easier for female high-school graduates to find employment than it is for women with university degrees. Second, in terms of economic security, compared with the male wage, female university graduates have a wage differential of 68.4%, and this is largely a function of underemployment and resistance of employers to hire better-educated women (Ro *et al*, 1998). Third, educated women's economic activities are heavily concentrated in a "traditional female track", non-managerial work unrelated to their specialties – e.g. receptionist, typist, telephone operator, other positions requiring little or no skills and certainly no university education (Rowe and

Kim, 1997). A substantial portion of women's economic activity is found in small companies, not in large companies with knowledge/information-intensive forms of work. In this context, Korean educated women are "reflexivity losers" (Lash, 1994: 133) as they are excluded from the new labor spaces of reflexive production in large companies. Basically, this is because female university graduates are systematically discriminated in the recruitment process, particularly by large major companies in Korea. In the large companies' annual mass recruitment, over 90% of jobs are usually offered to male university graduates (Chang, 1994: 22). This links to my final point here. As a matter of fact, these young women in my research vividly experience institutionalized gender inequality and ethical injustice in their everyday life "within universities", which further has significant implications on the women's career opportunities. Listen to the following complaints.

"In society, at least universities would be the most self-conscious and fairest places, the so-called intelligentsia, but sexual discrimination is common here. I find professors conservative and discriminating against female students. When receiving employment references from large companies, professors normally recommend male students and do not recommend female students".

(Eun-soo, 22)

"In the case of employment or special benefits, female students are not treated as equally as male students. In our department I was a top student. But when the opportunity for a project in America was offered, three male students were selected! I was very disheartened. I have realized that, in order to get recognized and succeed in Korea, a woman has to be 10 times more outstanding and smarter than a man". (Joo-hyun, 22)

"One time in a Business class, a male professor explained about investment and stock options. He explained it directly towards male students, in contrast, he joked with female students who were listening in the front row, "This will be helpful when you marry and keep a household diary, so don't forget it". That kind of joke was unpleasant sexual discrimination. Professors don't take female students' academic enthusiasm seriously, because professors think we will eventually get married and be stuck at home". (Yoon-kyung, 22)

Rising female education produces a critical mass of educated women, who begin to articulate their discontent in modernist terms that their employment futures are far less secure than for their male counterparts. The educated young women's discontent clearly illustrates sexual discrimination and gendered experiences in Korean university education that have negative effects on their career opportunities. The faculty's traditional views on sex-roles and the patriarchal characteristics of knowledge in higher education provide gendered experiences, putting women at significant educational and professional disadvantage. Overall it signals that university education does not properly fit with their needs, and does not truly encourage them to prepare for active participation in the labor market. Sexual discrimination is prevalent inside Korean higher education, yet hidden and undisclosed to the wider public outside. According to one survey, more than 60% of female students believe that knowledge taught in university classrooms is constructed from a male/patriarchal perspective, and 74% of female students feel that regardless of gender, most faculty have stereotypical traditional views about women (Ro *et al*, 1998: 135). Consciously or unconsciously, the classroom and campus climate in Korean universities tends to ignore or alienate women. Korean universities are still under the strong influences of patriarchal culture and do not take seriously women's academic enthusiasm and professional aspirations. One woman precisely puts it, "Professors think we will eventually get married and be stuck at home".

In short, both the ethical injustice in higher education and the systematic discrimination in the labor market exclude Korean educated women from the implementation of Western individualization. It would be illusory for Korean educated women to believe that independence and freedom can be found in the economic domain. I would thus call into question: Whose individualization? Examining closely in the contemporary Korean context, I would argue that Western individualization is not readily available to Korean women as it is unlikely to be implemented in reality. The Western idea of individualization is only feasible within the Korean women's imaginative self-reflexivity. It is wishful thinking played out at the level of imagination. It is still an unresolved individualization. These well-educated women are all eager to carve a free and independent life, but without occupation, without earning power, how would that be possible? Women's will-power

and education alone cannot be an effective transformative force in the identity politics of individualization. These Korean young women need more than “just education”, more than “just imagination” if they are to actualize an individualized quality of life. Crucially, what Korean women need are equal opportunities in the job market, not in the way it is inscribed within the state legal system, but in the way its manifest law is actually practiced in reality. In fact, it is their high attainment in education that drives more and more educated women to imagine an individualized way of life, but without occupation they suffer an identity crisis, not to mention economic insecurity. As a consequence, the mood of uncertainty and anxiety about their identity permeates here.

“Once graduated I would belong nowhere unless I find a job. As long as we stay within the school, we have the status of student. When asked, “What do you do?”, saying “I am a student” covers everything. But once outside the school, without a job I will be nothing. Without a job I will have no identity. It may be quicker to find a man and marry. Employment is not simply to earn money. It is a statement of identity that can show who I am”. (Joo-hyun, 22)

The feelings of uncertainty about employment, and anxiety about self-identity are manifest in the young women’s comments. All of these young women are anxious about the possible loss of career opportunity and earning power, feeling that they have so little opportunity for getting a job after graduation. Unfortunately, when it comes to the issue of employment, these vibrant young women feel close to a failure. In the uncertain realm of employment and individualization, they fear that they will suffer the consequences of being a failure – no identity. “One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure of where one belongs. Identity is a name given to the sought escape from that uncertainty” (Bauman, 1995: 82). Once graduating the women’s guaranteed protective status as a student will become out of date and no longer socially validated. The middle-class women here are engaging in a status struggle. “It may be quicker to find a man and marry”. Realistically, without a job women have no alternatives to marriage, if they want decent status-proper lives for themselves. Dependence through marriage could offer a potential way of achieving material security in the contemporary Korean labor market where employment is far less secure for educated women. As a consequence, rather than becoming self-responsible and self-determining agents in the new space of reflexive economies, educated young women

are likely to be trapped in the existing structures and the re-traditionalizing socialities, just like their mothers' generation. The systematic exclusion of women from the labor market is likely to re-embed the young women desiring individualization back into the institutions of traditional norms and expectations - most accessibly, marriage. Then actually, what are the middle-class young women's views about marriage? The dramatically changing idea of marriage is another distinctive feature in the young women's life.

"My motto is, don't be obsessed with love! Love or marriage is not an important parameter in life. If marriage severely affects my work, I will discard marriage. My work and success is more important". (Hyo-jung, 21)

"Marriage binds women's life so much. If given either marriage or work, I will choose my work and success". (Eun -soo, 22)

"Once I saw on TV a professional career woman lecture on being a new modern woman of the 21st century. She called it "the third woman". The first woman sought happiness within the home, and the second woman only at work. Now the third woman should keep balance between home and work. She emphasized, the third way of being a modern woman is to become a professional career woman, but at the same time to harmoniously combine work and home life. Of course, that sounds nice! But I found that lecture simply idealistic, not realistic. She must be lucky enough to have a supportive husband and in-laws. In fact, such a lucky woman would be extremely rare in Korean society. Who wouldn't like to marry if that is possible?"
(Yoon-kyung, 22)

Love is becoming more contested and more important than ever and "equally impossible" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 2). The above comments illustrate a clear transition from love/marriage to work. The middle-class young women's dramatically shifting idea of marriage is a critical differentiation here, in contrast to the strong desire for marriage held by the working-class young women in Chapter 6. Marriage is discarded because of its gratuitous demands and incompatibility with the fulfillment of work. These young women never feel that they could fulfill a successful

career and a rich personal familial life. These highly reflexive women are fully conscious of the reality that they cannot have it all – career success, marriage, children, and harmonious family – although they wish to have it all, ideally. It is worth highlighting that the feeling of “impossibility of having it all” has been a consensual theme across all Korean middle-class women in their 50s, 30s, and 20s in my research. Eventually, women are driven to choose either work/individualization or marriage/family.³ “If given either marriage or work, I will choose my work and success”. This is the general sentiment of the Korean middle-class young women. This means that women need to pursue a career and individualized life of their own, often at the cost of the joys in the family, love and intimate relationships. The women’s choice of work/individualization renders their commitments to marriage and other relations fragile and vulnerable. The notions of marriage/family are being more open, flexible, and understood less in terms of obligations but more in terms of “negotiated” commitments. As I sense from these Korean young women, “negotiation and calculability” constitute the young generation’s structure of feeling. One young woman clearly puts it: “Moms’ generation might have married in the blind name of love, but when it comes to marriage I would meticulously calculate all the conditions”. The young women’s life politics is planned around an insurance-based, equality-oriented, and highly calculable mode of thinking about potentially negative outcomes or effects of life decisions. Through negotiation, contract and calculation of interests, these young women attempt to organize and control their encompassing life circumstances. In other words, their day-to-day life becomes increasingly reflexive and calculable to “colonize the future with some degree of success” (Giddens, 1991: 202). Hence, they are on the search for a right way to live together, hoping to try out “contractual marriage” or “cohabitation”. It is a desire for new modes of life, breaking free from traditional gender roles.

“Only if the man can cook, wash dishes, do the housework, then I will marry. I want to consider contractual marriage to know in advance whether he is patriarchal or not... Then people may criticize me for being abnormal and crazy, my parents would go mad, “What the hell is contractual marriage? Is marriage business?” As long as I live in Korea I may never be allowed to make a contractual marriage”. (Bo-ra, 21)

“Living together before marriage is more sensible. But people would perceive me as abnormal. Contract marriage makes sense in the head, but cannot be acceptable in the heart emotionally”. (Eun-soo, 22)

The discussion on contractual marriage indicates that the Korean young women strongly desire to be unleashed from traditional norms and expectations, and to create a self-determining identity of their own. Yet the freely-chosen game of identity is played out only within the women’s imagination, as they are simultaneously concerned about the recognition and validation of their identity by others: “Then people may criticize me for being abnormal and crazy, my parents would go mad”. This common concern signals that female individualization is perceived much more problematic and deviant in the eyes of the society. The modern Korean society still shows fear and resistance towards Western individualization. Consequently, these young women are not certain about how to place a freely-chosen identity in the society, how to make sure that people around them accept this new placement as right and proper. Identity is now said to become more mobile, free-floating, multiple and personal, according to the contemporary (Western) discourse of identity and (post)modernity. In this Korean context, however, I want to emphasize that identity is also a “social, other-related, mutual recognition” (Kellner, 1992: 141-142), which means that one’s identity is dependent upon recognition from others combined with self-validation of this recognition. In the society of modernity, there is still a structure of interaction with socially defined and available roles, norms and expectations, among which one must choose and appropriate in order to gain identity in a complex process of mutual recognition. My point therefore is that the Korean young women’s identity/lifestyle politics pivoting on Western individualization is still circumscribed and limited by the boundaries of possible identities based on socially mutual recognition, although their yearning for a new identity and a new mode of life is continually expanding in the modern globalizing society. In this sense, the issue of identity for the Korean young women is largely unresolved.

In conclusion, the underlying assumption of Western individualization that one can freely choose, make and remake one’s identity as fashion is problematic to Korean women. Korean educated young women intensely desire to cobble together their own self-determining identity that is no longer obligatory in the prescriptions of

traditional gender roles. However, this new quest for individualization is likely to end up only in the women's self-reflexive imagination, as impeded by the systematic exclusion in the labor market. The women's constant struggle for individualization can end up fantasizing about a seemingly unachievable dream. Without equal opportunities in the economic domain, the women's occupational individualization is practically in question. The women's identity politics is in uncertainty. On the surface level, it appears that young women today have more choices and opportunities in life, in terms of education, work and marriage, but in effect they are often "crummy choices" (Hewlett, 1986: 401). In the uncertain realm of individualization, women are expected to master "risky opportunities" (Beck, 1994: 8), meticulously calculating and negotiating all the possible consequences. As a consequence, for women, the feelings of uncertainty, insecurity and anxiety become constituent experiences in the choice of individualization.

"Nothing is certain about job, marriage, anything in life. After graduation I will step into society and experience a real social life. But nothing is certain. Only uncertain, opaque life is awaiting ahead". (Moon -sun, 22)

Section (2) A Return to Pleasure: Entertainment and Feminist Utopia

In the previous section I have argued that the educated young women desire occupational individualization, yet the systematic sexual discrimination in the Korean labor market is unlikely to allow them to implement such desire. The gloomy and unhappy job prospects are the most dominant concern in their everyday self-reflexivity, constituting an unresolved identity and life politics. In this section I intend to show a close relationship between the young women's unresolved on-going struggle of identity and their particular pattern of television consumption: "Only entertainment!" "Just pleasure!" The Korean young women here experience enormous pleasure from television entertainment forms – most preferably, unrealistic comedy drama – yet they rarely wonder why it is pleasurable to them. The notion of pleasure is taken as so self-evident that they do not have to think about it in everyday life, unless triggered by the research interviews. It is "just pleasure". Then, what can we say about the apparently simple fact of pleasure - even the enormous pleasure located in anti-realism in this Korean case - or is pleasure, as common sense suggests, beyond

analysis? (Bennett *et al.*, 1981: 197). Premised on the assumption that there is no universal form of pleasure valid in all social contexts, this section aims to explore specific forms of pleasure in a particular social context; pleasure derived by the Korean middle-class young women from their most favored entertainment text of comedy drama. What is the social, cultural and political meaning of the specific forms of pleasure? Based on the research data, I intend to analyze television entertainment, as a pleasure and as a specific meaning. Entertainment is part of leisure (Dyer, 1992: 13), and pleasure is an essential objective pursued in entertainment and leisure. Yet unlike leisure, pleasure has attracted no sociology (Mercer, 1983: 88), but largely remained under the rubric of psychoanalysis. Drawing on the young women's concrete experience of the everyday, I will examine the specific meaning of pleasure in their leisurely encounter with television entertainment. In other words, I will approach "a return to pleasure in the terrain of lived experience" (McRobbie, 1994: 39-40) for a deeper understanding of television consumption in everyday life: "Each of us has an enormous capacity for pleasure, leisure and enjoyment. For the left and for cultural intellectuals in the past this was a source of guilt, a private, stolen experience in an otherwise gloomy and unhappy world" (McRobbie, 1994: 40). Throughout this section I will illustrate the ways in which the Korean middle-class young women draw entertainment texts close to the realm of lived experience and how the meaning is produced subtly through their experience of unequal power relations in the patriarchal society. I argue for the utopian function of entertainment, especially feminist utopia, which will then explain why television entertainment works particularly for women in an otherwise gloomy and unhappy world.

"The only thing I want from TV is pleasure. Just pleasure! For that viewing moment I don't want to think about anything else – worries about employment, uncertain future life, all the headachy problems". (Joo-hyun, 22)

"There are lots of things to think about in real life, but at least while watching TV I want to stop thinking completely. Just go blank in the head! Be as simplistic as possible!" (Sung-won, 22)

"The only thing I want from TV is entertainment and laughter. Only entertainment! Nothing serious". (Hyo-jung, 21)

“What’s TV? TV is for relaxing, having fun, escaping from the complicated life. Just pleasure. That’s it!” (Eun-soo, 22)

“Only entertainment!” It appears that through television entertainment, the middle-class young women actively seek distraction, an escape from the pressurized mundane world, “all the headachy problems” of employment and uncertain futures. They find television as a sense of escape to remove themselves from tension, worry, uncertainty and bewilderment that surround all aspects of modern living. Television entertainment is mainly “escapist” (Brown et al., 1978: 419). The young women here heartily welcome the television’s ability to “be there to entertain” (Gauntlett and Hill, 1999: 91). Television entertainment requires no attention, and its audiences exist only to be entertained. It is a welcome distraction, and this is why these young women delight in television entertainment. It demands nothing of the spectator. “The masses seek distraction whereas art demands concentration from the spectator” (Benjamin, 197: 241). Television entertainment, as opposed to serious art, is a distraction, a way of “not thinking” the everyday. “Entertainment offers us pleasure, and makes no demands on us, except that it asks us not to think about it” (Maltby and Craven, 1995: 19). Entertainment precisely gives the audiences what they want: “I want to stop thinking completely. Just go blank in the head! Be as simplistic as possible!” To be more precise, it is the audience that seeks distraction. The audience is an “examiner, but an absent-minded one” (Benjamin, 1973: 234). With television entertainment, the young women here no longer have to think or wonder, unless they want to. All they want from the viewing moment is just pleasure. “Just pleasure. That’s it!” Women usually function in the patriarchal society “as givers, not takers, of pleasure”, hence taking pleasure means claiming one’s space (Brown, 1994: 131). The young women’s pleasure taken from entertainment is, I suggest, a serious pleasure. As one woman below puts it, “Truth is hidden inside the laughter”.

“If I laugh my head off watching *Soon-Poong Obstetrics* (prime-time comedy drama) my parents say, “Why are you watching trash?” People think entertainment programs are meaningless trash, but I find them meaningful. Truth is hidden inside the laughter”. (Yoon-kyung, 22)

“People tend to think entertainment programs are bad, rubbish. I like entertainment programs. What’s wrong with laughing and enjoying? I don’t become an idiot by laughing and enjoying... I enjoy French films as well. French films make me think about life. Funny entertainment programs also make me think about life - How come they can live such a simple and easy life? Why can’t I live like that?” (Eun-soo, 22)

Speaking as a fan of a favored entertainment text (e.g. *Soon-Poong Obstetrics*) is to recognize an identity constantly belittled and criticized by institutional authorities, yet simultaneously to resist such criticism and defend their own pleasure by “standing as the most direct and vocal affront to the legitimacy of traditional cultural hierarchies” (Jenkins, 1992:23). Although these educated middle-class young women, currently attending university, do not feel ashamed or guilty about indulging in entertainment, upon taking a defensive position they start to articulate the reasons for enjoyment. The opening remark in their articulation of pleasure is often a defensive argument: “What’s wrong with laughing and enjoying? I don’t become an idiot by laughing and enjoying”. Entertainment is generally assumed by “high art” critics to lack moral seriousness, fill the mind with a vulgar, philistine sensibility. Here these women forcefully defend their pleasure as fully aware of such moral condemnation, the widely-taken perception of entertainment as a “vast wasteland” (Kellner, 1992: 146) - trash, rubbish, junk, etc. Rather, for these educated young women, there seems to be no difference in the raising of emotions felt, and thoughts evoked, while viewing the “high art” of French film or the “popular culture” of television entertainment. In the actual experience of contemporary cultural forms, the dichotomy between mass culture and high art may be then a falsely created one: “We suspend our real lives and our immediate practical preoccupations just as completely when we watch *The Godfather* as when we read *The Wings of the Dove* or hear a Beethoven sonata” (Jameson, 1979: 131). My point here is that much of the discussion around entertainment, such as fans of favored entertainment and pleasure derived from popular entertainment, has essentially “pathologized” (Harris, 1998: 5) it without leading to a closer understanding of specific meanings. The authentic voices of pleasure seekers are muted, rarely heard. In the following, I will let the young women

speak for themselves about their own pleasure; for example, why they truly enjoy the prime-time comedy drama, or so-called sitcom, *Soon-Poong Obstetrics*.

“Basically, it is not a realistic drama. The male characters have uncommon, silly sense and do not behave normally. Yet I just love their abnormality!”

(Joo-hyun, 22)

“The pleasure of watching drama is to ridicule. Sitting comfortably in the sofa, I enjoy ridiculing silly people. I like to watch silly and abnormal people in *Soon-Poong Obstetrics*”. (Eun-soo, 22)

“There is no strong man in this drama. Men are all weak and silly there. The typical example is the male nurse. He is very timid and passive, on the contrary, his wife is very masculine and can do Ssang-jul-bong (martial art). If the wife bullies, he cannot say a word. (Laugh) When friends suggest something, he steps back, “I have to ask my wife first”. He always listens to his wife”. (Bo-ra, 21)

“In general, Korean fathers in their 50s or 60s are quite authoritative. But this doctor (main character) is not that typical image of a Korean man. He always makes silly mistakes that make the family laugh... One time he was fascinated by young people’s performance of a cocktail show and was determined to learn it. (Laugh) While practicing hard, he almost burnt his hair”.

(Moon-sun, 22)

“A normal man would not try such silly things to save his face inside the house. While watching TV he was amazed by the craftsmanship of engraving words on a rice grain. So he tried it day and night. (Laugh) Wondering about what to engrave for his first work, he engraved his wife’s name on a tiny grain and proudly displayed it on a velvet cloth”. (Yoon-kyung, 22)

“I just love their abnormality!” Implicitly and explicitly, the comments here relate to sexual politics. The young women delight in the male characters’ “ideal” deviancy and absurdity that is so far from what they see in their real life, real male-female

dynamics and real family relations. Sitcoms question the normalcy of social typifications, and “pull deviance” into the universal problems of family, marking boundaries between common sense, normality and the unspeakable: And such deviancy or abnormality is recognized and found amusing (Tulloch, 1990: 253). Precisely, one source of pleasure for these young women springs from the comedy’s pulling of deviance into the problems of gender. The characters’ roles are reversed and de-sexualized within a sexist patriarchal culture. It is amply supplied with “weak and silly men”, as opposed to strong female characters, so the women’s pleasure is derived from laughing with the status reversal between men and women, the unruly reverse of the patriarchal order. Such entertainment offers an unruly delight. In this unruly world there is a sense of pleasure that transgresses boundaries, which transgression is vividly expressed by laughter.

I want to particularly emphasize the young women’s frequent laughing throughout their TV talk - because the laughter demonstrates clearly how much pleasure they experience from viewing the reversed world fraught with weak and silly men and absurd happenings. Such exaggerations have the capacity to provoke the rule-breaking “carnavalesque laughter” (Bakhtin, 1968: 101): Carnival involves a role reversal in which the established hierarchies of power are temporarily ignored, everyday law and order is ritually suspended, official culture is turned upside down. Like a carnivalesque world, the comedy drama is viewed by the young women as “life turned upside down”. It is ordered disorder whereby the everyday law of gender is completely turned upside down for the pleasure and laughter of spectators who indeed wish so.

Entertainment like *Soon-Poong Obstetrics* is an imaginary site for constructing an alternative culture. In that viewing moment, it seems to provide the young women with an “enclaved, in-between liminal space” (Turner, 1977) in which they are neither in nor out of social structures, and their seemingly frustrating hope for gender equality could be imagined. Watching entertainment constitutes such a space, “one defined by its refusal of mundane values and practices, its celebration of passionately embraced pleasures” (Jenkins, 1992: 283). The women’s pleasure of ridiculing and laughing is an active mode of reading that is subversive and “poaching” (de Certeau, 1984: 174): In a sense the women readers here are travelers, they move

across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields to enjoy it themselves. The women ridicule and attack sexual inequality of real life, and make the absent ideal present in their imagination through the encounter with entertainment. This is possible because entertainment offers a utopian image of something better than the realm of women's everyday experience. The following extracts point toward the utopian dimension of entertainment.

“Men in this drama (*Soon-Poong Obstetrics*) are emotionally soft. They are nice to women, don't look down on women. They include women in the social and play, ask women for opinions. They are different from the men I know. I am angry at the male-female relationship. Men around me - my brother and classmates - regard women as trivial, “Women are nothing”. Sitting all together at night, if I mention my future plan to my parents, my brother pokes in, “Cut it all out! Get married!” Even to prove I am far more capable than him, I wouldn't want to marry but only succeed”. (Eun-soo, 22)

“The relationship between men and women in this drama is equal. Women speak all they want to say and do all they want to do because men are not authoritative. They are rather like close friends... Once coming home this doctor (in his 50s) calls his wife's name following around her. They live like elementary school classmates. That's something different from other Korean couples of that age. Normally, daddies of that age don't call their wives' name. Once married women are called “XX's mom”. I haven't ever heard my daddy call my mom's name”. (Moon-sun, 22)

“The relationship between men and women in this drama is equal”. The young women here demonstrate a high degree of reflexivity in the consumption of television. Popular entertainment such as comedy drama stems from the gap between the socially ideal and the socially typical (Tulloch, 1990: 255). It evokes and manages social, cultural and political anxieties and fantasies. For the young women, this entertainment reflexively evokes a fantasy of feminist utopia – for example, the young women's fantasy of an equal relationship wherein men are emotionally soft, nice to women, include women, ask women for opinions, do not look down on women. They often

display a close attention to the particularity of entertainment narrative or image, and this allows them to draw upon reflexively their everyday experience of gender relationships. The ideal image of entertainment is felt far different from the real life perception of women, “Women are nothing”, “Cut it all out! Get married!” The young women find their everyday experience falls far short of the ideal image projected on entertainment. In this way, the utopian picture of entertainment serves as a mirror for society, a mirror in which the audience can see more clearly the society’s “defects” (Morrison, 1984: 145). Utopian constructions take the form of a picture of an unrealizably ideal social order criticizing an existing order (Alexander and Gill, 1984: xi). Thus, utopian ideals are shaped under the double pressure of the feeling of deprivation and the squeeze of stubborn realities (Bauman, 1995). Through the consumption of entertainment, the women express hidden wishes, hopes, or self-determined, equally stubborn oppositions to the realities of the dominated: “Even to prove I am far more capable than him, I wouldn’t want to marry but only succeed”.

“In this drama, women speak all they want to say and do all they want to do because men are not authoritative. They are rather like close friends”. Certainly, entertainment vocally says and physically presents something that triggers in the young women’s anticipating consciousness the “not-yet-become” (Bloch, 1986: 32, 1989), the daydream-like presentiments of what they lack, what they need, what they want, and what they hope to find in life. Entertainment’s appeal to the young women here is found in its ability to offer symbolic solutions to real world problems and felt needs, and touch the women’s emotions – for example, the feeling of “friendliness” in the male-female relationship. Entertainment partly gratifies because it holds open the imagined possibility of satisfying the women’s actual lack in, and desire for, “friendliness, closeness and emotional intimacy”. In this context, I want to particularly refer the notion of utopia to a more “personal locus” (Levitas, 2000: 198) to accentuate the women’s constant quest for an emotionally intimate human relationship. Precisely, this is why entertainment works. It works because the utopian function of entertainment is responding to the women’s “real needs created by real inadequacies of society” (Dyer, 1992: 25). Significantly, it works at the level of sensibility, offering the feelings of “friendliness, closeness and emotional intimacy” that the women want deeply, yet are not readily provided with in their day-to-day lives. “Entertainment does not present models of utopian worlds. Rather, the

utopianism is contained in the *feelings* it embodies. It presents *what utopia would feel like* rather than how it would be organized” (Dyer, 1992: 18. *Italics*, my emphasis). Utopian sensibility is taken off from the real experiences of the women, the real desires innate in the women, the real problems of patriarchal society. Thus, the women’s specific reading of entertainment can serve as temporary answers to the inadequacies of society, and their pleasurable feelings derived can anticipate a potential for the new and better. Entertainment has a potential to provide a way to make the world be perfect without figuratively speaking, exploring the world and without letting it apocalyptically vanish (Bloch, 1989: 146).

In conclusion, I argue that enjoying television entertainment for the Korean young women is a self-reflexive and imaginative social practice for hope and utopia towards gender equality, not a simple escape from a dreary unsatisfying reality to a mere fantasy world.⁴ It is “no longer an opium for the masses whose real work is elsewhere, no longer elite pastime thus irrelevant to the lives of ordinary people” (Appadurai, 1993: 274). Throughout this section the young women demonstrate highly self-reflexive, articulate, rich and elaborate reading skills, asserting their mastery over the favored entertainment text. Within the realm of popular culture, readers of their fascination are the “true experts” (Jenkins, 1992: 86). What entertainment truly offers, from the perspective of these women experts’ heightened sensibility, is something not of false consciousness, pure exploitation or manipulation. On the contrary, it is felt to offer a glimpse of utopia and hope, albeit far distant and faint in the women’s everyday reality. This finding may then confirm that all works of art, regardless of high or low, have a utopian potential and a utopian gratification, if readers wish to seek. “All contemporary works of art have as their underlying impulse our deepest fantasies about the nature of social life, both as we live it now, and as we feel in our bones it ought rather to be lived” (Jameson, 1979: 147). Yet current analyses in social/media theory do not move nearly far enough from a pro-capitalist ideological position: “They are too cautious, insufficiently utopian” (Levitas, 2000: 198). I argue in this Korean case that the ideology of entertainment should no longer be dismissed as false consciousness, but should be understood in close connection to the women’s lived experience and lived relationship. Women know, rationally and politically, the commercial forms of domination by the entertainment culture industry, but nevertheless, emotionally and personally, enjoy and derive enormous pleasure

from them (Mercer, 1983: 84). The utopian function of entertainment should be recognized only against the backdrop of women's everyday life. "Concrete utopia stands at the horizon of everyday reality" (Bloch, 1989: 153).

Section (3) Talking Back to The West: But Who Will Listen?

In the previous sections I have accentuated employment as the most crucial yet unresolved issue in the young women's identity/life politics pivoting on Western occupational individualization. One decisive factor in the modern Korean job market is the English language, and this compels more and more young women to travel abroad, learn and speak English in everyday life. Learning English and involving themselves with a wider Western culture through travel and television consumption is a distinctive characteristic of the contemporary lives of the middle-class young women. This marks a dramatic generational difference from the previous cases of the women in their 50s and 30s. Then, what are consequences of the overwhelmingly increasing experience of the Western language and culture? There is a hierarchy of dominance established around the status of the English language, and the issue of language dominance opens out to the broader issue of cultural imperialism (Tomlinson, 1999: 78-79). But does it necessarily shape one world, one culture? What actually happens in a specific cultural context? In this final section, I deal with the specific experience of Western cultural forms by the Korean middle-class young women in their 20s. My intention here is to challenge the monolithic colonizing force implied by the Western imperialistic thesis. By focusing closely on a dialectical aspect of cultural interpretation, I will illustrate the way in which the Korean young women critically contest and boldly negotiate the Western symbolic world. While highlighting the peripheral women's talking back to the central West, particularly about Western sexual morality, I will argue on the problems of "listening" and unequal power shaped around the English language and monopolistic Western knowledge. Throughout this section my data will present the everyday language and the stock phrases the young women often use when talking about Western culture, experienced and imagined through travel and television.

"English is a must for employment (in Korea). I withdrew from the university for one year and went to Australia for an English course. To brush up English

now, I keep TV on and listen to foreign programs – AFKN (American channel), CNN, drama, movies. To learn English I purposefully contact foreign programs. Who would find CNN news interesting? But it's good for listening practice. I don't find American drama interesting, but drama shows their living life, so it's best for learning everyday spoken English. If our country were economically powerful or Korean were a global language, we wouldn't have to spend so much time on learning headachy English”.

(Eun-soo, 22)

“The completion of an English course abroad is a boost on the employment resume. So many university students around me travel to America, Canada, Europe, Australia, etc. In this globalizing society it may sound strange if you have not been abroad. You have to travel abroad at least once to join the conversation”. (Yoon-kyung, 22)

To be a tourist is one of the characteristics of the modern experience, travel is a marker of status in modern societies (Urry, 1991: 4). This seems so true for the Korean middle-class young women in my research. Other than for pleasure, the main motive for such travel lies in the learning of the English language, as this is a compulsory requirement in any employment recruitment targeting for university graduates in modern Korea. Thus, transnational culture today tends to be tied to the job market, it is more or less “occupational culture” (Hannerz, 1990: 243). The compulsory requirement of English in the contemporary job market means that English, as a language of modernity and a means of making living (Choi, 2000), is becoming a crucial precondition for the women's attainment of work and quest for economic independence - individualization. As a consequence, these Korean middle-class young women go on learning and speaking English, whether they like it or hate it. English has emerged as a new form of “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1984) in globalizing modern Korea. Therefore, all the middle-class young women in their 20s have been to English-speaking Western countries, and their openness toward new cultural experiences through travel and television consumption is a marked generational difference, compared with the previous chapters on the women in their 50s and 30s. The following quotes point toward the young women's increasingly cosmopolitan experience today.

“I like foreign movies, watch lots of foreign movies (on TV). Good movies make me think about myself, my life. Am I also living like that? How should I live? I compare myself with them. ‘Life is short, I want to live like that!’ It stimulates me”. (Sung-won, 22)

“Traveling to other (Western) countries is always exciting. While walking down the street, popping into a store, eating a meal outside, queuing in a line, I always turn around and observe people. It’s interesting to see if they are different from us, and how they are different”. (Hyo-jung, 21)

“Since traveling to foreign countries I have become more interested in TV showing those foreign cultures, “Yes, I too have been there!”... Before traveling? They were just different people living in other world. But since traveling I have become a little critical when watching TV. If they behaved differently from us (on TV), I used to just ignore it. But now, I come to think, ‘Why do they do that?’ I come to compare that with our experience, and criticize them in the same way of criticizing our Koreans”. (Bo-ra, 21)

The Korean middle-class young women can be said to be “cosmopolitan”, in terms of “a willingness to engage with the Other, an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences” (Hannerz’s, 1990: 239). They are sensation-seekers and collectors of experiences, perceiving the world as “a food for sensibility, a matrix of possible experiences” (Bauman, 1998: 94). In anticipation of new and different experiences, they expect to treat the world as a series of spectacles to which they pay attention. The tourist gaze is intrinsically part of contemporary experience, and such gaze is sustained and reinforced by non-tourist practices, such as television consumption (Urry, 1990: 3). As the “implosive power of media” (McLuhan, 1964), television in particular, makes everybody today more or less cosmopolitan, mundane cosmopolitanism is becoming part of ordinary experience: “If we don’t choose to go and visit other cultures, they come and visit us as images and information on TV” (Hebdige, 1990: 20). Mediated knowledge is not just about recognition of the familiar, but more about the discovery of the new and different for these young women audiences. They are in a sense “diffused audiences”

(Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998: 76) as both local in actual performance and global in imagination. Among large and complex repertoires of images supplied by television, the young women construct cultural narratives of the Other and incorporate desirable features into their invention of meaningful ways of living: "Am I also living like that? I want to live like that!" It evokes envying, yearning, desiring. The mediated experience invites "the intrusion of distant events into everyday consciousness" (Giddens, 1991: 27) that often triggers not only envying and yearning, but also questioning, criticism, and talking back: "Why do they do that?"

The young women's cosmopolitan experience is characterized more by their inquisitive search for "differences" rather than universalities. Thus, their imaginative voyage into the new territories of a global melange proceeds with interesting discoveries of differences that sharply contrast with culture back home. Then, what are differences that matter to these Korean young women? What is the most yearning feature of difference, and what is the most contestable feature of difference? Before moving onto my focal discussion on the latter, "Western sexuality", I will first present the former, "free lifestyle". Throughout the interviews, it is typically stated: "I most envy their free lifestyle". "I like their passion for *I, myself*". To be specific, the following extracts illustrate what these young women mean by free lifestyle.

"In *Friends* (American sitcom), they often get together in the coffee shop and chat sitting comfortably on the sofa. None of them seem to worry about life or work. Everyday life is just ha-ha-ho-ho happy and simple. They don't seem to have a nice job, yet life is jolly. The long blond works in the coffee shop as a waitress. The tall stupid woman sings stupid songs. Did they go to university? Probably they did, they don't look smart though. In Korean society, if we are a university graduate and work in a coffee shop, people will think of us as a total loser. Not to mention parents' fury, "Have I sent you to university to see you work in a coffee shop?" None of their parents seem to compel, "Quit fooling around, get married and settle down!" In their culture it seems OK to fool around and enjoy a life. It's OK to be a loser. Because nobody meddles in their life. I like such free social atmosphere". (Joo-hyun, 22)

“I like their free individualistic life. They are making their own life, while we are making life for others”. (Eun-soo, 22)

In a context of global cosmopolitanism, Korean ways of life and traditional norms are routinely subject to interrogation and active critique. These middle-class young women criticize Korean gender models and appropriate forms of behavior prescribed by the patriarchal order, middle-class family values, parents’ intervention: “Quit fooling around, get married and settle down!” On the other hand, they derive new interpretations about life through the Western image of a free lifestyle: “It seems OK to fool around and enjoy a life”. The young women’s identity is subject to new possibilities, new openings and alternatives. Their yearning for a Western free lifestyle, precisely, points to the idea of individualization that I have already emphasized in the previous section. “They are making their own life, while we are making life for others”, envies one woman above. Western individualization turns out to be the most appealing feature that fuels yearning, imagination and self-reflexivity in these educated young women. In fact, individualization and globalization are two sides of the same process of reflexive modernization (Beck, 1994: 14).

However, not all elements of Western cultures reflected on television are instantly taken in as fuel for the women’s imagination. While the young women certainly envy and incorporate some features of alien cultures into their repertoire of identity, they refuse others. They do not relate to all the vast repertoire of mediated experiences, but selectively do so, in terms of the “perceived relevance” of mediated experiences to the ongoing constitution of the self (Thompson, 1995: 229). In other words, they first filter other cultures through their already established view of the social world, and then pick and fuse only those pieces which suit themselves. In their own filtering process, some elements are contested and discarded – most distinctively of all, Western sexuality.⁵

“When it comes to sex, they are totally different people. The striking difference between them and us is sexual morality”. (Moon-sun, 22)

“Sexually, they are too free. Their sexual ethics is questionable. For example, in *Dawson’s Creek*, a male student and a female teacher have a love scandal

that implies a sexual relationship. I also can't understand *Friends*. How can they be still friends after sleeping together? As if having sex with a friend doesn't matter at all? They have sex with anybody if they like. In *Alley McBeal*, even the old judge sleeps with a married woman, and the young president sexually pats a married woman. While watching TV, I wonder, do Western audiences not criticize it? Do they think that is normal and acceptable? I wonder how general people respond to it. Are they numb to it as such sexual conduct prevails in their culture? If our Korean broadcasting had produced such contents, they would have received a spate of protest calls from the audiences". (Eun-soo, 22)

"In Western society, even strangers have a sexual relationship on their first meeting (on TV). Even though they don't know each other well, after having sex, probably great sex, they call it love. "I love you". No matter how great that sex is, that doesn't look like love to me, that's just sex. I am curious, what is love to them? I don't understand their notion of love. They are very different from us. Because they have a different notion of love, the way they understand and accept sex seems different from us. For them, sex equals love, love equals sex. Because their human relationship is initiated from the animal-like sexual impulse, it seems hard for them to keep a long-term relationship. Isn't it the reason for their high divorce rate?" (Sung-won, 22)

Here, the Korean middle-class young women are engaging in a thorough process of interrogating the West as projected on television. They question, reflect, and criticize the most pronounced difference, "Western sexuality", according to their moral framework and ethics of everyday life. The educated middle-class women exercise a high degree of moral agency, centrally focussing on the questions of sexual morality. The situations of distant others are brought to them mainly as "moral and emotional" concerns to be explored and questioned: "Do Western audiences not criticize it? Do they think that is normal and acceptable?" "What is love to them?" They engage with global symbolic material through problematizing, questioning, intuiting and reflecting. While contacting Western television programs, they constantly judge and evaluate the distant events and characters, and compare it with what Koreans might have done in the same situation. This is an existential condition of global modernity in

a sense that more moral and emotional efforts are implicitly made on ordinary people than ever before (Tomlinson, 1999:177). Western sexuality turns out the most contesting theme for these Korean middle-class young women, all of whom have traveled to Western countries. Regarding sexuality, here are more concrete criticisms derived from their actual experiences in the Western contexts.

“We often cooked together and had dinner together with (Asian) students attending the same language institute (in America). One Japanese friend once brought an American friend she had met in a social. While sitting around the table and talking about various subjects in awkward English, this American woman talked about her boyfriends. Lots of boyfriends, before and present. It was nearly bragging. We showed a lukewarm response, one of us said, “I am not much interested in men”. In a smug smile this American woman then retorted, “Umm... You don’t know (the pleasure)”, and continued to lecture. This smug woman treated us like naïve and ignorant girls. We thought, she is a cheap slut. Only if fluent in English, we would have lectured on why we don’t want to sleep with many men. If wanting to sleep with many men is a choice, *not* wanting to do so is also a choice. She doesn’t understand or respect our choice”. (*Italics*, her emphasis) (Bo-ra, 21)

“Western women seem to think that we don’t know the pleasure of free sex, so we should wake up to their idea of free sex. They have this superior mentality, ‘We go ahead, so the rest should follow us’. It’s ridiculous of them to think that we may be a sponge absorbing everything. We don’t simply accept everything flooding in from the West, TV images. We are not idiots”. (Hyo-jung, 21)

“As far as I sensed (while learning English in Australia), Western people tend to think that they are far more advanced than us, more modern and better-off than us, so they have something to *teach* us. Such an arrogant thought. They know nothing about our long history and profound culture. We, Asian students were there in the Western country to learn English, but Western people tend to misunderstand that we came to their country because we envy their culture so

much and want to accept *everything* of their culture. Even our English teachers seemed to think so". (*Italics, her emphasis*) (Eun-soo, 22)

"Only if fluent in English, we would have lectured..." Embraced in the young women's talk are subtle nuances of conflict and antagonism against the built-in privilege of the Western language and its blind arrogance. The field of global mass culture is centered in the language of the West, and "it always speaks English" as an international language (Hall, 1991: 28). Through this particular example of Western sexuality, the Korean young women attack, in general, the preposterous assumptions posed by Western knowledge that the Western ways of life is installed, via globalization, as a universal cultural model for all women around the world, and that the rest of the world will therefore follow a trajectory close to the Western model and thinking as an ideal pattern of modernization: "Western people tend to think that they are far more advanced than us, more modern and better-off than us, so they have something to *teach* us". By assuming non-Western women as unable to act as social subjects in their own right, Western discourse in the Western language frequently erases and muffles the specificities of non-Western experiences.

The margin is a space of weak power, but it is a space of power, nonetheless (Hall, 1991: 34), it is a space of power that is not only made of victims, but also made of actors producing their own meanings – e.g. "It's ridiculous of them to think that we may be a sponge absorbing everything. We don't simply accept everything flooding in from the West, TV images. We are not idiots". These are specific responses of the margin to globalization, taking the form of stressing particularism. These imply that today's globalization or "globality" is mere ubiquity (Bauman, 1995: 24) that does not necessarily entail significant influences anticipated by globalist eulogists. Just as global television does not turn the Korean young women into a mindless passive imitator like a sponge, the power transmitted by the dominant language of English does not stimulate automatic conformity or submission. "The local is no longer the end of the road, the final and lowly destination of messages emanating from a lofty center" (Dayan, 1999: 19). Yet the very language of globalization, English, often fails to recognize that their imaginary receivers involve forms of resistance rather than adoption. Overall, central to the Korean women's comments above are bold

counterchallenges from the periphery, which talk back to the monopolizing Western colonialism, “Western parochialism” (Curran and Park, 2000: 1).

“To what extent the peripheries indeed talk back?” (Hanerz, 1997: 13). In effect, the extent to which the Korean young women talk back to the Western hegemony is substantially circumscribed by the linguistic force of English as an internationally dominant language. Given the difficulties in speaking the language of the Center, even these highly analytical educated women at the margin cannot take hearty pleasure out of speaking for themselves and talking back. They cannot contend openly due to their limited command of the English language. Considering this fatal linguistic limitation, it is not then possible for the Other to be a “co-equal speaker” capable of describing “equal exchange” in a world of unequal exchanges (Abou-El-Haj, 1991: 144). It is furthermore not possible to escape the dominating frameworks and pitfalls of Euro-American knowledge. Certainly, in these highly expressive non-English speakers, there arises anxiety and frustration about speaking, as they recognize subtle asymmetrical power relations formed around fluent English speakers. “Only if fluent in English, we would have lectured on why we don’t want to sleep with many men”. This resentment clearly indicates non-Western women’s “frustration with (dis)articulation of the subject” (Shohat and Stam, 1994: 345) in the linguistic force of the Western arena.

The voices of non-Western women are largely silenced, not only structurally but also linguistically, within the sphere of global knowledge production. Their silencing is not a result of their lack of agency, but of the failure to articulate in the dominant language of the West, hence, the failure to be heard adequately. Even if awkward in the English language, some attempt to speak, dare to talk back to the Western hegemony. But who will listen? Who will listen seriously to understand and respect non-Western women’s experiences or choices? The pressing issue is, who will listen seriously when the peripheries are brought to the academic table on the heated subject of globalization to speak about their alien villages? Who will listen with genuine interest when non-Western ordinary women speak for themselves over dinner table about their experiences? Does the Western hegemony of thought and language permit counter discourses? Are the dominating voices of listeners particularly

interested? Or are they indifferent to listening, but rather imagining and merely alluding to universalism?

“For me, the question ‘Who should speak?’ is less crucial than ‘Who will listen?’ ‘I will speak for myself as a Third World person’ is an important position for political mobilization today. But the real demand is that, when I speak from that position, I should be listened to seriously; not with that kind of benevolent imperialism, really, which simply says that because I happen to be an Indian or whatever” (Spivak, 1993: 194).

Who will listen? Tackling this question requires different forms of learning to admit and respect different women’s voices. Western discourse, feminism for example, needs to pay attention to the differences and antagonisms if they are to engage in a more adequate dialogue and fruitful exchange. In order to “unlearn the violence of universalism” (Ahmed, 1998: 57), Western feminists need to sense, hear the resisting voices of different women, whose experiences would become otherwise too alien to comprehend. This particular case of Korean young women can hopefully serve as indicative of such differences that matter; ineluctable anxieties arising from the asymmetrical linguistic power relations; and challenges talking back to the Western hegemonic orthodoxy, albeit not guaranteed for being listened to. “Feminism is in trouble if these challenges are ignored, as they do provide grounds for contesting the validity of feminist knowledge” (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2000: 208). And the West will have to develop much more “tolerance” for the world views of the Rest, the Other, no matter how “offensive” it finds them (Abu-Lughod, 1991: 135). However offensive, the authentic voices of the Rest may create a necessary distortion to the grand contour that the dominant language of the West attempts to draw of global culture and feminism. So finally I present the Korean young women’s offensive yet true stock phrases that are commonly expressed in their everyday language.⁶

“Body exposure in Western movies and advertising is too excessive, “Eat me please!” Women become more easily a sexual object for men. I don’t think Western women are liberated. Sexually, they are more subordinated”.

(Sung-won, 22)

“Western society voices loud women’s liberation. But I can’t imagine that Western women are more liberated, happier than us. They misunderstand sexual freedom as women’s liberation. If so, Las Vegas prostitutes should feel most liberated”. (Joo-hyun, 22)

“Men are simple and animal-like. Men can easily feel happy as long as supplied with tons of sex. But we women are different. We want more than just sex. Does free sex make women happy? Are Western women happy?”
(Yoon-kyung, 22)

Chapter 10 Conclusions

(1) Reflexivity at Work

This study has explored how Korean women deal with social change and make sense of their lives and identities through the cultural experience of television in everyday life as it is mediated by generation and class. This empirical work basically attests to the familiar argument that television is constitutive of everyday life (Silverstone, 1994), but furthermore argues for reflexivity at work: Reflexivity is constitutive of the experience of modern television. The practice of reflexivity is a defining characteristic of the experience of television, and television culture today comes to be a critical condition for reflexivity. The thesis overall demonstrates the reflexive workings of popular television culture in its multifold manifestations. It reveals how critical ordinary women are in their engagement with television and how reflexivity actually operates in the variegated settings of their everyday lives. It is expressive of reflexive modernization in a broad sense. This kind of reflexivity is already becoming “operative in the critique or the discourses of non-intellectual lay public groups at an informal and pre-political level”, as suggested in the Western notion of reflexive modernization (Beck, 1992, 1994). The ordinary Korean women in this study, regardless of their age and class position, engage in a process of self-analysis in their contact with television, and their on-going self-discovery exercise is enthusiastically carried out in the unique opportunity afforded by the research interview. As I have argued in the methodology chapter, the specific dynamics of the research relationship – the normative ideal of Korean female subjectivity, the capacity of TV talk combined with the unleashing of emotions – help create the conditions for an extraordinary discourse, which was already there awaiting the conditions for its actualization.

In this conclusion I will highlight three features central to reflexivity at work, and clarify the triangular relationship between reflexivity, television, and self-identity.¹ It should be noted that so far there has been little sustained attempt to grasp the notion of “reflexivity” (e.g. Beck, Giddens and Lash, 1994) as socio-cultural phenomena in relation to media, gender or culture; in other words, the contours and significance of reflexivity in media, gender or cultural studies are barely developed

(McRobbie, forthcoming). What underpins reflexivity? What I mean by reflexivity in this study is reflexivity as an everyday practice in the sense of “self-analysis, self-confrontation” (Beck, 1994: 5), or the “reflexive monitoring of action and its contexts” (Giddens, 1990: 36) to keep in touch with the grounds of everyday life. Arguably, reflexivity penetrates to the core of everyday life. The women in this study are able to reflect critically on their lives and monitor the actual circumstances of their activities as a discursive feature of day-to-day lives. Such reflexivity can operate more intensively “not in a situation of greater and greater certainty, but in one of methodological doubt” (Giddens, 1991: 84), in the “ambivalence of modernity” (Bauman, 1991). The conduct of self-analysis is essentially a way of coping with ambivalent social change and defining how to act in an evolving modern world. Korean women demonstrate the capacity to define reflexively their private social world, which is articulated through their own vernacular, such as TV talk. This kind of engagement is a form of “private reflexivity” (Beck, 1992: 7), whose reflexivity comes from an occasionally evident awareness of their own position with respect to the overweening power and hubris of dominant institutions and discourses. It is a significant form of “reflexive learning” (Beck, 1992: 6), for the women’s practice of reflexivity in the daily contact with television involves learning to deal with their present conditions in a new light, thereby attempting to expand the sense of self-fulfillment.

What is the medium of reflexivity? This relates to the second feature to be emphasized, which is the significant role of television in the reflexive process of self-formation. Reflexivity is said to require resources for it to operate successfully (Beck, 1992). I would argue that television, in “the media ensemble” (Bausinger, 1984: 349), may be the most powerful resource, acting as a nucleus of reflexivity. The domestic presence of television for ordinary women is not simply a means of escaping from boredom or deriving pleasure, but it also serves as a tool for the reflexive exploration of their lives, for the expression of the reflexivity of the self. While offering images and themes with “visually illustrated talk” (Abercrombie and Longhurst, 1998: 109) that evoke powerful forms of identification, television places new demands on the self and opens up a rare space where women can redefine and restructure the meanings, rules and resources of their life conditions. By opening up the self to the reflexive learning about forms of life and identity, the experience of television potentially

nourishes and enriches the formation of the self. Especially, the experience of the profusion of symbolic Western materials, with new possibilities, new openings and new imaginations, promises to deepen and accentuate the “reflexive achievement of self-formation” (Giddens, 1991: 215).

What is the role or consequence of reflexivity? This links to the final feature to be highlighted, the changing nature of self-identity. Self-identity can then be defined as a “reflexively organized symbolic project” (Thompson, 1995: 209-210). The self is the most viable object of reflexivity. I would argue that reflexivity penetrates to the core of the self and its deepest emotions. Or to put it in another way, television penetrates into not only the sphere of everyday life but into the heart of the self. ‘Who am I?’ ‘What do I want?’ ‘Am I happy?’ The women’s existential questions concern precisely the self and its emotional state. The reflexive awareness of the present state of the self enables them to incorporate the mediated experience of television into the process of self-formation, which necessarily involves “self-dissolution” (Beck, 1994: 175). Women struggle to inform and refashion the project of the self to renegotiate a coherent identity for themselves. It is an on-going project that is being routinely monitored, created and sustained as part of a broader process of connecting personal and social change. Such a labor-intensive project produces a particular biographical narrative of who they are, a sense of self-identity. Self-identity is precisely a symbolic project as reflexively interpreted and understood by women themselves. The practice of reflexivity takes a distinctively individual form in the creation of self-identity, while simultaneously signifying historically collective patterns of culture within which the formation and continuity of the self is embedded.

(2) Class, Generation, and Reflexivity

This Korean study reveals that the distinctive forms of reflexivity and the social dynamics surrounding the experience of television culture are influenced more by age than class. In other words, the “reflexive ordering and reordering of social relations” (Giddens, 1990: 17) in the light of continual inputs of mediated knowledge can be more adequately understood by the relations of generation than those of class. The dimension of generation is not usually considered to be important in Western sociology, (British) cultural studies, and feminist media studies.² These Western

theorists tend to recognize class as the crucial axis of domination-subordination and analyze the close interconnections between class and culture. This particular Korean case, however, shows many overlapping areas and striking similarities between different classes in the cultural experience of television, which means that the dimension of social class is less deterministic than is assumed in the Western paradigm.

It might sound paradoxical as I have constructed class as a category of analysis in the study, but “class analysis does not imply a commitment to the thesis that all social phenomena can be explained primarily in terms of class, or even that class is always an important determinant” (Wright, 1997: 1). In reality, this thesis inherits and inhabits the class determination of so many Western media studies with some degree of ambivalence. Of course, to an extent, class provides this considerable body of work with its crucial axis for analysis, and with this in place many of the most significant studies emerge which have shaped our understanding of media and everyday life, often with gender relations developing from and building upon that core of class as a key variable. But coming to this work as a Korean student, I am both indebted to it for helping to frame my own study here in a way which current Korean scholarship does not allow, but also frustrated by it. This frustration arises from my own sense that such a paradigm for understanding social inequities cannot be easily transposed into Korean society. Consequently I work with this tradition, it allows me to shape and give flesh to this current project and I also seek to claim some degree of distance from it. However, this is not to suggest that class does not matter. Although a “relative importance of generation and class” in Korea is different from that in Western societies and social identities (especially, class) are not always “in evidence” (Aronowitz, 1992: ix), any class differences should be carefully recognized. Therefore, in the following I will highlight the points of class differences in the Korean women’s everyday life intersected with television.

Class appears significant to the life trajectories of the old generation of women in their 50s. Class is primarily about inequality, exploitation and powerlessness; “class is a hidden injury” (Skeggs, 1997: 75). Misery of everyday life analyzed in Chapter 4 Section (1) clearly brings out how inequality and exploitation are consolidated and lived on a daily basis, as a hidden injury, in the working-class

women's lives. It indicates the emotional politics of class, which means that class is structural but the way class is significantly experienced for these Korean women (as a form of misery) is through affective aspects associated with repressed desires for emotional intimacy and the endlessness of want – not simply through the material conditions of everyday life concerning money, bare necessities, repetitive tasks, hardship and survival. Class here operates at an intimate and emotional level. These working-class women have long gone underground with their emotional needs and desires, while unquestioningly accepting the frustrating and exhausting situation in a notion of fatalism. The structures of inequality circumscribe the women's power, freedom and maneuvering in everyday social space, resigning them to “backstage performances”; their self still exists for others in the family. This is in polar contrast to “onstage performances” of middle-class women with a significant degree of power and freedom, as described in Chapter 7 Section (1) and (2). The everyday life of Korean middle-class housewives in their 50s is different from that often assumed in (Western) feminist cultural theory. A great deal of the women's time is taken up with healthy out-of-home leisure and enjoyment of life, which deliberately demonstrates the end of self-sacrifice, of being responsible for others. This age group of privileged women attempts to re-shape their self as being “individual”, however limited within the family and the domain of leisure, body work in particular. The body is the materialization of class taste (Bourdieu, 1984). In the increasing self-responsibility for health and bodily presentation in the expanded social space, television merely occupies a marginal space in the middle-class leisure life.

Young mothers in their 30s, both of working-class and middle-class, lead often claustrophobic lives, centered around child rearing and education, in an almost complete absence of leisure activities for themselves. The everyday life of working-class women with limited material resources is perhaps more claustrophobic, as revealed in Chapter 5 Section (2): “it saves money to stay in”, “if I can afford to do that [swimming], I'd rather spend more money for my kids' extra-curricular lessons”. Particularly, I want to point out that mothering, as a practice and an experience, has different implications on power and identity for the women of different classes. Professionalization of motherhood discussed in Chapter 8 Section (2) is a case in point. Within the constraints of being a staying-home housewife, educated middle-class women (unlike their working-class counterparts) deploy strategic plans to

generate a sense of self with the status, significance and recognition – not just a housewife but a “professional mother”. This alternative modern self is constantly at work, and in this way the women actively refuse to be positioned without power and identity. Furthermore, they deliberately engage in a translation of their self as a desirous, free and autonomous individual in the realm of fantasy, as indicated in Section (3). Ensuring their lost sense of self as being truly worthy of care and attention in the consumption of romance drama is a form of “self-justifying individualism” (Jhally and Lewis, 1998: 57); a compensatory return for these educated women, who give up their individual aspiration for the conflicting demands of caring roles, hence, much yearn for their lost freedom. Their reflexive self emerges in this yearning for freedom and search for an individual sense of who they are. On the other hand, for working-class women in their 30s, ontological security and identity are sought not in being an individual but in close relations with others (e.g. the family, husband, child, mother-in-law). A-ha! emotion highlighted in Chapter 5 Section (4) demonstrates this point: “A-ha! This is man and wife!” “This is mother-in-law!” Their reflexivity occurs through others, and their self is embodied in close connections with others. Precisely, the main themes of working-class life are, among the great themes of existence, marriage, children, “relations with others” (Hoggart, 1958: 105). The construction of self for working-class women is not part of a discourse of individualism but of a “discourse of dialogism and connection” (Skeggs, 1997). I am therefore suggesting a subtle difference in which being “individual” is a class-specific project of identity operating at the women’s lived and mediated experiences. Individualism is a reflexively organized project primarily pertaining to middle-class women.

Substantially, individualization is a marked feature of the identity politics of young middle-class women in their 20s. Their intense yearning for an independent life through a career choice signals a resistance to be fixed by historically defined social positioning, while assuming new gender roles and identities. However, the yearning for individualization is unlikely to be implemented in the problematic conditions of the contemporary Korean labor market, as I have argued in Chapter 9 Section (1). It is played out within the young women’s imaginative self-reflexivity compounded with feelings of uncertainty, insecurity and anxiety – hence, an unresolved identity of individualization. Against the constraints of the practical contexts, the Western notion

of “individualization” (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991) continues to fuel yearning, imagination and reflexivity in the young middle-class women’s increasingly cosmopolitan experience through travel and television consumption, as discussed in Section (3). Similarly, young working-class women in their 20s also desire to seek personal fulfillment in the world of work, however, not at the expense of a family role. Marriage is a crucial interest, as revealed in their “age-specific plan” about marriage in Chapter 6 Section (1). This is in contrast to the relatively less important idea of marriage for their middle-class counterparts (e.g. “If given either marriage or work, I will choose my work and success”). For the working-class women with a limited range of choices, marriage is posed as the one most open and desirable to them in identity politics, as a possible means of gaining material security, social mobility and acceptance. A woman who remains “unmarried” (e.g. single or divorced feminist) is perceived by them as a precarious self of fear – not only as a bodily evidence of social “stigma” but also as the “disgrace” itself (Goffman, 1963: 11), a signifier with lowly status lacking social acceptance and “respectability” (Skeggs, 1997). This fear is enveloped in these working-class women’s repudiation of feminism. Their structural positioning usually closes down access to economic capital and an improvement in social status, whereas symbolic and cultural ways to escape the working class are open up to them in their deliberately playful and imaginative journey outwards to the global telecity, as illustrated in Section (3) and (4). Their desperate yearning for the freedom of upwardly mobile transformation in the infinite imaginative journey is a self-reflexive, class-specific hope.

Overall, it can be suggested that class is still significant as a means of social differentiation among the older generation of women in their 50s, whereas the significance of class has declined among the younger generation of women in their 20s with common reflexive orientations towards the global, the modern and new. Individualization takes place in reflexive modernization and globalization, thereby, blurring class identity. “Class identity is re-cast in terms of individualization” (McRobbie, forthcoming), in a varying degree, among the young women of different classes. On the other hand, the forms of reflexivity are significantly dissimilar between different generations, which signifies that each generation of women is oriented in different directions and their constitutive culture is travelling along different roads in pursuit of different ends. The reflexivity at work shows a different

set of cultural tendencies aroused by historically-specific problems and conflicts that confront each generation. In short, generational differences clash more sharply in this study, revealing more distinctive generational cultures than class cultures.

Why are class cultures less distinctive in the women's consumption of television? For possible explanations I infer two historically-specific cultural factors. One is the evident fact of the remarkably high level of education in Korea, as already emphasized in Chapter 2. Education has been a motor of Korean modernization: The literacy rate is nearly 99% (Rowe and Kim, 1997); 95.3% of females and 95.9% of males enroll in high school; 55.5% of females and 92% of males enroll in a four-year university or a two-year college course (KWDI, 1998). This high level of mass education, coupled to the phenomenal rise of economic power, can "remove people from class culture and move beyond class society" (Beck, 1992: 91-105), although the notion of a class society still remains because there is not yet any suitable alternative. Such tendency is further tied to the mediation of mass media at the level of culture. Social class is not a fundamental dynamic shaping the life of "the mass person" (Martin-Barbero, 1993: 30-35), for the mass person does not pertain to any specific class and the way of consuming mass culture is not related to the division of social classes. Often the poor are the most productive consumers of popular culture as their creativity is not determined by the cost (Fiske, 1989b: 35). The high level of mass education can make it more possible for the productivity of consumption to be detached from class. Therefore, it is simplistic to assume that middle-class groups are always more critical or reflexive than working-class groups. I would rather argue that Korean working-class women, like their middle-class counterparts, equally demonstrate critical and creative modes of engagement with popular television culture.

The second, yet more fundamental reason can be explained by the unique nature of the nation. The social and political characteristics of Korea have historically constructed the collective ideology of "one family nation" in terms of language, lineage, race, ethnicity, culture, and so on, thereby imposing cross-class social unity, not social segregation. The modern nation Korea is an "imagined political community" (Anderson, 1991) structured and sustained by the powerful homogenizing forces, so there is generally internalized experience of living within the

imposed forms of the single unity – including the unique singularity and normativity of female subjectivity, as emphasized in the methodology chapter. Modern Korea is different from polyethnic Western societies, whose cultures and narratives of national identity are becoming increasingly hybridized in a current (post)modern order. The historical and cultural specificity of the nation Korea is in sharp contrast to the pronounced tendency of class-ridden society, especially Britain, where its national institutions feature prominently both as reflections and causes of class segregation – from the public schools to the National Health Service, the monarchy to the political parties (Adonis and Pollard, 1997) – therefore, class is internalized in the social process (Willis, 1978) and psychologically entrenched across lifestyle including leisure activities, consumption and other aspects of behavior in everyday life (Argyle, 1994). Class then becomes a more fundamental explanatory category for cultural criticism in this kind of Western society than in Korea where the homogenizing cultural characteristics have partly superseded social divisions.

This study therefore brings out more distinctive patterns of generation culture than of class culture. The patterns of generation culture show both the social dynamics between different orientations of each generation with an individual historical problem, and the intertwined meanings of television as reflexively interpreted and understood. Here I want to emphasize that the patterns of generation culture do not lend themselves profitably to generalizations, but these should be understood as “possible configurations of living cultures” (Benedict, 1935: 34), or imagined as an “arc” (Benedict, 1935: 17) on which are ranged the possible interpretations provided by each generation, by its own historical shape, its own common purposes, its own deep personal meanings. A culture is a whole way of life, a product of a human’s whole committed personal and social experience, with two significant aspects – meanings and directions (Williams, 1989: 4-8). It can be inferred that to make meanings in a culture is to find directions. Precisely, the meaning-making in the experience of television culture by Korean women can be viewed as a creative process to discover directions unknown in advance. The following configurations will lead to a better appreciation of different meanings and directions of cultures as discovered, created and lived by each generation of women in their relationships with television, which are characteristically marked by reflexivity.

(3) Tradition / Morality / Family / Nation

(Women in their 50s)

The most salient form of reflexivity in the cultural experience of television by women in their 50s is generally directed toward a discursive defense of tradition. For this older generation, reflexivity is largely limited to the reinterpretation, reconstruction and reinvigoration of tradition, such that the side of past is more heavily weighed down than that of future. Tradition is a means of handling time and space to cope with the changing demands of modern and social conditions. It is a reflexive way of organizing future, a mode of integrating the reflexive monitoring of action, which is inserted into and structured by everyday social practices. The reflexivity of TV talk by this generation of women is precisely one of the everyday social practices, which serves as clear evidence of the spoken language of tradition, of the traditional forces and features enduring in modern consciousness. Tradition is called to consciousness, actively reinvigorated and registered on the basis of reflexivity. A ritualized social practice, such as watching television drama everyday, is a practically organized medium for ensuring the preservation of tradition. Tradition does not disappear in women's everyday life, but rather a specific world for tradition is discursively articulated in their own terms through the engagement with television, defended as having moral value against competing modern ideas, flourishing against a world of radical change and doubt. However, it should be noted that in contemporary scholarship – including feminism, television media studies, sociology and cultural studies – there are endless discussions of modernization and what it means to be modern, but few indeed about tradition and its significant role in modern life, since tradition is merely assumed as the shadow side of modernity, an implausible construct that can be easily brushed aside (Giddens, 1999: 38).³ The tradition-directed reflexivity in the Korean women's experience of contemporary television makes it clear that tradition thrives almost everywhere, “beside, behind, between, or beneath the practices and structures of modernity” (Luke, 1996: 112), functioning as a lived metaphor for moral meanings, as a vision for moral directions.

Precisely, television is reflexively understood and appropriated by the older generation as a moral force of tradition, a means of moral fixity in day-to-day life. It powerfully intervenes in the women's everyday lives in a style that provokes and

conveys the deepest moral certitudes of tradition. The driven quality of their reflexivity urges television to teach tradition to the young. Older women stand the essential mediators or the “guardians of the tradition” (Smith, 1991: 28) who supply interpretations and meanings of tradition. Meanings interpreted through the engagement with television involve the implicit and explicit morality of female subjectivity and conduct, for example, “what it means to be a woman”, “how a woman should behave”, “what is normal and acceptable”. Within a normative horizon “the question of *acceptance* arises and with it anew the old question: how do we wish to live?” (Beck, 1992: 28. *Italics*, his emphasis). How people from all walks of life come to know their social worlds and engage the contours and contingencies of everyday life is based in “rules” that explain, prescribe and constitute social reality in certain preferred ways (Lull, 1995: 45). For the older generation of women, such rules are constructed, deliberately or unquestioningly, from the local knowledge of traditional morality, while accomplishing an important role. The traditional morality has a motivational urgency, which means that it is appropriated as a “means of power” (Hobsbawm, 1983) to legitimize their rules over younger women, especially daughters-in-law, who are increasingly becoming educated and modernized in the light of new experience of changing social conditions. Traditional knowledge provides a framework for action that can go largely unquestioned. What is subtly intended in the older women’s reflexive return to the traditional morality is to prescribe and impose the “unquestioning acceptance” of their rules – their preferred ways of life and female subjectivity – on the younger generations of women. It intends for a “deliberate refusal of dialogue” (Giddens, 1994: 65) on the basis of enforced and legitimized power of tradition. Power and knowledge embedded in tradition are largely naturalized, so they have the capacity to issue and enact binding commands to the young, which bind past to future for the control of time.

Specifically, the binding commands of reflexivity *de facto* define what the tradition actually is and where the traditional morality is actually embodied. It is precisely a site of the family. The family is essentially a moral and emotional content of the tradition, representing a traditional moral truth, or a “formulaic notion of truth” (Giddens, 1994: 63). There are ordinarily deep moral and emotional investments in tradition among the older generation of women, for the moral character of the tradition embodied in the family has an emotional drive to ontological security to

those who adhere to it. Tradition fuses morality and emotion. The family is a stabilizing moral framework of tradition that provides emotional supports and integrates them into a coherent identity. Tradition is a medium of identity, hence threats to the integrity of tradition embodied in the family can be experienced by women as “threats to the integrity of the self” (Giddens, 1994: 80). The domestic presence of television at this juncture is reflexively interpreted and understood as part of an on-going family moral discourse, in which “women are the bearers of the vision of family, its keepers, its producers” (Stivens, 1998: 17). In the engagement with television, the older generation of women actively produces and reproduces a formulaic notion of the family and the women’s role of sacrifice for the sake of their family. This indicates their desire to stay in time and place which remains untouched by the buffeting of change around it. Tradition exists in this privileged space of the family, claiming a privileged view of the family. Filtered through the moral prism of the family in their own centers, incoming modern knowledge of different ways of life and identity on a television screen is perceived to have an alien and contradictory quality against tradition. The family, the smallest social entity, becomes a prime site for the struggles between tradition and modernity, a “bulwark against the social cost of modernity and the dangers of fragmenting national and personal identities” (Stivens, 1998: 17).

The older generation’s moral investment in tradition extends from the smallest social entity, within the family, to the available largest, in the nation. The reflexive forms of the nation are neither backward nor primitive but contemporarily effective and deliberate forms with “placeable feelings and bonding” (Williams, 1983: 180-182), which are of fundamental human importance, and such feelings of wanting to belong to the nation in effect complete a national identity. The nation with its placeable identity provides women with a large-scale yet realistic socio-cultural framework for a modern world order, for it is felt to satisfy their “needs for cultural fulfillment, rootedness and security” (Smith, 1995:159) against the disruptive effects of massive social change. Precisely, the nation is experienced “emotionally” and has a discursive presence as a symbolic cultural resource of extraordinary importance (Lull, 2001: 153). The power of the nation and the enduring appeal of national identity are rooted in a micro-level of modern life, expressed and articulated through the symbolic rituals of everyday life such as television consumption, thereby consciously fostering

and reinvigorating cultural identity. National cultural identity is a constitutive part of the meanings and directions that the lives of the older women choose to take in the wake of the disembedding revolution of modernity. It is an “inevitable product of a dialectic of global modernization” (Smith, 1995: 3), yet a more familiar, secure and preferred meaning, by which the direction of future settles for the older generation of women in their 50s.

(4) Transition / Negotiation / Intimacy / Emotion

(Women in their 30s)

The distinctive form of reflexivity in the experience of television by women in their 30s is one marked by an evident transition from tradition to modernity. The transition is demonstrated by the reworking of gender relations within the family structure, changes in the relative social position and power of men and wives. Contemporary private spheres are constantly shifting, being negotiated and redefined by economic, political and ideological forces of modernity, while signaling a collaboration between modernity and tradition. The accelerating process of Korean modernization has systematically been a gendered one, as pronounced in the segmentation between the public and private domains: Korean men as breadwinners work the longest hours in the world, 55.1 hours per week (*The New York Times*, June 10, 2001), which inevitably makes them unavailable in domesticity, whereas women as domestic managers turn their energies toward childcare, child education in particular. Under this socio-economic segmentation women present a solid front of the family, and their husbands are outsiders. The nuclear family with the embedded standard biographies of men and women, built around the traditional characteristics of gender roles, still remains as a cultural norm, and importantly, younger wives' identities are still defined closely in terms of home and the family. But it should be emphasized that this modern form of feudalism is in effect an actively modified “negotiated family” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995: 2) with new arrangements by changing gender status and power. This is arranged by a “transactional negotiation” (Giddens, 1992: 3) that provides a distinct and extraordinarily powerful status for women as “wives and mothers” with the control of the private sphere – ranging from the control of their husbands and children, to the use of television. Korean housewives and mothers are not subordinated or oppressed in the private sphere as Western feminism would

universally assume, nor do they suffer “the problem that has no name” (Friedan, 1963). Rather they actively negotiate their position and power within private domesticity in their own modernist terms. Precisely, such negotiation is preconditioned on, and permitted by, the successful realization of the reflexive project of self, the reflexive understanding of the contours and contingencies of everyday life.

Reflexive forms of negotiation operate in its multifold manifestations in the variegated contexts of everyday life. The mechanisms by which the negotiation occurs are the range of tactical and strategic actions, which will lead to possible forms of active mastery and feelings of secure control over day-to-day life circumstances, or even the creation of a “fantasy of dominance” (Giddens, 1991: 194). The women’s negotiation is operating at a micro level by a new politics – combining both a “confrontational tactical plan of operation” (de Certeau, 1984), and a plan of action characterized more by strategy, which is similar to “Plan X” (Williams, 1983: 243-248): It is indeed a politics that draws on certain kinds of high operative intelligence, such as reflexivity, and a well-assessed planning, in that its objective is unknown “X”, in which the only defining factor is competitive advantage. This micro-politics is not meant to be a lasting solution, but the gaining of edge and advantage for what is accepted. Ordinary housewives and mothers do not believe that there are possible political ways to completely change the conditions of their life. Thus their chosen policy is for phased advantage, an effective even if temporary edge, which intends to continually weaken and reduce the power of their men, thereby keeping themselves at least one step ahead in the major domain of their phenomenal world – home and the family. Such an orientation is a limited but powerful way of controlling the space and any changes of direction of future, through the control of the immediately potential resources of domesticity. Most women take the resources that are ready made in their domestic life: For example, they tend to use their child, mothering, as a “channel – narrow but deep – for their own human will to power” (Rich, 1976: 38), and use television as a structuring medium of everyday life and a regulative mechanism of family relationships. They have the capacity to transform the routine resources of domesticity into adequate opportunities which would otherwise be absent in their surrounding social circumstances. With their own micro-politics, women are practically accepting and living in, yet simultaneously negotiating and restructuring the private sphere.

Crucially, the women's negotiating and restructuring of the private sphere is bound up with a transitional phenomenon of intimacy. With social and cultural changes resulting from Korean modernization – for example, a paring down of the size of the nuclear family, geographical mobility and breakdown of women's support networks and communities outside the nuclear family – the younger generation of wives are more likely to turn to their husbands for intimacy. Intimacy comes to be of integral element for the reflexive project of the self. Intimacy is taken as a reflexive project to be worked at, a process of self-fulfillment on the part of the women. Reflexivity is the inner-directed, turned inwards the personal relationship in marital life. Intimacy, or the quest for intimacy, is at the heart of modern forms of established sexual relationships (Giddens, 1991: 94). Living in the harsh socio-economic realities of the gendered "habitus" (Bourdieu, 1984), women realize the difficulties of maintaining a satisfying close relationship with their often unavailable husbands, therefore, struggle to find a way for a restructuring and controlling of intimate life behind which stands the whole weight of changes of the world outside. It may follow that for women, "intimacy is an orientation to the control of future time", whereas for men, controlling the future is anticipated by an economic activity, and intimacy or love remains closer to amour passion (Giddens, 1992: 57). The women's search for intimacy and struggle to secure a meaningful life in the familiar private sphere are closely intertwined with the particular way in which television is used. TV rituals, the women's deliberate use of television as a routine, are intended for a certain degree of binding force simply by virtue of regular repetition. Television lends its unique capacity to women to fulfil personal and emotional desires.

The women's quest for intimacy is to deliver enough "emotional" satisfaction, in large measure. A reflexive questioning of emotional satisfaction is a core object of the reflexive project of the self. In other words, the self's emotions occupy a central place in reflexivity. 'Am I happy?' The self-examination of emotional state, experiences and feelings in relation to men, is central to the women's quest for intimacy. In the modern "normal chaos called love" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995), women concentrate on emotionally fulfilling relationships and complete closeness, with their own ideal of love or the so-called pure relationship that "there is only one person in the world with whom one can unite at all levels" (Giddens, 1990:

121). Their focus on the dimension of emotion is clearly expressed in the way they experience television. "A-ha! emotion" and "emotionally-oriented fantasy" argued in the previous chapters are expressive of this phenomenon. In making meanings from modern television culture, women seek to gain pleasure which is oriented for emotional satisfaction, "good feelings", more than sexual sensation. It follows that modern hedonism is founded in emotion rather than sensation (Campbell, 1987: 69-77). Pleasure is sought via emotional and not merely sensory stimulation. Emotions have the potential to serve as immensely powerful sources of pleasure. The emotionally-oriented fantasy is distinctively modern pleasure based on a reflexive ability to create an illusion which is known to be false but felt to be true. Emotional satisfaction is the commodity of which women feel deprived, and that consequently is sought through the consumption of symbolic cultural resources, such as television romance drama. The reflexivity of the married women in their 30s is the inner-directed towards the meanings of personal relationships, wherein intimacy with its emotional satisfaction is a focal orientation for the reflexively organized symbolic project of the self.

(5) Openness / Play / Imagination / Freedom

(Women in their 20s)

The distinctive feature of reflexivity in the experience of television by young single women in their early 20s is one marked by openness, an embracing of the new, the modern and global, the other. This openness consists in the fact that traditional social practices are reflexively questioned, examined, altered and undermined in the light of incoming non-local knowledge. Young women are oriented outward towards a broader world, thereby dissolving the structural boundaries of tradition and loosening the connection between the self and tradition. Their reflexivity indicates the very comprehensiveness of the dissolution of tradition, a more compelling mark of transition from tradition to modernity, or the so-called reflexive modernization which is "abolishing its own ordering categories" (Beck, 1994: 33). This kind of reflexivity corresponds to processes of "intentional change" (Giddens, 1994: 57) with the consequential problematization of tradition and open dialogue with other alternative modes of life. By opening up the self to new forms of mediated symbolic Western materials, they create new arenas for "experimenting with the project of the self"

(Thompson, 1995: 233), therefore, new possibilities for self-formation. It can be said that young women are reflexively more open, fluid and contingent to change, while living in indefinite time-space extension full of experimental ways of being, acting, and playing.⁴

Play is a key aspect of the young women's opening out to the broader world, the mediated symbolic West. The West on the television screen is not taken as a world of strangers, but of friends, with whom a certain degree of familiarity is sustained through everyday routine contact. They playfully make a mediated excursion to the expansive world of the West, the new and different, the other. Play depends on a unique condition of "mobile privatization" (Williams, 1983: 188): What is pleurably experienced inside the television screen – like the inside windowed shell of a modern car – is relatively unhindered movement, open choice of direction, and the pursuit of self-determined private purposes, with people they want to be with, going where they want to go. This mobile privatization enables them to journey outwards to the global "telecity" (Bauman, 1993: 178) where the others appear solely as objects of enjoyment and offering amusement is their only right to exist. The new experiences of private mobility "disembed" or "lift out" (Giddens, 1990: 21) the players from the immediate locales of day-to-day lives and ordinary experiences. To move into a space and a time to play is to leave something behind – one kind of order – and the ordinariness of everyday life; to explore tissue boundaries between the real and the fantastic, between the inside and the outside, between the self and the other; and to engage in an activity of "as-if" culture that is meaningful (Silverstone, 1999: 59-64). Play in this way involves continuous movement across boundaries and thresholds between the real and the imagined.

Young women use an indefinite range of imagination out of play. The playful experience of crossing boundaries and opening out to the broader world is achieved through the power of the imagination. Boundaries, to those who have experienced crossing them, become a matter of play, and the element of play opens possibilities for freeing the imagination (Pieterse and Parekh, 1995: 11). It seems comparatively easy for the young women to employ a skillful use of the faculty of imagination to construct or conjure up ideal images of reality. They can be called a modern imaginative hedonist, much more an "artist of the imagination" (Campbell, 1987: 77),

who takes images from existing global symbolic materials, and reflexively reorganizes them in their mind in such an intended way that they become distinctively pleasing. The imagination is a means by which to conceptualize, structure, and schematize mental representations in service of the imaginers' intentions (Lull, 1995: 109) – in both emotional and rational ways that make them feel secure, happy, and “intrigued with life” in the realm of the cultural imagination (Lull, 2001: 158). The imagination is a reflexively organized field of social practices, “a form of work and a form of negotiation between sites of agency and globally defined fields of possibility” (Appadurai, 1993: 274). For these Korean young women, Western film is the center of gravity of the imagination, the “living, social mediation” (Martin-Barbero, 1993: 166) that constitutes new cultural experiences and identities. The presence of the other, *the West* in the Korean gaze, comes to be a critical condition for the imagination to operate fully. Identity is therefore experimented and reworked both in imagination and in everyday life. The imagination occupies a central place in the reflexively organized symbolic project of self-identity.

The imagination is closely intertwined with yearning, which is precisely yearning for “freedom” in this case. Imagination generates new forms of yearning, or the capacity to gain pleasure from an imaginative cultural practice becomes immediately connected with the already existing yearning. The importance of imagination lies in its relationship to yearning, longing, desire and, ultimately, consumption (Campbell, 1987: 78). The young women’s yearning for freedom is an inevitable consequence of both the growing awareness of dissatisfaction in the exigencies of Korean reality and the imaginative practice of consuming the symbolic Western world. Freedom is not a given characteristic of the human individual, but derives from the acquisition of an ontological understanding of external reality and personal identity (Kierkegaard, quoted in Giddens, 1991: 47). The reflexive exploration of the boundaries between the inside and the outside, between the self and the other, enables them to imagine the possibility of freedom. More specifically, it is freedom of “lifestyle”, openness to the multiple choices of how to live and who to be. Their project of self-identity pursues an “emancipatory life politics” (Giddens, 1994: 156), the possibility of a self-fulfilling and satisfying life liberated from inequality. The young women’s imagination is open towards the more individualized form of freedom, and directed far away from the traditional morality of sacrifice as lived by

the older generation of women in their 50s. Tradition loosens its hold yet without being destroyed completely. Still the imagination is not an independent, hermeneutic force existing outside social influence, but is subject to the pervasive structuring ability of the main concept taken up in social rules (Lull, 1995: 110). Precisely, the young women's imaginative practice of freedom is still subject to, and bounded by, the pervasive main concept governed by social rules – sexual morality. Not every Western image of freedom is randomly taken in as fuel for the imagination, but a particular imagined world is socially constructed, in which Western sexuality is ruled out. This means that the young women's dialogue with the West is a dialectical complex process, and that everyday life in the realm of the imagination is *ipso facto* not an amalgam of free choices. Everyday life is made and remade through the dialectical negotiation between the locally governed rules and the globally defined fields of possibility.

(6) The Tradition- / The Inner- / The Other-Directed Culture of Everyday Life

This study has shown the social dynamics of different forms of reflexivity with which to organize the project of self-identity, and the significant role of television as a resource for reflexivity. Reflexivity is organized around the axis of generation oriented toward different directions. The possible configurations are the tradition-directed (women in their 50s), the inner-directed (women in their 30s), and the other-directed (women in their 20s). The dialectical nature inherent in the reflexivity of each generation is a push-and-pull of different tendencies towards modernity, “a tensionful, contradictory, push-and-pull of different influences” (Giddens, 1990: 139). Tradition in everyday life is now under threat, beginning to dissolve by the experience of modernity, “experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils” (Berman, 1983: 15). As a consequence, the reflexive organization of the self becomes an inevitable unfinishable project to be worked at, and television, as historically-situated cultural experience, is integrated into the project of the self in everyday life.

Each generation of Korean women, with its own historically-situated reflexive organization of the self, proves both the capacity to define their everyday life situation and the energy to negotiate its unwanted influences and interventions

“from above” to construct their own space of living cultures. They make do with what they have, demonstrating “the art of being in between” (de Certeau, 1984: 30), of constructing their space within and against their place. They create for themselves an “expansive discursive cultural matrix” (Lull, 2001: 132-133) which helps them to find a way and increase control over their lives in a world where the stabilizing influence of culture is all being in transition. The women’s reflexivity operating in television culture with the ability to create the terms of everyday life is hidden, marginalized and without official expression in a dominant discourse, however, this unique cultural space of unofficial biographies shapes the other face of everyday life, “the power of everyday life” (Lefebvre, 1971: 35). This means that we should not simplify or dismiss women’s experience, the everyday negotiations of the mundane. The seeming disappearance of the “category of experience” in the field of media and cultural studies (McRobbie, 2002) should be re-visited to explore how subjects are constituted as different, how they operate differently, how they contest the workings of given ideological systems; in other words, to critically and politically re-work the “project of making experience visible” (Scott, 1992). “We are all the unofficial biographers of ourselves, for it is only by constructing a story, however loosely strung together, that we are able to form a sense of who we are and of what our future may be” (Thompson, 1995: 210). In the forces of confusing, bewildering, unsettling social change of modernity, Korean women struggle to negotiate the culture of everyday life in their own dynamic energies and capacities towards a deliberately encouraging, intended and hopeful movement, gathering their own “resources for a journey of hope” (Williams, 1983: 268). Television is an important resource for reflexivity in modern everyday life, which stimulates ordinary women to research their own lives and identities for a journey of hope.⁵

Appendix 1: List of Interviewees

Working-class women in their 50s

Name (pseudonym)	Age	Marital status	Occupation	Education	Children	Spouse's occupation
Byung-soon	52	Married	Service (noodle diner)	Less than high school	Three sons	Cleaning
Min-sook	51	Married	Housewife	High school graduate	One son / One daughter	Construction manual work
Soon-hee	52	Married	Sales (vegetables)	Less than high school	One son / Two daughters	Unemployed
Kyung-ja	50	Married	Sales (miscellaneous)	Less than high school	One son / One daughter	Unemployed
Soon-young	51	Married	Sales (audio components)	Less than high school	Two sons / One daughter	Unemployed
Na-ju	50	Married	Sales (clothing)	High school graduate	Two daughters	Unemployed
Jung-wha	50	Married	Housewife	High school graduate	One son / One daughter	Apartment security guard

Working-class women in their 30s

Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Marital status	Occupation	Education	Children	Spouse's occupation
Ha-jung	30	Married	Housewife	High school graduate	One daughter	Electrician
Eun-kyung	30	Married	Housewife	High school graduate	One daughter	Clerk (computer institute)
Sun-hae	32	Married	Housewife	High school graduate	Two sons	Porter (hospital)
Yeon-sook	30	Married	Housewife	High school graduate	One son	Chef
Nae-young	30	Married	Housewife	High school graduate	One son	Service (food diner)
Hee-sun	30	Married	Housewife	High school graduate	One daughter	Bank clerk
Young-joo	31	Married	Housewife	High school graduate	One son/ One daughter	Sales (convenience store)

Working-class women in their 20s

Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Marital status	Occupation	Education	Father's occupation	Mother's occupation
Jung-hyun	22	Single	Student	3 rd year, university	Distributor (steel/al.)	Housewife
Na-ri	22	Single	Sales (fashion accessories)	High school graduate	Unemployed	Sales (clothing)
Yeon-jung	22	Single	Student	2 nd year, college	Carpenter (furniture)	Housewife
Soo-mi	20	Single	Household helper	High school graduate	Family business (food diner)	Family business (food diner)
Suh-jin	21	Single	Waitress	High school graduate	Unemployed	Sales (kitchenette)
Kyung-joo	22	Single	Sales clerk (superstore)	High school graduate	Unemployed	Sales (miscellaneous)
Kyung-moon	22	Single	Nurse trainee	High school graduate	Dealer (auto accessories)	Housewife

Middle-class women in their 50s

Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Marital status	Occupation	Education	Children	Spouse's occupation
Bong-wha	52	Married	Housewife	High school graduate	Two sons / One daughter	Business (manufacturing)
Won-ja	52	Married	Housewife	University graduate	One son / One daughter	Partnership (language institute)
Go-sun	50	Married	Housewife	University graduate	One son / One daughter	Executive (trade company)
Jung-soon	50	Married	Housewife	University graduate	One son / One daughter	Manager (bank)
Chung-sin	51	Married	Housewife	High school graduate	One son / One daughter	Government clerk
Eun-kyung	52	Married	Housewife	High school graduate	Two sons / One daughter	Architect
Gwang-mi	52	Married	Housewife	High school graduate	One son / One daughter	Early retired (major corp.)

Middle-class women in their 30s

Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Marital status	Occupation	Education	Children	Spouse's occupation
Hae-ji	30	Married	Housewife	University graduate	One daughter	Auto dealer (major corp.)
Nae-yoon	31	Married	Housewife	University graduate	One son	Manager (finance firm)
Eun-sang	32	Married	Housewife	University graduate	One son	Stock broker (major corp.)
Mi-ra	32	Married	Housewife	University graduate	One son / One daughter	Administrator (major corp.)
Se-jung	32	Married	Housewife	University graduate	Two daughters	Engineer (major corp.)
Eun-young	32	Married	Housewife	University graduate	One daughter	Chemist
Sung-mi	32	Married	Housewife	University graduate	One son / One daughter	Government officer

Middle-class women in their 20s

Name (Pseudonym)	Age	Marital status	Occupation	Education	Father's occupation	Mother's occupation
Sung-won	22	Single	Student	3 rd year, university	Manager (bank)	Housewife
Hyo-jung	21	Single	Student	2 nd year, university	Restaurant owner	Housewife
Joo-hyun	22	Single	Student	3 rd year, university	Head teacher	Housewife
Bo-ra	21	Single	Student	2 nd year, university	Writer	Teacher
Eun-soo	22	Single	Student	3 rd year, university	Executive (trade company)	Housewife
Yoon-kyung	22	Single	Student	3 rd year, university	Business (food chains)	Housewife
Moon-sun	22	Single	Student	3 rd year, university	Sales (Electronics)	Housewife

Appendix 2: Example of Interview Transcription

This appendix reproduces the transcription of the interview with Soon-hee, a 52-year old working-class woman with one single son and two married daughters. Parts of this transcription have been subject to detailed analysis in Chapter 4, and all passages quoted there are printed in bold. The inclusion of this lengthy transcription intends to provide the context of how my research subject told her story, while also showing the reflexive nature of TV talk as discussed in the methodology chapter.

Researcher Do you often watch TV? Do you like watching TV?

Soon-hee I don't sit down still in front of TV and watch it from the beginning to the end. I sometimes watch dramas but don't particularly wait for a drama to come on. **I just watch a little bit of this, a little bit of that when time allows.** I have not watched any drama from the beginning to the end.

Researcher Can you still understand the story?

Soon-hee Oh, yes. It doesn't matter whether I watch it from the beginning to the end, or watch bits somewhere in the middle. It's just a drama! It's so obvious.

Researcher Is there any program you enjoy watching?

Soon-hee I didn't watch the early part of *Rose and Beansprout* (weekend prime time drama), but toward the latter part I enjoyed.

Researcher What do you particularly enjoy about it?

Soon-hee **It's our life!**

Researcher Our life?

Soon-hee It exactly shows our life. It's fun to watch because it shows the way we live.

Researcher What about, specifically?

Soon-hee The family, children, parents-in-law, all those problems.

Researcher Who do you like most, or dislike in this drama?

Soon-hee I don't really like the eldest son and the eldest daughter-in-law in this drama. They are disgusting. I really dislike them.

Researcher Why?

Soon-hee They don't properly serve their elderly parents (husband's parents). Their attitude is so wrong. That eldest son is married to a rich family and lives under his mother-in-law's house. That happens in Korea now, but I wouldn't approve of that. He does not consider his own parents. That's so wrong. The eldest son should care about his parents, first of all. The eldest daughter-in-law should behave accordingly as she is married to the family of the eldest son. The eldest son doesn't necessarily have to live with his parents. This is becoming a trend (in Korea). Nowadays, there is no obligation for an eldest son to live together with his parents and siblings under the same roof. But the eldest son, though living separately, should serve his elderly parents, first of all. He should try to maintain the harmony among his brothers, so that their wives can all get along without conflicts in the (extended) family. That's the eldest son's responsibility, no matter how far away he lives from his parents... (Soon-hee continues to emphasize the proper role of the eldest son and the eldest daughter-in-law).

Researcher Is there anybody you like in this drama *Rose and Beansprout*?

Soon-hee I like the second daughter-in-law (in her 20s). She is trying hard to create the domestic harmony. She, is the real woman! I like her type. She tries hard to be nice to her parents-in-law, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, busily maintaining the whole household. She is nice to her husband as well.

Researcher So she is an ideal young woman to you?

Soon-hee Yes. She is not a stupid bear. She quickly senses the characteristics of each family member. She is skilful and nimble in managing all the family relationships. That looks nice to me. The whole family should get along with each other. Family harmony is most important. But her mother-in-law, Kim Hae-ja, is not wise.

Researcher What is she like?

Soon-hee She is too talkative. I don't like that type. As an elderly person in the home, a mother-in-law should be quiet and oversee the behavior of young people, daughters-in-law. Otherwise, a talkative woman in the family will always cause domestic discord and fights even among men

in the family. Women should not talk much for the sake of the family harmony. But it's fun to see her in this drama.

Researcher What is fun about her?

Soon-hee She is very intimidated by her stern husband, but always says what she wants to say, in a silly and talkative way. While watching her, I come to realize how our talk can sound like petty nagging to our husbands. She is understandable to us, mothers. She is a typical Korean mother. She has lived an oppressed life by her stern husband, so expects much out of her four sons and daughters-in-law. While watching this drama, I think it would be nice to have a daughter-in-law like this second daughter-in-law.

Researcher For your son? How many sons do you have?

Soon-hee I have one son approaching a marriageable age. This second daughter-in-law may be the one that most mothers would like to have as their daughter-in-law. While watching the drama I think of my future daughter-in-law. I would never have a daughter-in-law like this first daughter-in-law (in the drama). She is too selfish and doesn't care about the harmony among the family. A daughter-in-law doesn't necessarily have to be educated or smart as long as she can take good care of the family harmony. She should be attentive to her husband, parents-in-law and other family members.

Researcher Is that what you would want from your future daughter-in-law?

Soon-hee When I marry my son, I would check, most of all, if my daughter-in-law is able to handle the family harmony among her husband, parents-in-law, sisters-in-law and brothers-in-law. If I take a daughter-in-law, I would treat her like my own daughters.

Researcher Do you have married daughters?

Soon-hee I have two daughters, both married.

Researcher Do they all get along with their family-in-law?

Soon-hee Many people, in fact, treat their own daughters precious, but treat their daughters-in-law like a house servant. People around me treat their sons precious but find every tiny fault with their daughters-in-law. I don't like that attitude. I have raised my daughters precious, why should I let them be treated badly by others (mothers-in-law)?

While watching dramas, I often find obnoxious mothers-in-law who treat their daughters-in-law badly. Children are all precious to their own parents... (Soon-hee goes on to criticize some of her friends who find faults with their daughters-in-law).

Researcher While watching TV, are you most interested in children?

Soon-hee Right. We mothers watch children (on TV). Sons, daughters-in-law, parents-in-law, how they live, whether they get along with their parents-in-law.

Researcher Are you not interested in husbands or anything else?

Soon-hee We are not interested in husbands or anything else at this age.

Researcher Why not?

Soon-hee Because children are most important. We don't really care about husbands at this age. **We usually talk about our children. Some might watch TV just for fun, but we think of our children while watching TV. We watch drama and think of our children.**

Researcher Only think of children?

Soon-hee Of course! We watch TV and think of our children. **I enjoy watching *Morning Forum* (daily variety-talk show). Every Wednesday that program helps people to find their separated families. They can reunite with the families separated for 40 years, 50 years. In those old days, we were really poor. Some sent their children to orphanages or rich families. But I am quite surprised to see that even young people, about the age of my children, were also deserted by their parents! While watching those young people who have suffered for a long time, I deeply realize that the whole sacrifice of my life only for my children must be very worthy. I had a really hard time raising my three children on my own.**

Researcher What about your husband?

Soon-hee **My husband didn't have a job.**

Researcher How have you made a living?

Soon-hee I had to raise my three children, selling stuff, food, cosmetics, clothes, and so on. I have raised my children and educated them as much as I could. **If I were not strong enough to raise and educate my children, they would be out on the street by now.**

- Researcher Do you not resent your husband?
- Soon-hee **I could have divorced hundreds times, but I endured because of my children. Children need both parents.** I will take a daughter-in-law who has both parents.
- Researcher Why?
- Soon-hee How she has been raised and educated at home is very important. A woman from a single parent tends to be ill-mannered and could easily divorce. Mothers need to be strong, capable of raising their children well in case fathers are unable to do so. That's the important role of mothers.
- Researcher Is that the important role of women?
- Soon-hee Of course. Women should be strong and able to raise their children well in any difficult situations. I would like my daughter-in-law to be strong and able to raise her children well. It doesn't mean that she needs to go out everyday and earn money. But just in case her husband is not (financially) able, she should be able to cope with (financial) difficulties. She should raise her children well. Even in those hard old times, I raised my three children on my own... (Soon-hee repeatedly talks about her hardships).
- Researcher Then, you might like a strong and able woman, for example, a young lawyer wife in a drama *The Last War*? Do you watch *The Last War*?
- Soon-hee Yes. People seem to criticize her, but I don't think she is too bad. While watching that drama, my friends get angry at her, raising their blood pressure, even swearing, "How could she do that? She's crazy! She's so wrong!" Mothers who have only sons criticize "her" for not respecting her husband, and mothers who have only daughters criticize "her husband" for not being (financially) able for the family. I think, her husband is to be blamed. He is (financially) totally unable. Of course, it's just a drama, there are some exaggerations. Because he is not (financially) able, his wife handles every matter on behalf of him. If a man is unable, his wife needs to be strong and able. Without this strong and able woman, this family will be a total mess. Thanks to this strong and able woman, this family will be all right.
- Researcher Then, she would be an ideal daughter-in-law to you?

- Soon-hee Not really.
- Researcher Why not?
- Soon-hee She puts forward only her opinions. She is exactly the image of today's young women. She is smart and educated. She speaks well because she is a lawyer. No matter what, she should respect her husband and elderly parents-in-law. She yells at her husband, kicks her husband off the bed. A woman should not ignore or discourage her husband. No matter how stupid and (financially) unable he is, he is the husband. It's not good to have a daughter-in-law who is smart and rich. A wife should not be better than her husband for the peace of home. She is from a rich family, but her husband is not. The husband's mother sells vegetables (in a traditional market). No matter what, she should respect her husband and parents-in-law. That's the principle.
- Researcher Do you also teach your daughters that a woman should always respect her husband and parents-in-law?
- Soon-hee Of course! That's the proper behavior of Korean women! Korean women should behave according to the Korean tradition! In fact, if I were that husband, I wouldn't live as such. It can happen nowadays that a young man wears an apron and cooks in the kitchen to please his wife and his mother-in-law. Of course, if the man's mother finds that out, she would go mad! This man is an eldest son. As an eldest son, he should serve and think of his parents first. As a mother with a son, I can understand that son's mother (in the drama).
- Researcher What can you understand?
- Soon-hee As a mother with a son, I can understand her. But she is being nonsensical sometimes. If her son is (financially) unable, she couldn't really hold her face up to her daughter-in-law. She should feel ashamed. I would feel ashamed if my son is (financially) unable. But this mother is being rather brassy. She finds faults with her daughter-in-law and blames her on every matter. **As a mother, I can understand her concern about her son.** If I were in her position, I would probably do the same. While watching the drama, I sometimes sympathize, "Umm... that's understandable. I might do the same".
- Researcher What is understandable, for example?

Soon-hee **Because that mom (in *The Last War*) has spent her whole life raising and educating her son, she expects to be served as well by her daughter-in-law. But this doesn't work out because today's young women are different from us. When this son does not side with his mom, this mom grieves, "How have I raised you? How have I raised my son?" It exactly shows our life. Because it's so real, it's fun to watch.** This poor son is trapped between his wife and his mom. He can't side with his wife because then his mom will be disappointed. He can't side with his mom because then it will bring constant discord with his wife. While watching this drama, I thought, I would try to negotiate with my daughter-in-law for the harmony of the whole family.

Researcher How would you negotiate?

Soon-hee Mothers of our generation are strongly attached to their sons even after the sons are married. While watching the drama, I think, that seems useless now. "How have I raised my son?" Frankly, we mothers have this strong attachment to our eldest sons. But it doesn't fit into a reality now. Young people nowadays are very different from us. We may need to let go of our sons once they are married and form a new home with their wives. This is a very difficult thing to do. I have one son. Frankly, I will feel very disappointed if my son marries someday and sides with his wife.

Researcher Really?

Soon-hee Really. All Korean moms do have the strong desire to live with their married sons.

Researcher Why?

Soon-hee Why? Well... Old moms have not received love from their husbands. So they want to expect everything from their sons. While watching together *Rose and Beansprout*, a friend of mine once said, "if I get older and become just like her (the mother character with four sons), please remember to criticize me". While watching the drama, we say that we should empty our greedy minds. We should not expect much out of our sons. "How have I raised you? How could you do this to me?" That's a mom's greed. I think, conflicts in the family are caused

by our greedy minds. Young women should be more considerate of older people, and we mothers should be less attached to our sons, although it's very hard. It should be done for the harmony of the whole family. As in a Buddhist saying, "we are borne into this world with empty hands and die into another world with empty hands". I come to think, what's the use of living greedily? I will try to be nice to my daughter-in-law in the hope that my daughters will be treated well by their mothers-in-law. The other day my son brought one woman... (Soon-hee talks about her impression about the young woman introduced by her son).

Researcher The relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law is such a complicated and difficult one, isn't it?

Soon-hee Mothers-in-law tend to be mellow on their sons, especially eldest sons, but harsh on their daughters-in-law. In a drama *See Again and Again*, I saw an obnoxious mother-in-law. She always found faults with her eldest daughter-in-law! Before getting married this eldest daughter-in-law learned cooking and did everything to please her mother-in-law. She is good at everything, cooking, everything really. She is the real woman! But this mother-in-law is not pleased at all. She always finds faults. In fact, most mothers-in-law (in Korea) are like her.

Researcher Why?

Soon-hee I can't understand those mothers-in-law. Daughters-in-law are all precious daughters to their own parents. Mothers-in-law should understand that their own daughters could be treated in that way once they are married to other families. Usually, mothers who don't have daughters but have only sons tend to be so harsh on their daughters-in-law.

Researcher Why?

Soon-hee Because they don't understand! They don't understand what it is like raising daughters. They haven't experienced raising daughters. Only a monk can understand other monks' minds, and only a thief can understand other thieves' minds. Only a mother with daughters can understand other mothers with daughters. There should be at least one daughter in the family, otherwise, Korean mothers-in-law can't get

- better... (Soon-hee reveals her married daughter's complaints about her mother-in-law who has only two sons).
- Researcher Is there any program you don't like on TV?
- Soon-hee I only watch what I like.
- Researcher What do you not like?
- Soon-hee I don't like unhappy dark stuff. I only watch things that give me laughter and enjoyment.
- Researcher You like *Rose and Beansprout*, *The Last War*, *Morning Forum*. Is there any other program you like?
- Soon-hee On Sunday morning I enjoy watching *Studio of Luck* (marriage-oriented, blind-date show)
- Researcher Isn't it a love-matching show for young people?
- Soon-hee I am so surprised to see how bold and brave young women are nowadays.
- Researcher Bold and brave?
- Soon-hee They bravely come out on television! They speak well, sing well, dance well! They are not shy.
- Researcher You could never imagine that?
- Soon-hee Of course not! In our days we could never imagine that. Indeed, time has changed a lot.
- Researcher How do you feel about watching those young women?
- Soon-hee Things have changed so much, so fast.
- Researcher Are you pleasantly surprised, or offended by their boldness?
- Soon-hee They look OK to me. They are all educated and have a nice job. They are pretty, tall, confident. Whenever asked by the MC about any questions, they all speak smartly and spontaneously. They sing and dance well just like professionals.
- Researcher Are you interested in this show because of your single son?
- Soon-hee Of course! I am concerned about my son's marriage. It's interesting to see young people on TV. I want to see what they are like. Through TV, I see what is changing among young women nowadays. In *Studio of Luck* I can see that. Young women are so bold.
- Researcher You learn through television what is changing among young people?

- Soon-hee If you watch young people's programs, you can see what they do, what they say, what they like. (Laughing) Once I learned this word "Wang-tta" (youth slang for "an excluded person"). That word seems very popular among young people. While watching TV with my son I once uttered this word. He was surprised looking back at me, "mom, where did you learn that? Wow! Our mom is so modern!"
- Researcher You felt good about that?
- Soon-hee We laughed. Of course. Who would want to be an old-fashioned crone?
- Researcher Do you usually talk with your son and watch television together?
- Soon-hee He doesn't have time to sit down and talk. But we sometimes talk when watching television together.
- Researcher Do you usually talk with your husband and watch television together?
- Soon-hee He doesn't listen to me. He rarely talks to me. My son says to me, "Mom, you should live your own life. You should have a good time with friends". **Husbands of our age are all similar. They are blunt, no fun. We have never had a family time together. We have never watched TV together.**
- Researcher Your husband doesn't watch TV together?
- Soon-hee He watches TV alone. Husbands of our age are not nice to their wives. They are not like young people nowadays. Surprisingly, one day my husband came home with something to eat in his hand, and threw it in front of me, bluntly saying, "try it". I thought, this could happen to me in my life!
- Researcher You were impressed?
- Soon-hee Yes! He had never brought anything to me. I thought, I should live longer to see it happen again! I really wonder how I have lived with this stock-stone-like man for a long time. We never sit down close and talk friendly... (Soon-hee complains about her husband's lack of affection).
- Researcher When you watch television with your son, what do you talk about?
- Soon-hee When we watch *Studio of Luck*, my son sometimes points to a woman (on the screen), commenting, "I like this type", "I like that type". Then I can see his favorite type. Nowadays, young women are very different

from us. They have grown up in an affluent environment. They are more educated, more confident. They want to go outside, work outside, play outside. They bravely come out on TV! While watching the program, I said to my son that I wouldn't want a daughter-in-law like those young women (in *Studio of Luck*).

Researcher Why not?

Soon-hee I wouldn't mind if my daughter-in-law wants to work outside. It's good for a woman to have her own work. That's better than staying at home all day long. It's true, staying-home housewives grow dissatisfied with their husbands, because husbands don't talk to their wives at home. Nowadays, I can see many young couples work outside. That looks nice to me. But there is a rule to keep. A woman should take good care of her home and family first. I wouldn't mind as long as my daughter-in-law takes good care of her home and family.

Researcher Home and family is more important than work?

Soon-hee Of course! Work is important, but it's most important to raise her children well and devote herself to her husband's success. **A woman should not neglect her family because of her work. That's the woman's role! What's the meaning of your work outside when the home is not going well?** Once happiness inside the home is achieved, then you can enjoy your own life outside, then you can demand anything you want because happiness of the home is your achievement... (Soon-hee continues to emphasize the importance of the home and family).

Researcher *Rose and Beansprout, The Last War, Morning Forum, Studio of Luck.* Is there anything else you enjoy watching?

Soon-hee *Housewife Song Contest.* I remember it's broadcast either on Saturday or Sunday morning. I don't know exactly when. At the weekend in the morning I ask my son what time it is broadcast.

Researcher What do you like about this show?

Soon-hee Those housewives sing very well. Some housewives sing much better than real singers. I wonder when they learned singing.

Researcher Are they young housewives?

- Soon-hee Most of them are young housewives. They sing very well. I wonder where they learned singing. Nowadays women are different. They are not shy. They sing well, dance well. They bravely appear on television.
- Researcher Do you envy them?
- Soon-hee They look nice to me. They are well-dressed and well-made up. Most of them are young housewives, but even old housewives don't have many wrinkles on their face. Their skin is firm. They must have a nice life. They must be married to a nice husband. Sometimes their husbands and children, or mothers come along on the show to encourage their singing. They look happy.
- Researcher Do you like singing?
- Soon-hee I am not good at it. I sometimes feel like learning singing though. Nowadays women sing well.
- Researcher Do you have a chance to sing outside?
- Soon-hee Occasionally in a social. It looks better if you sing well in a social. Those who step back, saying, "I can't sing", look stupid. Some women go to a singing room (karaoke) or learn singing at a culture center. A passive and shy woman is the virtue of old times. Nowadays a woman should be able to do everything well... (Soon-hee then talks about how young women nowadays are different from her generation).
- Researcher Why don't you go to a singing room or learn singing?
- Soon-hee: That's not my life. That's for comfortable women who have nothing much to worry about life. After sending off their husbands to work, they can drive a car, meet friends, have a lunch outside. Those women singing on television might lead such a life. What's a worry when they have nice husbands? It's important for a woman to marry a nice, (financially) able man. A woman's life is dependent upon the husband.
- Researcher Is that so?
- Soon-hee Life cannot be the same for every woman. It's a destiny.
- Researcher How is it a destiny?
- Soon-hee You see, some women meet nice husbands, some don't. Some women lead a comfortable life, some don't. It's in the (Korean) old saying: **A woman's life is destined from her birth. If you are destined to live**

a good life, you are destined to meet a good husband. A woman's life is dependent upon the husband.

Researcher Do you feel bitter?

Soon-hee I am all right. My children are all grown up, they will thank me. I have the home to go back to after work. I have a husband, he's not much fun though.

Researcher Do you still think it's better to have a husband?

Soon-hee Of course! It's better to have a husband and children. No matter how much they pester you, it's better to have a husband and children. You will realize it as you grow older and weak. Happiness is not just given to us. We have to seek it, like the TV title *Seeking Happiness* (weekend morning variety-talk show). If we can feel happy with even tiny things, that's our happiness. The home and family is most precious of all... (Soon-hee, again forcefully, emphasizes the importance of the home and family).

Notes

Chapter 1

1. This study was initially prompted by my encounters with Korean divorced women of my age (under 28 at that time) in America (1993-1998). This led me to look into the statistics of the rising Korean divorce rates and reflect: Why do young women divorce? What are their real conflicts? Are they caused by female assertion of autonomy? How do young women struggle to negotiate? This generated a research agenda on Korean women's changing lives and identities, the meanings of contradictions and tensions between the traditional and the modern or the global.
2. I was first drawn to the strikingly changing images of Korean advertising (e.g. images of free and independent young women), but advertising was not the media that ordinary women routinely consumed. Then I considered women's magazines, but their circulation and readership were limited to small segmentations (e.g. university students, young middle-class housewives). Radio in Korea functions primarily as a transmitter of music (e.g. Western/domestic pops) for teenagers. On the other hand, television is the most widely popular media, occupying a high proportion of Koreans' everyday leisure life. See Chapter 1 Section (2). Therefore, I have chosen television as an object of study.
3. A relative importance of age and class in Korea is different from that in Western societies. Korean contemporary scholarship has paid attention to socio-cultural dynamics surrounding the relations of generation, whereas relationships between "class" and "culture" remain under-researched. Thus, it is my intention to consider the dimension of social class in this study to examine whether, and how, women's different class positions distinctively influence their cultural experiences of television.
4. I am aware of using Western feminism theory as a conceptual reference and comparator, despite its Euro-centricism and irrelevance (in some cases) to Korean women's lived experiences.
5. When was the subject "woman" emerged in relation to the mass media? As early as 1960's Betty Friedan (1963) in *The Feminine Mystique* criticized the American

mass media, and Gaye Tuchman *et al.* (1978) compiled research on the effect of media sex-role stereotypes upon American girls and women.

6. For critiques of ideology, see Stuart Hall (1996) and Elizabeth Frazer (1987). For critiques of the ideology of gender identity, see Teresa de Lauretis (1994), and Ien Ang and Joke Hermes (1996). For the purpose of my study, I find John Thompson's (1990) reformulation of ideology most useful. As Thompson argues, what is required in the study of ideology is the everyday appropriation of symbolic forms in specific social contexts: "If we are interested in the way in which meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination, then we must examine how the meaning mobilized by mass-mediated symbolic forms is understood and appraised by the individuals who, in the course of their everyday routines, receive media messages and incorporate them into their lives" (Thompson, 1990: 24).
7. Also see Marjorie Ferguson (1978) and Rosalind Coward (1984).
8. I find, paradoxically, feminist psychoanalytic analysis inherently, physically, (and maybe politically) rationalizes women's oppression under patriarchy. Or speaking of feminist politics, can it be rather viewed that psychoanalysis thus holds a political significance for it speaks about feminine subjectivity "as a problem", as argued by Jacqueline Ross (1986)?
9. Given the problematic category of "woman" how can we more effectively, more politically account for diversities and differences in that category, without embracing the all-victimized-femininity theory of ideology, without reproducing the ethnocentric and universal claims of semiological reductionism, and without falling into the trap of biological psychoanalytic essentialism? Jackie Stacey (1987) and Ruby Rich (1978) in film studies provide different insights.
10. Sonia Livingstone (1996) investigates the history of media effects research and reveals that the findings of the field are in many ways inconclusive. How should the question of media effects (ideology) be reformulated? The future of media effects research should direct to audience interpretations and develop links with media effects, argues Livingstone.
11. Here is an example (Hobson, 1982: 112-113): "The woman with whom I had gone to watch the program was serving the evening meal, feeding her five-and three-year-old daughters and attempting to watch the program on the black and white television situated on top of the freezer opposite to the kitchen table.....Clearly,

even though she cannot give the program her full attention,” the fact is that she can still enjoy *Crossroads*.

12. Budd, Entman and Steinman (1990) argue that subcultures can be reactionary or accept most elements of the status quo.
13. To put it in Michel de Certeau's (1984) terms, the powerless (women) take some control over their lives by employing silent, transgressive, ironic or poetic "tactics" (reading activity) to "make" or "do" with their social situations.
14. See the critique of Roger Silverstone (1994: 146): "there is no evidence of how that [reading] activity feeds into other parts of their lives or indeed of how other parts of their lives feed into that activity".
15. Similarly, see Ien Ang's (1991: 10) criticism: "Our understanding of television audiencehood has been thoroughly colonized by the institutional point of view".
16. Ang (1985: 136) views popular pleasure and fantasy as a relatively separate dimension from feminist politics and her standpoint is that "the personal may be political, but the personal and the political do not always go hand in hand". Brown (1990, 1994) argues that feminine discourse can be potentially empowering and politically progressive since women resist and make fun of dominant ideology in their own safe spaces of soap opera gossip networks. Radway (1984: 17) poses a seemingly romantic question as to "how romance writers and readers as well as feminist intellectuals might contribute to the rewriting of the romance in an effort to articulate its founding fantasy to a more relevant politics". Modleski (1979: 104) proposes that rather than starting from nothing feminists can look for clues to women's pleasure already present in existing forms, and not only challenge this pleasure but also incorporate it into feminist strategies.
17. As David Morley (1989: 39) argues, "it is this kind of detailed empirical attention to the varieties of subject positioning and to what actually happens in particular situations which we need to pursue". John Fiske (1989: 75-76) discusses the links between semiotic power/resistance/pleasure, the role of television and social change, yet the gap is obvious in his hope that "what I would like to see is the methodologically daunting project of tracing actual instances of these links being made, of these processes being actualized".
18. For audience research on women of color, see Lee and Cho's (1990) work on Korean women fans of soap operas in the US, and Mankekar's (1993) work on Indian women audiences.

19. Ironically, Ellen Seiter (1989: 225) makes a self-contradictory statement in her empirical work: “we judge our failure to contact any women or men of color for the interviews, however, as a serious limitation of the study”.
20. Professional stability of women in the Korean media industry is substantially low, partly because of the “lack of professional consciousness” in women themselves (e.g. women’s work outside is secondary to their domestic roles).
21. Although women appear more often than men as primary visual characters in prime time television commercials (56% to 44%, respectively), there is a significant difference in the gender-role portrayal in their level of employment (Leung, 1995).
22. Women on television drama are now changing slowly – asserting more power at home, strongly expressing their opinions and having a professional job. *The Last War* is a case in point. See Chapter 4 Section (3).
23. Why is romance drama (e.g. *All About Eve*, *Legend of Love*) enormously popular? See Chapter 8 Section (3).
24. When local productions are abundant and dominant, foreign productions with perceived low quality are less likely to be selected and favored by local audiences. In general, Asian viewers do not like sex, vulgarity, violence and crime in Western programs, nor do they see Western media as corrupting their cultures because indigenous cultures and values are strong enough to withstand any foreign influence (Goonasekera, 1995).
25. For detailed analyses, see Chapter 6 and Chapter 9.

Chapter 2

1. Note, however, that it is even difficult for Asian academics to understand the long colonial history of “other” Asian nations, and even difficult for Koreans situated in the proximate Asian terrain to understand multi-racial and multi-cultural conditions of Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, etc.
2. Confucianism required three obediences of women: Before marriage, a woman had to obey her father’s orders; when married, those of her husband; when widowed, those of her son. Women’s life cycle was continuously dependent on the males, and this was subordination of the inner sphere to the outer sphere (Deuchler, 1992: 231).

3. Women were totally excluded from formal education. Throughout the Chosun period, formal educational systems such as Sung-Kyun-Kwan (national academy), Hyang-Kyo (local schools) and Seo-Dang (elementary schools) provided education for males only (Jeong-shin Han, 1996).
4. On the contrary, it is interesting to note that during the Silla (4th century A.D – 918) and the Koryo (918 – 1392) periods preceding the Chosun dynasty (1392-1910), when Buddhism with its egalitarian and humanistic ideals was predominant, women enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom and status interacting with men outside the house relatively freely in non-family contexts. About 70% of Koryo poetry and songs were works of women vividly portraying their emotions and thoughts in the free and active everyday life (Kyung-won Cho, 1994). However, seen in Confucian moral perspectives, Koryo women were far from the ideal. The problem of women's ethics emerged as an urgent political issue, and the Chosun dynasty came to limit the legitimacy of women's social roles (Yun-shik Chang, 1983).
5. In the process of propagating the Confucian patrilineal family system, ancestor worship was given a great emphasis, and this necessitated the eldest son of the family to be the one in charge of offering rites for ancestors (Jeung-seun Yi, 1996).
6. As the reproduction of sons was most important for a family, a husband and his wife slept together only on certain days which were usually arranged by the husband's mother. Sexuality in the formal marital relationship was explicitly for procreation and there was no room for sexuality for pleasure (Young-hee Shim, 1998).
7. *Naehun* advised women to obey their husband's parents: "Always follow what the parents-in-law ordered... If the parents-in-law call you, answer promptly and obediently" (Kyung-won Cho, 1994).
8. Adultery was severely punished: An upper-class woman who committed adultery was decapitated in 1423, and her lover was banished (Deuchler, 1992: 259).
9. Women themselves have internalized the Confucian notion of sacrifice and their inferior status. This trace is manifest in ethnographic research on *yangban* (upper-class)-descendant women living in contemporary Korea of the 1990s (Hae-joang Cho, 1996). Despite the reception of modern education, a woman explained that chastity was required only for women because earth cannot have two heavens. To

the researcher's question, "Why are men superior to women? Aren't both earth and heaven indispensable?" she responded, "The earth cannot step on heaven, can it?"

10. Although religious movements stirred women's self-consciousness, they were not substantial enough to bring change at a societal level due to severe suppression by the male-dominated ruling class. The reason for the suppression was Western religions' objection to Confucian ancestor worship rites.
11. Protestant missionaries, who observed the earlier failure of Catholic missionaries to disseminate Catholicism in Korea, adopted indirect methods of promulgating Christianity by establishing schools and hospitals as well as churches.
12. Until 1892 at Ewha Womans University, men lectured to women students from behind a screen so that the presence of women would not distract them (Gelb and Palley, 1994: 4).
13. The number of two-year college students in Korea have greatly increased since the early 1980s. This is partly due to the implementation of the legislation (No. 3054) which prompted the growth in the number of two-year college enrollments to solve the serious social problems of the increasing number of frustrated *jae-soo-saeng*; high school graduates who fail in the competitive four-year university entrance test (Tae-hong Kim, 1996). The majority of these repeaters are "male" students and they take the test every year to avoid being categorized as a "loser/failure".
14. It is not my intention to explicate Korea's economic miracle. Refer to George Hyde (1988), Seung-kyung Kim (1997), and Hagen Koo (2001).
15. An "unmarried mature" female worker (e.g. aged over 30) showing a high degree of work concentration, achievement and competitiveness for promotion tends to be frowned upon as being "unfeminine".
16. The compulsory or customary retirement of women at marriage is often the case, which helps to preserve a male-dominated bastion (Pil-wha Chang, 1994). Although the 1987 Equal Employment Act specifies these practices as illegal, habitual custom and culturally reinforced gender roles still operate.
17. While it may be true that the physical space of contemporary Korean housing is "over-dominated" by women, this does not necessarily lead to the creation of their own room to be independent, as in Virginia Woolf's (1929) liberating sense of a room of one's own.

18. In general, from childhood Korean men have been educated by their mothers not to enter one area in the house which is perceived exclusively as a woman's domain – kitchen.
19. This explains why over 90% of Korean women prefer sons to daughters: A male child is essential for providing a successor for the family lineage, for maintaining status in the family and securing economic and emotional support in old age (Eunshil Kim, 1995).
20. If "gender is performance", as argued by Judith Butler (1990), a Korean woman who refuses to perform her traditional role is to be socially excluded as a "non-woman".

Chapter 3

1. For details of interviewees, see Appendix 1.
2. For an example of interview transcription, see Appendix 2.
3. Note, however, that there is currently a lack of reflexive space and critical debate concerning methodological issues in this field. Existing audience studies have rarely illuminated their experiences of conducting research, rarely deconstructed the complexities of the research process. Little attempt has been made to reflect critically on the research process itself: issues of access and acceptance, multiple roles of the researcher, the relationship between the researcher and the researched, and the possible impact of this relationship on the nature of the research data and knowledge produced. These issues are left largely undiscussed. Therefore, I seek to provide methodological reflections in an attempt to trigger a whole range of issues arising from the research process that need to be fully addressed in media audience studies.
4. My argument here is that knowledge is socially situated, affected by the researcher's embodied performance in a particular ethnographic moment. Data does not simply exist "there" waiting to be revealed as wholly autonomous and representative of a whole truth, but the data is a product of discursive practices of research, which is mediated by the researcher's bodily presentation of self. The researcher's body, the normative ideal, plays a crucial role in the research process.
5. Reflexivity is now increasingly understood to be central to the constitution of contemporary subjects and self-identities (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992, 1994);

however, ordinary women as reflexive subjects and their capacity of self-reflection, or their TV talk as a critical form of reflexivity have not been fully recognized in media audience studies.

6. The category of emotion is very recent sociological work, and there is a growing body of work on emotion: For example, Giddens (1991, 1992) on intimacy and security; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) on love and relationships; Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1990) on emotion, discourse and the politics of everyday life. It is my intention to recognize emotion as an enabling category of analysis and a social descriptor. The notion of love and emotion runs through the research chapters along the axis of tradition/change/modernity.
7. There is no doubt that emotion plays a key role in doing research. My argument therefore is to think with and engage with emotion in the research process, and to strategically deal with the fact of emotion for theoretical and intellectual purposes.

Chapter 4

1. Unquestioningly, these women carry on a harsh self-forgetful ritual of everyday life and “make their toil a badge of dreadful honor” (Hoggart, 1958: 50) devoted to the family. I am aware of my use of Richard Hoggart throughout since his insightful analysis of British working-class life and popular culture has some parallel and relevant points to mine. See Section (2) and (5) in this chapter, and especially, Chapter 5 Section (4).
2. Regardless of their unemployment status, the position of the Korean working-class husband is a “master in his own house” (Hoggart, 1958: 54).
3. By and large, this finding demonstrates that television is intimately interwoven into the fabric of everyday life (Silverstone, 1994), and that women’s talk on the experience of television represents “everyday family life” (Rogge, 1989), a world whose framework is often taken for granted and unquestioningly accepted as normal.
4. Some might raise a question, why do these women not find a hope in their daughters? In a Confucian patrilineal society as explained in Chapter 2 Section (1), sons remain with the family forever, whereas daughters leave after marriage. That’s why a majority of Korean women want to bear sons, and as long as mothers are pleased more with sons, gender arrangement will reproduce.

5. This is less clear and more questionable in relation to “family life”, argues Lefebvre (1991: 94-95). It is in everyday life that the ideology becomes natural.
6. For a parallel argument, see Harindranath (1998).
7. Why do women “collude” in what might be seen as anti-women or anti-feminist? Why are they drawn into the parameters of patriarchal power? Why do they willingly enact its principles? These questions remain unresolved to me.
8. Similarly, the moral frame of drama is that of “personal life” (Brunsdon, 1997: 15). The emotions that become the subject of drama are grounded within the “family” (Glaessner, 1990: 126).
9. What is happening on the women’s viewing moment may be “retraditionalization” (Abu-Lughod, 1998: 25), with the implicit assertion of Korean counter-modernity or anti-modernity.
10. This empirical case attests to John Thompson’s (1995) discussion on the media and tradition and Anthony Smith’s (1990, 1991, 1995) persistent argument for national identity.

Chapter 5

1. On the other hand, a television set in the homes of older women in their 50s tends to be placed in a sitting room and used exclusively by their (often unemployed) husbands.
2. In this ritualized appropriation, television becomes “almost another member of the family” (Gunter and Svennevig, 1987: 4), forming a “dialogical relationship” (Spigel, 1992: 3).
3. Here TV rituals signify a process of “detraditionalization” (Giddens, 1991). Although the young wives’ desire for the continuation of family life is similar to that of older women in their 50s, what seems different is “detraditionalization” in terms of more egalitarian and emotionally intimate relationships with their husbands.
4. The “money issue” implicated in this context reveals a wealth of data about the quality of working-class housewives’ lives and why they are more likely to be home-confined than middle-class housewives.
5. Young women (presumably, middle-class) are said to face fundamental conflicts regarding political and moral choices between work and family/childcare: They

find themselves in the position of having to choose what kind of life and what gender roles they want to adopt, and this ability to choose is experienced as a psychic and emotional burden attended by a great deal of pain and confusion (Heide, 1995: 3). However, this kind of pain and confusion seems rather easily resolved for these Korean working-class women. First, this is basically because there is “no such a choice” worthy of consideration for them. Their wage is simply too low to choose, as one woman asserts: “There seemed no choice for me. I earned just a little bit of money and all my wage would go directly to my babysitter. Then, it would be better to stay in and raise my child on my own”. Second, this situation is further aggravated by the women’s increasing feeling of insecurity about leaving their child in an other’s care in a modern society. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, I offered these mothers a period of free babysitting in the appreciation for their long hours of interviews, but all of them politely rejected my offer. The women’s desire for the provision of “security” is another reason for quitting their jobs. And they tend to find possibilities for gaining a satisfying sense of self-identity through their child. Another woman clearly puts it: “Sitting in this room I sometimes think about *my life*. There seems nothing much I can see as *my life*. The child seen in my eyes everyday is something I can feel as *my life*, something I can feel as *mine*” (*Italics*, her emphasis). As individuals become increasingly powerless in conflict, they develop a paradoxical ideology of self-control and self-creation (Craib, 1999: 107). The agent for that self-control and self-creation for these Korean women is their child. See Chapter 4 Section (2), and Chapter 8 Section (1) and (2).

6. “Relevance” is central to popular culture, for it minimizes the difference between text and life (Fiske, 1989a: 6). Relevance can be produced only by the viewers, for only they can know which texts enable them to make the meanings that will function in their everyday lives.
7. Similarly, this point is illustrated by Richard Hoggart (1958: 105) on British working-class life: Its main themes are marriage, children, relations with others.
8. Note that “audiences discriminate and tend to prefer home-produced television, rather than slavishly pursuing imported programs” (Tracey, 1997: 355), and that locally produced dramas compete well with imported Western forms despite vast difference in production costs (Tracey, 1985, 1988). As shown in this Korean case, the women’s enormous interest and pleasure in the domestic programs is due

to their particular “relevance” to the audiences’ everyday life and greater “emotional affinity” to the audiences’ everyday experience.

Chapter 6

1. These working-class women are poor and relatively uneducated, but “uneducated” here means “high school graduates” in an extremely education-g geared society like Korea. Refer to Chapter 2 Section (2).
2. It is interesting to see that these Korean young women’s critiques seem to espouse what may be termed as “postfeminism” (Friedan, 1981; Hewlett, 1986); a kind of self-critique of earlier feminism for ignoring women’s desires to fulfil their roles for the family. Betty Friedan (1981) argues that the primary emphasis of second-wave American feminism (in the 1970s) on women and work, although initially necessary to eradicate the “feminine mystique” that served as a barrier to women’s achievement of equality, has now been replaced by an equally pernicious “feminist mystique” that tends to ignore altogether women’s needs for motherhood and family life. In a similar vein, Sylvia Hewlett (1986) claims that the second-wave feminism has little connection to the mainstream of (American) women’s lives since it fails to account for women’s desire to bear and raise children.
3. I do not intend to use the term “post-feminist family television” (Press, 1991; Heide, 1995; Dow, 1996) in this context, since Korean television has not yet even experienced a full-bloomed “feminist” era. However, their critiques seem relevant to understand the ideological functions of contemporary Korean television: For example, conflicts for married career women are often “avoided” by showing them mainly occupied with family rather than work-related tasks. By avoiding conflicts, television tends to “simplify” the complex issues of women’s work and family life. Through the simplification, television discourse “closes off” the ways in which the pressing social issues could be thought about. Television in this way functions to provide simplified “fantasy-level solutions”.
4. The young women’s everyday life and its sources of information from contemporary television are infested with psychologism (e.g. “discover who you are”, “learn to know yourself”) and “do-it-yourself” cultures.

5. The tremendous expansion of symbolic Western materials has “disembedded” young women and played a part in a process of “detraditionalization” (Giddens, 1991).
6. For parallel arguments, see Tamar and Katz (1990), Ang (1996), Tracey (1997), and Robins (1997).
7. The broad aim of this section is to understand the complexity of how global television is actually absorbed in a non-Western culture. I have demonstrated complicated relationships between global television and local meanings, dialectical aspects of cultural interpretation, and wider implications in the issues of globalization. Also, see Chapter 9 Section (3).

Chapter 7

1. Even Korean husbands tend to acknowledge the centrality of women in everyday family life, as one man expresses it (quoted in Hoffman, 1995: 119): “The man is the head, but the woman is the center. The family can function without the head, but it falls apart if there is no center”.
2. In fact, this age group of middle-class women was most inaccessible for the research interviews during the day as they were not at home.
3. Adrienne Rich (1976) says: “Once having been mothers, what are we, if not always mothers?...it is not enough to let our children go; we need selves of our own to return to” (p. 37). I agree with Rich. But the question for these Korean mothers is, where and how to return when decent work opportunities are not available to them?
4. Feminism in Korea largely echoes the American second-wave feminism with its primary emphasis on “work-like-men careerism” lacking a capacity for maternal and familial thinking. Refer to Chapter 6 Section (1).
5. The prime time daily drama *Can't Help Loving you* was often brought up by these middle-class women throughout the research interviews, and opened heated debates on its family morality.
6. For these middle-class mothers, the quality of television is often defined as “good” when it brings normative middle-brow “family values”.

Chapter 8

1. This point about middle-class women's domestic power and freedom was also discussed in Chapter 7 Section (1) and (2).
2. Men's long hour culture of work is a block on more flexible gender-role arrangements, while it more or less makes men tired and disengaged in family life. It also makes television a women's thing simply by virtue of the unavailability of men.
3. Note the argument of Linda Nicholson (1994: 82): A major problem with feminist uses of categories such as mothering, sexuality, and reproduction is that such uses project the meanings these activities hold for contemporary "Western, white, middle-class women" onto the lives of women of different classes, cultural backgrounds, and historical periods.
4. For details, refer to Chapter 2 Section (2).
5. These Korean women actually talk about how they deal with social change, and engage with a process of "reflexive modernization" (Beck, 1992, 1994).
6. I am not here drawn strictly to a psychological definition of female fantasy or endorse universality of female fantasy. The purpose of this analysis is to highlight the notion of "caring" (from significant others) as the essence of (married) women's desire and fantasy. Interestingly, however, there are some similarities, shared meanings and vocabularies between my research data and Western feminist work (e.g. Radway, 1984; Geraghty, 1991): Caring is a high point of disparity between women's real-life experience and wish, hence, the fantasy of caring is an equivalent dream for something better than the women's everyday experience.

Chapter 9

1. Overall, there was a pronounced degree of exuberance and vibrancy in the research interviews with young middle-class women (as well as young working-class women). This suggests a great deal of interest in the topics I presented to them.
2. For details on education and work, refer to Chapter 2 Section (2) and (3).

3. This, again, echoes the argument of American economist Sylvia Hewlett (1986: 401), as mentioned earlier in Chapter 7 Section (3): “We have not yet created a context that allows a woman to reasonably expect that she can have both a career and a family”.
4. Consuming television entertainment demands no attention and its audiences exist only to be entertained. Yet the specific meanings constructed from the entertainment text are rather more complex and sophisticated than the alleged elitist criticism of “mass deception” (e.g. Adorno and Horkheimer, 1979).
5. *Friends* and *Alley McBeal* were the most watched and often discussed Western television serials among these young middle-class women.
6. At this point, I want to raise a question: Is there a need to “de-westernize” media and communications studies? I am aware of a growing sense among the (Western) academic community about the need to go beyond the traditional “Eurocentric” view of transnational media and communications and to broaden the terms of research agendas in the era of globalization. But how might this be done, particularly given the problem of listening?

Chapter 10

1. Here my intention is to show how the notion of “reflexivity” (Giddens, 1990, 1991; Beck, 1992, 1994) is integrated into the everyday consumption of “television media” and the creation of “self-identity” (Thompson, 1995).
2. In the field of feminism, apparently, Sylvia Walby (1997) in *Gender Transformations* takes up the theme of generation differences between women being a major structure of difference.
3. Some have focused on tradition/nation, for example, John Thompson (1995), Anthony Smith (1990, 1991, 1995), David Chaney (2002), to name a few.
4. In fact, young women’s everyday life includes all the use of technology (especially, computer information/entertainment), which allows for fully experimental ways of being, acting, and playing. Young women are more immersed and connected to a technological “media ensemble” environment, and such an expanded world is part of their everyday life and of being Other-oriented.

5. I deliberately use the term “research” in this context because, in a reflexive way, “we are all researchers of our own lives” (quoted from a friend in a personal conversation).

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