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Title: Fabrication of Loss: The Cultural Discourses on the Crisis of Masculinity in South Korea under Neoliberalization

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Abstract:

This study examines the discursive changes of masculinities in South Korea throughout the economic crisis of the late 1990s and subsequent neoliberalization. For this purpose, this study explores how Korean masculinity, which had been the symbol of economic development, was challenged and contested in the 1990s, especially including the period of the International Monetary Fund intervention between 1997 and 2001. In particular, it examines academic discussions and traces popular cultural texts, including the novel *Father* (1996), the film *Friends* (2001), and the series of TV ads about “a new family” by Samsung Corporation. In so doing, this study discusses how hegemonic masculinities were reconstructed in relation to the economic reformations and neoliberalization of South Korea. The economic crisis, caused by the shortage of foreign funds in 1997, signaled national failure, particularly of the government-driven economy and developmental nationalism as the ultimate symbol of the patriarchal system. The mass layoffs and increasing number of temporary workers also threatened the myths of salary men and of middle class families. At the same time, the discourses of the crisis initiated repetitive discussions that mourned the declining status of fathers, husbands, and males in general, and called for reconstructing traditionally harmonious, happy families. Despite these rhetorical, economic, and social changes, gender hierarchy remains intact in South Korea, where women’s increased participation in labor and households has not furthered gender equality. Women and youths are still regarded largely as dispensable or temporary workers whose contributions are non-essential to household economies. The elaboration of the discourses on the crisis of masculinity helps us understand the processes of de/reconstructing hegemonic masculinities under the economic crisis of the 1990s. This study argues that the discourses on masculinities became a discursive strategy for suturing the crisis of masculinities without challenging gender hierarchy under a globalizing and neoliberalized economy.

Introduction: Korean Masculinities at the Crossroads in the New Millennium

This study examines the discursive changes of masculinity in South Korea throughout the economic crisis of the late 1990s. For this purpose, firstly, it explores how Korean

masculinity, which had been the symbol of the economic developments, was challenged and contested in the 1990s, including the period of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) intervention between 1997 and 2001. Secondly, it examines how hegemonic masculinities were reconstructed in relation to the economic reformations and neoliberalization of South Korea. Ultimately, we aim at demonstrating that the cultural discourses on the crisis of masculinity indicate not only the challenges against Korean masculinity, but also the urgency of reconstructing hegemonic masculinities and masculine domination under the national crisis of the late 1990s.

During the past decades, South Korea has been successful with its economic development: its success is often called a miracle, and along with other East Asian countries, it was labeled as one of the Four Tigers (along with Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore) and represented a Confucian capitalism. Based on the economic success, furthermore, Korean governments inquisitively pursued globalization both economically and culturally. One representative case is to pronounce “*Segyehwa*” (globalization in Korean) as the national agenda in 1995. Even now, South Korean government is very active with expanding its FTAs (Free Trade Agreements) with many countries, including India, EU, and the U.S. Despite its economic development and the extensive globalization, however, South Korea is still in the bottom in Gender-related Development Index: it ranked at 115th in 2009 and at 104th in 2010 respectively among 134th countries from the annual reports by World Economic Forum. Such backwardness in gender equality in South Korea seems contradictory to the economic development and the extensive globalization that South Korea has undergone during the past decades. Such seemingly contradictory trends invite a couple of questions: whether South Korea is under the condition of masculine domination or Confucian patriarchy, and whether there has been a moment of crisis in the status of Korean masculinity, and if so, how such a crisis could be sutured.

As a way of answering these questions, this study traces cultural discourses on the crisis of masculinity with focus on the economic crisis of the late 1990s. The radical economic vicissitudes of the 1990s brought about not only economic and political, but also ideological and social changes into Korean society, including changing roles of families and different statuses of males. Until the 1990s, Korean society enjoyed its continuous economic growth: the economic affluences provided women relatively more opportunities in receiving higher education and working in professional fields. Meanwhile, there were

burgeoning cultural discourses on gender and sexuality along with feminist movements both in popular cultural texts and in academics. However, such heydays were immediately shadowed by the economic crisis in 1997, represented by the IMF intervention. The economic turndown caused many companies to be bankrupt, which also led to mass layoffs and the increasing number of temporary workers. This national crisis and the following reforms, prescribed by the IMF marked the transformation of South Korea toward neoliberalization. At the same time, such a national crisis caused the spreads of the discourses of crises, e.g. the breakdown of family, and disrupted the myths of salary men and of middle class family. As the result, the attempts for reflecting on gender inequality and patriarchal masculinity were overwhelmed by the discourse of family crisis, which led to a great emphasis on decline of father's status and male crisis.

This study argues that the cultural discourses on the crisis of masculinity during the economic crisis indicated the urgency of reconstructing the male domination and privileges of the masculinity, while exaggerating the little loss of Korean males under the highly patriarchic system. Thus, it examines various popular cultural texts: the representative cases are a novel *Father* (written by Kim Jeonghyun, 1996), a film *Friends* (dir. Kwak, Kyungtaek, 2001), the national campaigns on “New Intellectuals” in 1999, and several television commercials. Such discourses provide ample resources for illuminating how Korean society would respond to the crisis of masculinity, patriarchy, and family system at the moments of the national crisis and neoliberal globalization. The elaboration of the discourses on the crisis of masculinity will help us understand the processes of de/reconstruction of hegemonic masculinities in South Korea, and think of what is at stake for Korean women at the moment of the extensive globalizing and liberalizing economy. Current syndromes such as “superwoman”, “gold-miss” and “alpha-girl” should be considered in connection to the tenacity and the hegemonic position of patriarchy in Korean society.

Crises of Korean Hegemonic Masculinity in the 1990s

The 1990s witnessed emerging attempts to critique the traditional masculinity in South Korea. Simultaneously, this period marked a transition in cultural discourses from a grand narrative of political ideology to micro-narratives which paid attention to individuals, everydayness, family, and so on. Under the effect of burgeoning feminist discourses and postmodernism,

multifaceted and plural masculinities have been represented in various cultural texts compared to the previous period when patriarchal fatherhood and traditional manhood were intact as the normative masculinity.

In order to better illuminate such changes, this section briefly discusses the traditional manhood and the components of the Korean hegemonic masculinity, which had not been doubted or even discussed critically before the 1990s. Masculinity is a historic product, but it is not a fixed entity, and each model of hegemonic masculinity is produced within a particular political economy in combination with corresponding philosophical ideals. Likewise, the elements of hegemonic masculinity were always a product of historical contexts, and the elements of emerging hegemonic masculinity could be overlapped with, and reconstructed through the previous ones. (H. Jung, 2011).¹ Korean hegemonic masculinity, which had stood as the normative one in the past decades, was produced in tandem with the ways the developmental regime mobilized, utilized, and even appropriated the historical legacy of the Confucian patriarchy. Such a combination had been intensified in the context of the national division and the ongoing military confrontation with the North (Moon, 2002). In a similar way, Moon suggests three components of Korean hegemonic masculinity, which are the ability to provide for the family, military service, and distance from daily reproductive labor (2002, pp. 83-84). In short, Korean hegemonic masculinity was forged through the incestuous combination between the Confucian legacy and economic developmentalism under the condition of the militarization.

In South Korean contexts, the Confucian patriarchy contributes to the configuring the gender relations mainly two ways (S. Cho, 1998; Moon, 2002). On the one hand, it neutralizes a gender hierarchy by understanding the hierarchal relationship as morals, and on the other hand, it establishes a superior-subordinate relation within family by granting a male an mastership, which consists of both responsibility and authority, over family members. The Confucian governance which upholds the “three bonds” (san gang) of superior-subordinate relations – ruler to subject, father to son, and husband to wife –was deeply embedded in the developmental regime in South Korea (Han and Ling, 1998). Particularly, the compressed economic growth in the 70s and the 80s relied on the developmental

¹ For example, dominant forms of Anglo-Saxon masculinity have drawn on an eclectic mix of competing and partially overlapping and historical archetype including a Greek citizen/warrior model, a patriarchal Judaeo/Christian model, an aristocratic honour/patronage model, and a Protestant bourgeois rationalist model (Hooper, 1999, p. 477).

authoritarianism, which is a hybrid of Western capitalism and Confucian parental governance (Han & Ling, 1998). Meanwhile, the road “to industrial capitalism under the regime of Park Chung-Hee needed family as a main institutional framework for mobilizing social and economic resources and controlling the political attitudes of local populations” (Chang, 2009, p. xx). Such a modernizing project under the Park regime took on hypermasculized (state) developmentalism (Cho, E., 2000; Han & Ling, 1998). State’s hypermasculinity here requested the feminization of other social areas through reviving the Confucian masculinity and highlighting Korean traditional values (Cho, E., 2000). With the legal system of household mastership inheritance (*hojusangsok chedo*), males were regarded as a head of household (as a supposedly primary income earner and a bearer of authority).

In South Korea, furthermore, militarization and national security also characterize the patriarchal developmentalism, given that the developmental strategies were fraught with military connotations. Within the capitalist industrialization during the militarized dictatorship, they were also called “industrial soldiers” as heroes of economic development. President “Park’s hypermasculinization of the state succeeded primarily because it resonated with traditional notions of Confucian manhood: that is, morality (do deok, 道德), strictness (eom, 嚴), “face” (ye, 禮), and responsibility (chaekim, 責任) for household prosperity” (Han & Ling, 1998, p. 65). Being a soldier, as a defender of a national community, had also become an element of hegemonic masculinity in the context of the national division and the ongoing military confrontation with the North (Moon, 2002, p. 89; E. Kim, 2002). Male fidelity in the Confucian culture was reconstructed under the developmental regime which was based on the intimate relationship among the state, industry and military (E. Kim, 1998). Furthermore, performing any of reproductive works – housework, nurturing and caring – was considered unmanly or emasculating due to the ideal of family provider and soldiers as well as the Confucian masculine ideal which was strictly separated from the life-sustaining activities of the household (Moon, 2002).

While such a hegemonic masculinity had been intact, South Korea on the one hand has “achieved fast capitalist industrialization, political democratization, and social structural changes”, and on the other hand, it has exhibited a gender inequality as well as a particularly strong family-centrism (Chang, 2009, p. xx). Based on the economic success and democratization of society, for the past decades, females also could have more opportunities

for higher education, working opportunities, and various ways of consumption and cultural experiences, but the women's increased opportunities in higher education have not led to the women's economic independence (Moon, 2002). At the same time, such dreary situation "gradually changed over the past decade with the revitalization of women's movements and their successful lobbying for reform of the equal employment law" (ibid., p. xxx).

The challenge against the hegemonic masculinity in the 1990s is partly an outcome of burgeoning cultural discourses on gender and sexuality along with feminist movements. Explorations of various femininities and critiques of masculinity and patriarchy were attempted both by male and female writers. The production of a new film genre called "male melodrama" and representation of "de-familism" would be representative examples. These cultural texts began to describe the traditional masculinity as problematic, and to highlight the oppression and violence by male-dominated family, effeminate men, and a new family romance without a father.

Furthermore, Korean males have become objects simultaneously of mockery and ridicule in cultural texts. One of the representative examples was the then-buzzword of "Gankeun Namza [the bold men]" and its related stories (1995). In these popular narratives, Korean men were described as outdated, bigoted, and inefficient. These stories were based on the societal changes in which the idea of jobs for life was in danger, so many men in fifties and even late forties were requested to submit the early-retirement. Mid-aged men who had ruled the family as breadwinners suddenly felt embarrassed and bereft once they lost their jobs. The economic capacity, i.e. to earn family wage functioned as a material base of fathers' authority in middle class family (Kim & Sung, 1999; K. Min, 2009; J. Lee, 2005). These men who did not know any domestic chores and housekeeping were left helpless after the layoffs. Such a condition in South Korea threatened the traditional masculinity and patriarchal hierarchy in families. These stories about bold men satirized crass and stupid men who could not accept such changes in their family. Therefore, the bold men in these stories kept asking the traditional requests to their wives without understanding the changes. In one episode, the bold men ask their wives to prepare breakfast, ask their wives how they spend the pension or ask their wives to switch channels to sports broadcasting from melodramas, which are supposedly females' favorites. These stories had been widely popular before the economic crisis, and many news articles, journals and television programs mentioned or quoted them.

The discourse on the crisis of masculinity in South Korea was made salient and even overwhelming by and large by the economic crisis of the late 1990s. While the financial crises swept many countries of Asia in the 1990s, South Korea also had to accept IMF bailout from December 1997 to July 2001. This economic crisis severely damaged the ideal of the developmental state and the myth of national development. The IMF intervention brought about fundamental changes not only in the economic and political sectors, but also in cultural and ideological realms. At risk was the hegemonic [developmental] regime that consisted of authoritarian governments, major conglomerates, crony relationship between politics and economics, and developmental nationalism (Cho, 2008). People also began to recognize the negatives of the rapid and centralized economic success, the bureaucracy of governments, liaisons between governments and companies, and family-owned conglomerates, which were primarily regarded as the virtues of the economic developments. People also realized that the government could not be the last fortress for their personal welfares. Throughout the IMF reform, many people got fired or were hired as temporary workers, and the gaps between the rich and poor have been widened. The IMF intervention signaled the national failure, particularly the failure of the state-led economy and developmental nationalism (as the ultimate symbol of patriarchal system). The sense of crisis or even failure came to be prevalent, accompanied by frustration with developmental nationalism (Cho, 2008).

At the same time, the IMF intervention and its reforms signaled the extensive neoliberalization of its economy and even South Korean society in general. Before the 1990s, South Korea had been regarded for decades as a typically developmental state (in which government involves itself in the whole economic process, in order to maximize production elements for foreign trade). Meanwhile, South Korea had been also widely recognized as an example of a successful export-oriented industrialization strategy, meaning that its governments promoted exports for the national profit. In the early 1990s (and even in the late 1980s), however, several indications of moving toward neoliberalization in South Korea were observed. With membership in the WTO and OECD (1995 & 1996), changes in the government's roles and power had been enforced: to keep up with global standards, South Korean governments continued to deregulate some economic sectors, to increase the maximum allowable amounts of foreign investment in Korean corporations, to reduce its own influence on foreign exchange control, and to replace the fixed exchange rate with a variable one. Representatively, Kim-Youngsam government (1993-1998) abandoned the long-term

economic plans and dismantled the Central Economic Board in 1994: previously, the actions of the latter had epitomized the developmental state model. To put together, the changes in the 1990s indicated the transformation of Korean society toward neoliberalization, including changes of economic structures, relations between political and economic realms, and changes of natures of nationalism.

While Korean society has been reformed and neoliberalized, the hegemonic masculinity under the developmental regime was broken up and even diversified. The collateral damages from the IMF reforms and neoliberalization such as the mass layoffs, increasing number of temporary workers, the request of the early retirements and so on, contributed to threatening the ideals of salary men, the middle class and males as the breadwinners (and households), and ultimately to destroying the hegemonic masculinity, which had been constructed under the developmental regime. At the same time, however, South Korean people during that time became familiar with new idioms such as “IMF homeless” and “family breakdown” through which they came to think about their familial, social, and economic predicament (J. Song, 2009). It was the 1990s that for the first time the traditional men and hegemonic masculinity was the object of contentions and disputes in South Korea.

Reconstruction of Korean Masculinities under the Economic Crisis

Through the economic crisis and the structural reform, the hegemonic or normative masculinity was no longer tenable, which however indicated neither that the system of patriarchy or masculinity totally collapsed, nor that the gender equality was much improved in South Korea. Instead, various levels of cultural discourses on family, father, and brotherhood immediately surged throughout the IMF intervention. These discourses tended to encourage fathers/husbands, and, then to enable them to get back pride and energy. Meanwhile, Korean women were still called to serve the patriarchal system (both as temporary workers and emotional labors in their homes). Such a condition implied that Korean masculinities and their hegemonic positions could survive the economic crisis along with complex and contradictory constitutions of hegemonic masculinities. By highlighting the four dimensions among cultural texts on men and gender relations, this section elaborates how the crisis of Korean masculinity was sutured in the moment of its own crises. The four

dimensions are compassion on fathers, male bonding, new ideal men, and women in supporting roles.

Compassion on Korean Fathers: *Father* (1996)

During the economic crisis, cultural discourses from popular culture journalism brought to fore fathers' mental panic, distress, and feelings of loss and isolation within home. Along with the family crisis discourses, fathers who lost their economic ability as breadwinners began to be described as those who were hurt as well as in need of sympathy and emotional support from their family members and even the society. Fathers or mid-aged men, who were once the objects of mockery and ridicule, were presented as objects of sympathy or pity. By enabling fathers to regain prides and spirits, furthermore, such discourses even sounded to restore their loss of authority.

Father, Korean novel published in 1996 and became a bestseller over the IMF bailout period, epitomizes the popular discourse on the fathers' crisis at that time.² The novel describes how the family members who are emotionally detached from their father in its beginning restore their affection and bonding with him. It focuses on his isolation from his wife and children in colleges whom he spent his whole life on providing them money and necessities. Even when he is diagnosed with incurable cancer, the father keeps it secret from his family members. Emotionally disconnected from them, he suffers from loneliness as well as physical pain, and, in need of affection and empathy, he falls in love with another woman. Nonetheless, their family members failed to notice both his physical pain and emotional turmoil. However, the novel ends up with describing the reunion of family members and with their fully understanding and appreciation of the father's sacrifice and dedication to the family while he passes away. As Moon (2002) points out, this novel opportunely provides a sentimental portrait of a dying father who faithfully perform his duty as a provider without his family members' appreciation, and efficiently contrasts the thoughtful and self-sacrificing father and family members who rarely pays attention to father's physical changes and his concern for family. The novel's commercial success and popularity show how the South Korean society responded to the crisis of masculinity and to

² Due to its mega hits, this novel was remade into a film in 1997.

those discourses.

Television drama *Did We Really Love* (1999) also represents fathers' crisis. In this show, a middle-aged man who lives with his wife and a grown-up daughter in her late twenties, works as an executive director in a company. Once he was previously in charge of layoff during the economic crisis, the layoff finally comes to him. While he is continuously relegated in his working place, he keeps it secret from family and his wife is described as a big complainer without knowing how hard her husband's work is. Like the novel *Father*, he also comes to be in an intimate relationship with another woman, which is represented as the outcome from his loneliness. The wife finally knows his situation and she turns to an understanding wife and actively helps him to start his own small business.

In these discourses, fathers, who have less economic capacity, authority, respect, and even love from their families and the society than traditional ones, are described as ones who are hurt in need of sympathy and emotional support (H. Park, 2011). The discourses on fatherhood which emphasized one's moral duty also encourage respecting the father/husband as the family head regardless of his economic ability (Moon, 2002, pp. 86-87). Under the economic hardship, family breakdown was considered to be resolved, and meanwhile, fathers' loss of authority was regarded to be restored. In so doing, these discourses brought Korean fathers and men into the center of the family and even to reinstate the male breadwinner model during the economic crisis (Kim & Sung, 1999; J. Paik, 2009; S. Park, 2009).

Nostalgia for Male Bonding and Strong Masculinity: *Friend* (2001)

Another notable trend on masculinity was witnessed in the genre of "gangster movies," which enjoyed its heydays in the box offices in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. By adopting the elements of the comedy genre, gangster movies in South Korea attracted wide popularities while they satirized social problems such as corruptions, inefficiency and absurdity of systems, bureaucrats, and official organizations such as school, police, governments and even companies. However, the essences of the gangster movies can be summarized as the societal desires of accomplishing male fantasy and reinstating strong masculinity (J. Yoo, 2002). As Yoo argues, the popularity of gangster movies could be made possible through two societal reactions at that time: one is against the installation of several social systems based on gender-equity and the other is against shrinking authority of

male householders through losing their financial abilities throughout the IMF intervention (p. XXX, 2002). The most representative case among the gangster movies would *Friend* [Chinkko] (dir. by Kwak, Kyungtaek, 2001), which recorded about eight million audiences (the highest-grossing South Korean movies by 2001). Focusing on the narratives of *Friend*, this section illustrates one dimension among newly constituted masculinities in South Korea.

First of all, *Friend* is basically about the lives of four male friends. This film traces their childhood, high school, and grown-ups, and meanwhile, they are separated and reunited. Although two of them end up mobsters, and others advanced to college, and even to studying abroad, their relationship strongly expresses the male-bonding through causing troubles in school, desiring the same girl from the local band, watching the pornography, drinking, and singing karaoke together. The two main characters as mobsters continue to have troubles with assaults, domestic violence, drug addiction, but their relationships are romanticized as the symbols of comradeship, nostalgia for their untainted youth, and real humanities.

Also, this film is full of violence such as breaking in facilities, confronting school teachers, stabbing, fights, and assaults on wives. Contrary to the main stream of gangster films, it does not include comic elements: instead, it accentuates its realities: for instance, it is based on the director's experience about his friends as a semi-autobiography, and it vividly describes the school experiences (such as school uniforms, local bands, a roller-skating rink as the popular gathering place in the 1980s). Particularly, it was advertised for its real action scenes, including the fights between two mobs, assassination, and stabbing with Sashimi knives. Rather than eliciting complaints and criticism, descriptions of such extreme violence was utilized for its promotion. The success of film and societal mode of embracing violence seemed to demonstrate the social desire for physical masculinity and, furthermore, for strong, or even authoritarian leaderships, which were prevalent in the 70s and 80s.

This film strongly expresses the local sentiments: its set and location is around Busan, the second biggest city in the east southern province in South Korea, and also the actors speak with a strongly accented Busan dialect. Such a dialect is often utilized to express the masculine and macho characters in cultural texts and daily lives. Also, the east southern province [Youngnam, 嶺南] had been the hegemonic region, where the past several Presidents including Park, Jung-hee were born, so many privileges were granted as opposed to the west southern province [Honam, 湖南]. In other words, the east southern province had

been the central region during the economic and industrial development, as well as the symbolic region of the developmental regime. The IMF intervention, coincidentally, contributed to the shifts of governing power: the president election was held just one month after the beginning of the IMF intervention, and the candidate from the opposing party was elected in 1997, and he was also the first president from the west southern province. The setting exclusively around Busan and the strong dialect in this film reflected nostalgia for the heydays of this region, industrializing periods, and strong masculinity (as the central roles of the government).

The mega hit of *Friend* and the popular trend of gangster movies at that time indicate people's nostalgia for physical masculinity, leadership, and strong male-bonding, which would be the symbols of the developmental regime. Against the several trends of the gender-equity, and shrinking male authority, the discourses reveal its desire for reconstituting strong masculinity.

New Ideal Masculine: New Intellectuals (SinJisik) and Sports Celebrity

Despite its normative nature, the concept of hegemonic masculinity assumes that there could be a struggle for hegemony, and older forms of masculinity might be displaced by new ones (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In this sense, it is no surprise to witness different symptoms of deconstructing the normative hegemonic masculinity in South Korean society throughout the economic crisis. At the same time, there were several emerging alternative masculine ideals to the traditional hegemonic masculinity in South Korea. The noteworthy example would be the government's promotion of New Intellectuals (SinJisik-in, 新知識人), and the national frenzy for a Korean sports athlete who played in the U.S.

The New Intellectuals, which the Korean government began to select in February 1999 as a national campaign, refer to people who are active and creative in their own fields, so could produce added values, creativity and innovation irrespective of their educational background. One article of the law defines the New Intellectuals as someone "who could create new knowledge, and create material and immaterial values to share them with society." (제 2조). The first selected new intellectual is Shim, Hyungrae, who was the very popular comedian in the 80s, and expanded his career to a film director in the late 1990s. At that

time, Shim advertised that his corporation had U\$ XXX contract with foreign investors in 1998 Festival de Cannes simply based on their techniques on special effects and CG (Computer Graphic). He could symbolize a new ideal, who adventured a new era (film industry, and CG) and produced added values (high profile contracts) despite his background (no education in film and a former comedian). Shim was also featured in the New Intellectual television commercial, which was widely broadcast in television with a message that South Korea could accomplish the second national building after the IMF intervention.

During the IMF intervention, Korean athletes who accomplished surprising successes in the U.S. became the national celebrities and even heroes: one of them is Park, Chan-ho. Park, a Korean origin, played as a starting pitcher in L.A. Dodgers between 1997 and 2001, and earned averagely fifteen winnings per season. Meanwhile, his annual contracts had soared from 0.3 million in 1997 to ten million dollars in 2001. While he was hailed as a hero and his performances were widely broadcast in South Korea, President Kim, Daejoong invited him to the Blue House and bestowed a medal of national honor on him, calling him a “national hero” (Cho, 2008). Park was featured in a public advertisement in which Park smiled next to the message “Korea with Love” (Chosun-Ilbo, 5 August 1998). Meanwhile, he was represented in the media as the national ideals (Cho, 2008).³ Presentations of Park strongly emphasized his individual efforts; in particular, the media complimented his incessant training and mental toughness. Also, he was described as a winner in global competition, which of course operates on free-market principles. The media repeatedly pointed out that his success was proven by their economic profitability, i.e. their annual income. Both through identifying his success in the U.S. with national achievement and through underscoring their close relationships to his families, furthermore, the media successfully used Park to symbolize individuals who are responsible not only for themselves and to their family but also to and for South Korea. In short, Park came to embody the ideals of a new national individual or masculinity.

To put together, Shim and Park came to represent the new ideals who could distinguish themselves from the traditional intellectuals in the academy and governments. Their virtues would be proven mostly through the added values, which could be easily calculated by the financial income. As the ideal masculine, furthermore, they are also called

³ The analysis of Park and his media representation is based on the author’s earlier study in Cho (2008).

the national individuals or males who would be in charge of the national destiny against the global encroachments such as IMF.

Women in Supporting Roles: Cheering Breadwinners and Temporary Workers

The transformation of masculinities would not happen in separate spheres from gender relations as well as the new configurations of women's identity and practice (Connell & Masserchmidt, 2005). To understand the making of new hegemonic masculinities, it is necessary to pay attention to how the cultural discourses interpellated women, and which roles they invited women into. During the crises both of the national economy and family, the various discourses assigned married women the important roles of caring for and catering to their husbands and family, as well as of getting jobs as supplementary earners (H. Park, 2001). Such dual and even seemingly contradictory roles for married women in these discourses should be understood in relation to the longstanding strategy of the state's mobilization of family for the national projects, and the neoliberal structuralization which need more temporary workers who would replace the permanent ones.

While the discourses on family breakdown were widespread, media coverage about "how to cheer husband" and "how to support a head of family at home" was greatly increased, highlighting housewives' roles in family. It advised women not to give any discouraging responses to suffering husbands regardless of their economic ability and to treat them with constant respect. The need for wives' dedicated and affectionate caring was emphasized to a great extent and concrete tips were provided by daily newspaper as well as women's magazine. In the novel *Father*, even after the wife knew that her suffering husband had a relationship with another woman, she appreciates the woman for keeping company and being a conversation partner with her husband. The discourses on respecting father/husband as the family head flooded in TV commercials, in which the duties of mother/wife are clearly specified. While addressing the discontents and agonies of male employees, the discourses in these commercials found faults from wives for not giving adequate emotional supports to their overworked men, and meanwhile, family was described as a privileged site where depressed men could gain recognition (S. Cho, 1998; Moon, 2002).

Most representatively, *Samsung*, e.g. the biggest conglomerate in South Korea started series of "Another Family Campaign" in April 1997, which did not highlight its products and

companies, but focused on depicting happy family and its members. Along with the favorable responses to these series, other companies launched similar public advertisements. Kyobo, one of the major life insurance companies started campaigns featuring a young wife and a little girl who sing along “Daddy, Cheer Up!,” and LG Telecom also created TV commercial series called “Family”. In general, these commercials covered family members’ cheering for husbands and fathers, and wives’ emotional support was highlighted to a great extent. For example, a commercial of *Oxyclean*, laundry detergent, represented a housewife ironing her husband’s white shirt and saying “hard times like these days, old shirts don’t matter. Just perfect cleaning helps husbands” and “honey, cheer up” (S. Kim, Oct. 26, 2004; M. Lee, April 10, 1998). Writing a letter to husbands/fathers was also often encouraged in commercials. *Rogadis*, men’s suit company, depicted in their TV commercial a wife reading a letter for her husband for the first time after marriage, with her saying that “we’re having a hard time but don’t forget you have me and our lovely kids.”⁴

In addition to emotional support, women were also asked for contributing to family economy. While many men were in danger of layoff or early retirements, the myth of family wage in the middle class also collapsed with the economic downturn. Meanwhile, several discourses blamed housewives for being economic incompetence, and even the discourses on “working mom” and “the housewife CEO” were easily witnessed for the first time. However, women’s employment was most regarded as temporal or supplementary, not permanent or primary. In other words, women’s participation in labor and financial contribution to family was encouraged and even necessitated only during the emergent situations either in the nation or in family levels. Furthermore, the economic crisis made women employees the first fired and last fired (Moon, 2002, p. 81). Although female workers were more vulnerable to layoffs, their sacrifice was taken for granted in the name of protection of male workers who were thought of as a head of their family. Despite women’s work and their contribution to family economy, their roles were still marginalized and, at the same time, the longstanding normative construction of women as dependent or, at best, as supplementary income earners could be sustained.

⁴ In addition, Rogadis advertised the campaign “Write to Your Husband” to award best letters and photos.

Conclusion:

The 1990s of South Korea witnessed the transformations in gender relations, the roles of father/husband, and the status of family, which were heavily influenced by the economic and structural vicissitudes of the Korean society. Particularly, the national economic crisis in the late 1990s, and the ensuing neoliberalization of the society have been critical with the reconfiguration of the hegemonic masculinities in South Korea. As shown, the traditional hegemonic masculinity, which had prevailed during the developmental regime, could not be sustained throughout the economic changes. As a result, the hegemonic masculinity was broken up and even diversified: Korean males have become objects of mockery and satire, as well as of sympathy and pity. However, such changes did not necessarily lead to the disruption of male domination, and even to the gender equality. The discourses on the family breakdown, father/husbands, and brotherhood during the IMF intervention indicate that hegemonic masculinities were reconfigured in relation to the neoliberalization of Korean society. Newly forged hegemonic masculinities were based on different elements such as father's moral duties rather than economic capacity, nostalgia for strong and even violent masculinity, the efficiency based on creativity, and females' emotional and supplementary labor. Such a condition demonstrates that the hegemonic or normative masculinity was no longer tenable, but the system of patriarchy and hegemonic roles of masculine could be survived along with complex and contradictory constitutions of hegemonic masculinities.

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